

Awakening

VT-49 Decimator *Retribution* Unknown Orbit Unknown System

The bridge of the *Retribution* was silent as the pilot sat and waited. Silence within, silence without. The black, bleakness of space surrounded the VT-49 Decimator as it circled idly around the emerald green planet below. The distress call should have long ago been answered. The pilot simply could not answer. The fact that the ship was able to stay in orbit after colliding with an asteroid field was a small miracle. The concussive trauma the impact had placed on the pilot, however, was not.

He had no idea where he was heading to or from. The human pondered where he could have gone wrong, how he could have wandered so far off course as to not have any beacons input or to witness any passing vessels. Surely, he was well off the well-worn space lanes.

The navigational computer was faulty, of that he knew. Though he believed he was trained in astrogation, he could not set a light-speed jump blind. Nothing moves as slowly as time when it is the only constant companion to a lone pilot lost in the endlessness and openness of space. The VT-49 had only a faint link to the holo-net and could not stream in any data to help pass the time. The pilot cursed himself, wishing he had a cache of holovids stored to pass the time or to jog his memory.

The irony of how sudden casual thoughts of assistance turn to overt fears of being stranded and foraging for survival. The pilot took mental stock of his supplies. Minimal, at best. He had no idea how long his trek was supposed to last, as he couldn't remember who he was. His fuel reserves were steady, however, and he considered how long he may be out in space.

The decision to land a vessel is never easy in uncharted territory. Scanning the topography and looking for electromagnetic pulses turned up nothing of value for the pilot. He decided to put his craft down at the peak of a plateau in a hilly continent on the northern hemisphere. The planet looked to contain a breathable atmosphere and had some traces of water. Perhaps he could eek out survival for a time. He keyed in a few dials at the helm and manually began the descent.

Entering atmosphere the approaching sky took him by surprise. He was confronted with a vibrant gold and deep purple. As the *Retribution* slowly descended The pilot could detect no aerial fauna, and below only the outline of stubby flora were visible. He considered himself content for a second to not maroon others with him and then cursed his isolation as the craft made landfall.

Planetside Unknown Planet Unknown System

Much Later

Daytime was easier for the pilot. The beautiful purple and golden sky cheered him in his solitude, and helped him forget that despite his wanderings and treks through the streams and fields of this unknown world, he was utterly alone. Nighttime was more problematic. Not even the low humming and guttural noises made by the native reptiles and small mammals put him at ease. He had found no apex predators, to be sure, but he had found no sentient life to help him find his way.

And so he slowly became accustomed to daily field navigation and marking off a grid perimeter to thoroughly search his new world. He cursed not having a speeder. He cursed his isolation. The silence and loneliness was not helped by the dull palatability of the reptiles and rodents he was able to catch and cook readily. He would not starve, and the *Retribution* made for a luxurious retreat from the elements. Mostly though, the pilot sat and waited, trying to remember who and what he was before the accident.

The distress signal was ever present, tapping a long low frequency barely audible within the bridge of the VT-49. A single red diode flashed ceaselessly, as if faintly beating away the resignation that the pilot was slowly finding him in. He often sat in the commander's seat on the bridge and tried to remember faces of people sights of the places he had seen to force recognition. Still, nothing.

After many, many weeks he devised a way to distract himself from the gloom and misery. He learned to breathe slowly, to close off his mind to what little external stimuli that surrounded him. He learned to create an area that he could relax and draw mindfulness from.

At first it was a passing effort, one he dismissed as a way to make time move. Yet, the more he meditated and the longer he allowed himself to transcend himself the more he began to gain. Sitting in silence, letting his mind take him wherever it inherently wanted to go soothed him to the core. Images of people, places, and battles flowed freely. These were images representing a lifetime of experiences that were his, but not his. It gave him hope. It also gave him the ability to not truly care *where* he was or *when* he was, for that matter.

He did not know, and could not know, truly how long he lived this way. He increased his meditation regiment drastically, spending countless hours a day in trancelike harmony with his mind and body. He concentrated long and hard, reaching out for something. Surely, he had friends that would be searching for him. He trusted that he would not be forgotten. He knew it was a dream at best, but a dream that allowed the pilot to be at peace.

And yet, as things often do, when the pilot found himself adjusting to his new life fate interceded as a cruel mistress. He did not hear the call at first, deep in meditation. He attributed it to his imagination and wishful thinking. Yet, the high pitched note refused to be ignored. He slowly moved to his communications array and flickered on the incoming message. He remembered everything. Flooding his mind all at once.

"Sky Breach Base, this is Commander Mauro Wynter. Ship badly damaged, please send location beacons, I am coming home."

He did not move, not yet. He did not look up, not yet. He simply sat and waited. Slowly, tears began to flow freely down his face as he repeated the words over and over in his head. He was going home.