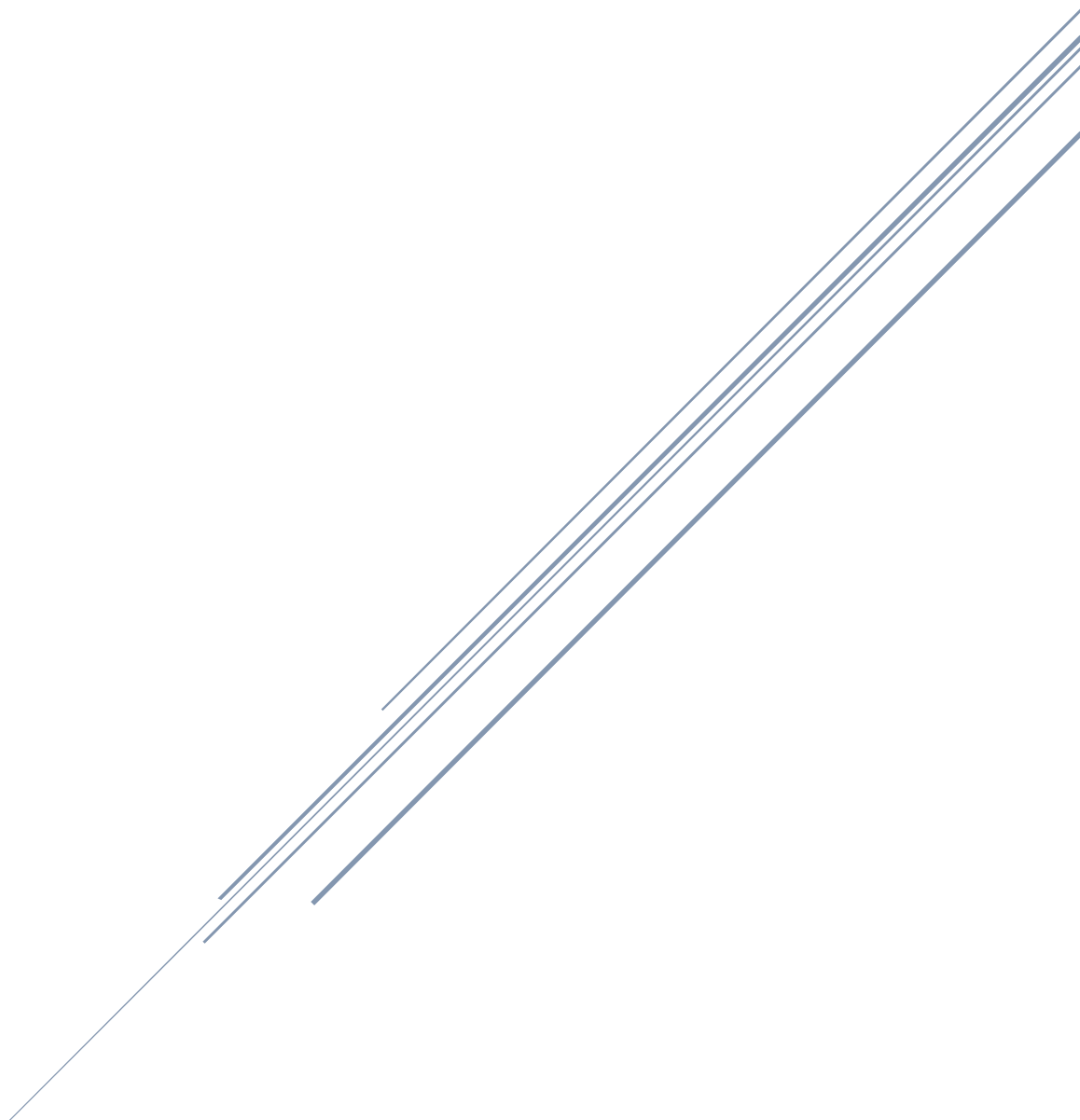# [TEB WEEK 1] FICTION

Prompt B

Pollus Paratus

#12436

[TEB Week 1] Fiction

Reactor Building, Market District

It was a quiet night for Pollus as he was running through the reactor's diagnostics yet again. Tomorrow was going to be an important day as one of the buildings in the market district was being activated and yet the reactor decided to fizzle at the last minute. Pollus sighed for a second, wondering which god was punishing him for this last-minute fatality that would sidetrack the Dread Lord's master plan.

"Linus, how's it looking?" Pollus called out to his assistant, a human mercenary engineer that had been with him for three months. Linus was a mechanically inclined guy, impressing Pollus with his attention to detail and skill that could only come from strict training working on the Ascendant Fleet's spacecraft.

"I think you did it Pollus. Everything is normalizing and looking like it'll be fine. But we should probably go ahead and install a secondary unit just in case." Linus was known for his thoroughness and his love for secondary units as insurance. Any other day, Pollus would have rolled his eyes, but he had to agree with Linus on this one.

"You know what gets me about this. We got this unit from an old destroyer in orbit and rebuilt the reactor. It should power up the entire city. It'll be running for the next twenty years without any issues even as Aliso City grows. How could one faulty part prevent it from powering up a single building?"

Linus nodded, "The power is all in there. It's just getting the power out in a controlled fashion that's hard. But the fail safes are designed to prevent the reactor from overloading and vaporizing this city."

"Good point Linus, I'm pretty certain the Dread Lord would be upset about that..." Pollus chuckled and started working on

the auxiliary power unit, placing it next to the wall and connecting the leads to the circuitry. The APU would send out a signal and continue to generate power in case the reactor shut down.

An Hour Later

Pollus and Linus just completed hooking up the APU to the system and tested it. For tomorrow, the show would have a hitch on his side. If something were to go wrong at the opening, it would happen to some other unlucky individual.

Looking at his handiwork happily, Pollus looked up at Linus, "Time to go home and get something to eat. See you tomorrow?"

"Sure thing, boss. I'm looking forward to getting some shuteye. Feels like I haven't gotten any sleep in a couple days, making this junker work properly..."

Suddenly, AR-G0, Pollus's MagnaGuard comes rushing into the room, staff in hand and lit up. Pollus looks up, a little alarmed and excitedly asks, "AR-G0, what's happening!?"

With the synthetic voice processor unit that Pollus installed on AR-G0 when he first brought the droid, the droid spoke up, "Warning, Aliso City is under attack. Warning, Aliso City is under attack."

Okay, so the AI's processor chip could use some work, but it wasn't designed to be a protocol droid. Pollus and Linus look at each other, confused as to would knew about Aliso's location and would be brazen enough to take on the Dread Lord when one wall of the reactor building vaporized in front of them.

Taking cover, Pollus peered above the barrier in time to see AR-G0 spring into action and decapitate a B1 Battle Droid marching towards them. Not quite processing how B1s were

still around sixty years after the Clone Wars, he dropped back down next to Linus.

"Linus, we need to shut down the reactor. If those B1s penetrate the casing, they'll take out the entire city!"

"Yeah, I'm working on it. Hitting the master should be the fastest way to shut down the unit. But it was on the wall that the B1s vaporized. We're going to have to do this manually. B1's, huh. I remember the guys joking about it when we first came down here, but I thought it was a myth."

Pollus jumped up and ran towards the console on the other side of the room, diving for cover in the nick of time, a blaster bolt going through the space his head occupied a split second earlier. "Okay, I'm going to work on shutting down the reactor. Here's a blaster. AR-G0 looks like he needs some help!"

Linus activated the blaster that Pollus heroically threw five feet in the air in his lap and spun around cover to start returning fire. AR-G0 did need help, the heavy fighting already having left him without his head and a leg, but the ferocious MagnaGuard was still dangerous with both of his arms attached.

Just when things couldn't possibly get any worse, an accidental thermal detonator from a dying B1 exploded right underneath the reactor casing, sending Linus and Pollus to the floor.

Pollus shook it off and hollered, "Linus, are you alright!?"

Linus stirred, "Yeah, I can still feel my arms and legs. But that came from the reactor. Check it."

Pollus looked over and could see that the reactor was in distress and that vapors were pouring out of the casing. The only thing that crossed his mind was that the coolant was bleeding out.

Suddenly, Furios chirped over Pollus's earpiece, "B1 Battle Droids are swarming the Market District, Paratus. Over."

Pollus responded while looking at the reactor, "Boss, we have bigger problems. My reactor is about to go critical and the explosion will destroy the entire city, but the problem is under control."

For a long second, there was silence on Furios's end. Then the Quaestor spoke, "Keep doing what you're doing. We'll dispatch troops to assist with the B1s."

Linus crawled closer to the reactor and swore up and down about how the B1s damaged his six-week overhaul project before shaking his head, the color draining out of his face as he processed the full extent of the problem, "The cooling kept the core from getting too hot, which would accelerate the core. It's a self-fulfilling nightmare. We need to either cool this core down fast or drain it in a controlled charge, but I'm not seeing how we can do that."

Pollus looked around on the shelves, looking for something that the CIS or his people left behind, just something that could act as a makeshift cooler. He just wasn't seeing the parts, the most important being coolant. A reactor room with no spare coolant, were they that careless...

In the corner of the supply cage, a glint caught Pollus's eye. "Linus, wasn't this room originally built to store spare orbital gunnery equipment?"

Linus thought for a moment, "You mean when the CIS had it? I guess... We did find a lot of spares for cannons. Why?"

"Isn't that an emitter for one of the old CIS tanks in the corner?" Pollus pointed at the dusty table size cylinder leaning up against the corner of the cage.

"I think you're right. I don't like where you're going with this Pollus... We could rig it up to the top of the reactor, but it'll still melt the emitter and we'll still be crispy critters. And that's with no interference from the B1s..." Linus stared at the emitter, shaking his head, "Lemme see if I can find the parts to make it work."

"You're so awesome Linus, but I really need you to move the emitter and I'll find the parts. It looks like we have about ten minutes before everyone's a crispy critter."

Ten Minutes Later

Infantry from the Ascendant Legion have driven the B1s away from the reactor building while Pollus and Linus work on the jury-rigged contraption that should save Aliso City from certain doom.

They were cutting it short, but all the parts for the jury rig seem to function properly, the first time since their morning started. Pollus was putting the final connector into position with a hydrospanner and eyeballing the build, "Well, this is it Linus. Let's vent her."

Pollus hit his communicator, "Boss, we're venting the reactor. You're about to have a sweet light show outside. If this doesn't work, see you on the other side, out."

Linus made a few modifications and shook his head, "Core temperature is almost to critical. It's now or never. Pollus, how can you be so calm about this?"

Pollus pressed the large red button, "If this fails, I don't have to answer to the Dread Lord. If it works, we're going to be in deeper shit about not having a reactor for tomorrow's launch, but that's solvable. We have an APU hooked up."

The emitter started to glow and vibrate as power was beginning to circulate through it for the first time since the CIS

occupied Aliso. Pollus was monitoring the progress on the undamaged console, regulating power as the room got brighter and brighter. Suddenly, the tip of the emitter erupted, sending energy towards the stars. "So far, so good Linus! It's working!"

Linus had his eyes covered, shielding them from the bright light, "Tell me when I'm not dead!"

Five Minutes Later

"That's the last of the core energy Linus. You're not dead." Pollus looked at the reactor. While it wasn't exactly true, the core was nearly spent and would spend the rest of its days warming up an aquarium or a tank of water.

The emitter was burnt out. While Pollus kept the energy from completely melting the emitter, it was clear from the damage that the emitter would never see any use aside from a pretty museum piece about the great battle with the B1s.

Furios chirped over the comm, "Paratus, nice light show. Is the reactor issue solved? Over."

"Yeah, but tell the Dread Lord we have another problem. The secondary APU was fried so we're gonna have to get a new one before the opening. Over." Pollus smirked and looked at the smoldering mess of an APU, which died when there was a momentary power spike from the reactor.

"Dammit Pollus, those things cost credits! Out!"

Linus looked at the APU and looked at Pollus, "How much trouble do you think we're in?"

Pollus stepped through the vaporized wall and surveyed all the damage around him, buildings tumbled and burning, charred remains of B1s carelessly scattered, fallen by blaster fire and chuckled, "Linus, that's the beauty of this. Those force

users don't know jack shit about rebuilding. They'll keep us for as long as it takes to clean this stuff up, which I'm guessing will be a few months."