
FLIGHT OF THE GEIST

“Good work, Wiz. The station’s life support systems are stabilized, Sire,”

“Excellent. Cap, get these boys moving. We’ve dealt with some of the boarding party, but advise caution.”

Static punctuated each phrase.

“Get those weapons operational. Ham, you and Pogo get up to the lift and secure it. We move to the hangars next. Top priority is to get back to Rubber Duckie, pronto.”

“Roger, Wilco.”

“Let’s do this Hammer! You and me together, best buds. We’ll light ‘em up good and fast. Pew pew pew. Blamo! We’ll save all the girls on this station, right? Then they’ll definitely want to go on dates with us. They’ll fall in love with us for sure. I just hope things don’t get serious too quickly.”

“Shut it, Pogo.”

The hulk of a man lifted his Z-6 rotary cannon to his hip with ease. The trooper’s polished white plasteel armor had been marked with carbon scoring. If he had been injured, he wasn’t showing any signs of slowing down. His compatriot, shorter than the behemoth by nearly eight inches, raised his carbine and followed. The barrel shroud of the weapon bore the tell-tale marks of hard use, raw durasteel that faded in array of heat tempering from light straw to deep purple. It seemed that the smaller man had been shooting as much as he spoke. They rushed off towards the turbolift, clearing the command deck in seconds.

“Wiz, gimme progress, son. We don’t got much time.”

“Power rerouted, Cap. Hull integrity Forty-Seven percent. We’ve got four operational turbolasers, point defenses operational, shields are spooling. Four minutes to full charge. Reactor is looking a bit dodgy. Don’t know how long she’ll hold.”

“Good work, soldier. Weapons free and claws out, boys. Keep shooting till they stop moving, then double taps. I’ll take point”

The trio of operators moved as if they were controlled by a single mind. At the corners of each corridor, two would sweep the hall for assailants while the other crossed to the other side. Each covered the others on their advance. They moved with the type of professional precision that underlie their years of combat experience. This was not the first firefight they’d been party to. They were going to be certain it wasn’t their last either.

When the first of the shambling assailants came into view, the trio of soldiers let loose a hellfire of blaster bolts. The volume of fire cut the first of the Restoration Troopers to ribbons. As they passed over its motionless body, Wiz drew his side arm. Without lowering his primary weapon, he unleashed two blaster bolts into the creature's head. Execution with extreme prejudice was required with these abominations.

They pressed on through the hallways of the XQ series platform, reaching the central core and their fellow operators who awaited them at the turbolift. The large man, Hammer, was slightly slumped over but still firmly holding the anchor of his rotary cannon to his hip. Doc, the team's field medic, immediately rushed to his side.

"Kriffin' hell, Ham. You're not looking so hot."

"I'm fine, Doc."

"Bullshit, Soldier. Tip back that can, let me get a look at you."

The large man lifted his helmet. A trickle of blood came from the corner of his mouth. The fluid ran thin, dripping on to his white armor. The medic instantly moved to action, digging into his hip satchel. He drew two small vials and an aerosol dispenser. The first vial was light blue bubbly substance. The medic slipped the vial into the dispenser and placed it near his ally's nose.

"Just bacta, big man. Won't hurt at all."

His finger depressed the button on the sprayer. The contents of the vial were instantly vaporized. A fine mist erupted from the applicator. Hammer breathed in deeply. He coughed slightly.

"Said I were fine, Doc. Don't be wastin all yer dang ole med-sin on me"

"Keeping you doing peak damage isn't a waste. We're gonna need you fully operational, soldier. The True Emperor needs us. Now listen, this one...It's a stim. Might sting a bit."

The medic slammed the second vial into the applicator. The yellow liquid bubbled as it locked into the medical device. The medic pulled down the body glove the heavy weapons specialist wore under his armor to get clear access to his neck. He pressed the applicator against his skin, instantly depressing a smaller button on the device.

"Ah, Shit! Sumbitch that hurt."

"Cap. Hammer needs more patching, but I've got him up and running for now."

"Ham, gimme your status, soldier."

The goliath man slipped his helmet back over his head, stood up straight and raised the six barreled cannon to level. He spooled up the weapons rotary system. Just as the barrels came up to speed, four horrifying undead weapons appeared at the end of the corridor. The roar from the blaster was deafening. With a rate of fire of one hundred and sixty six rounds per second, Hammer's weapon

had lovingly earned the moniker “Betty Buzzsaw”. He’d painted the name on the housing of the cannon along with his interpretation of a tasteful image of a nude Twi’lek woman.

The Restoration Troopers and the Ascendant leading their charge met the functional end of “Betty Buzzsaw”. Their limbs, with crystalline shards poking through the musculature, were severed. The creatures roared in apparent pain. Their screams were all silenced before “Betty Buzzsaw” had completed her six second show of excessive force. The barrels continued to spin as the weapon ran silent.

“Woah woah woah, big man!”

He lowered his weapon, pulling the smoking powerpack from the housing. The heavy weapons specialist dropped the empty pack on the floor. He pulled a fresh powerpack from his bandolier, slamming it home into the weapon’s

“Status update, hungry for more.”

“A-firm, Ham. Wiz, get this lift running. Everyone else, fresh up those powerpacks. Stay sharp.”



“Sire, we’ve the Imperial regulars have completed their sweep. Lost ten or twelve of them taking down one beastie. That aside, negative contact on additional Ascendant.”

“Very well. Any news from Ragnath?”

“Negative, Sire. Communications are locked up tight.”

“Frezz. Kamjin is probably set to give some rousing speech to inspire his people. He’s undoubtedly required attendance for all, including the lowliest communications operators. Damn fool gives more credence to being an orator than a warrior. There is no reasoning with these monsters. Our people are dying down there.”

The officer stepped forward. His tunic was cut to fit his frame perfectly. Often times an officer would put on substantial weight after putting in some time with the fleet. Tosten was not one of those types, ambition drove his every action. He was fit, in mind and body, to serve in the Imperial Fleet. It was that very quality that drew Thran’s attention to the young officer the first time they met. Promises and whispers of promotion, recognition, and still greater accolades turned the junior officer’s loyalties to The Usurper.

“Mi’lord. Pardon my interruption. I’ve completed a tactical analysis of the situation. I believe we have an opportunity to sever the enemy’s logistical pipeline. This will give our soldiers on the ground a serious tactical advantage.”

"Lieutenant Tosten, a pleasure. I am surprised to see you here. Please share your insights with me."

"Beg you pardon, Mi'lord. It is Leftenant Commander, now. I was on shore leave, between assignments."

"Commander? You're a man of determination, Tosten...You don't wait for someone to do you favors to move upward, you take initiative. I like that about you. I suspect I'll be addressing you as Admiral soon. Please, Commander...proceed."

"Mi'lord. The Enemy fleet has bypassed several of the fleet's smaller vessels during the initial phases of the invasion, electing to move on to securing the blockade against Ragnath. Likewise, they have paid little attention to this facility. They have their grip over the moon, sire, but they seem to be of single focus in scouring the for vessels leaving that they have left their transport craft mostly unprotected."

"Yes, I see where you are going with this Tosten."

"The Fleet, mi'lord, has disengaged. Admiral Narmi is a coward. He engaged only briefly before turning tale and fleeing. The enemy vessels seem to have weaponry that surpasses our own. The size and composition of the enemy fleet has scared off some of my superiors from planning a counterattack. So, we would be limited in the scope of what our assault could be. The transports, mi'lord, they are lightly armored and shielded and possess no weaponry to speak of. If we could only gather several small ships, we could severely cripple the enemy assault. Perhaps, Three corvettes would suffice."

"Get word out to the commanders in the fleet. I want three Raiders here in four hours."

"Two Raiders, mi'lord. The *Geist* is already on standby. We landed her in a crater on Danktooine and have been awaiting orders for some time now. I will need transport back, if I am to assume command."

"Presumptuous, Tosten, that I would place you in command. I like it. Cap, gather the boys and find any vessel that is capable of flying. We need to get to the *Geist*."

"Aye, Sire."

Just as the man turned to execute the order, the hangar bay went dark. Emergency lighting clicked on, filling the large space with a dull amber light. A staccato automated voice came over the station's intercom.

"Power system failure. Reactor shut down in fifty-seven minutes. All hands to emergency stations."

"Karkin' hell. Commander, expedite your time line. You have one hour. Do not disappoint me. Cap, you heard the bucket of bolts...Double time."

"Roger, Wilco."

"Aye, Mi'lord. It shall be done."

The soldier tossed his carbine over his shoulder. The taut sling positioned the weapon firmly against his back. He rushed off to issue the orders to his troopers. The officer had stepped over to the nearest computer terminal and began his relay of encrypted communications. His fingers danced over the buttons and toggles in such a graceful way, Thran swore the man could've been a conduction in the Galaxy-renowned Bakuran Symphony. In a matter of moments, the five-man squad was combing the hangar for any shuttle, tug, or puddle jumper that would get them off the failing platform. They opened the canopies of several small fighters, TIEs and recently captured mercenary vessels. They combed through small shuttles and freighters. The platform was a trade hub. There were many comers and goers.

One small ship, a trading vessel, stood out. It was old and looked as though it would fall apart if you looked at it wrong. Long riggers of the vessel were folded up beneath it. It was a Corellian craft, though it bore little resemblance to the famed YT-Series. Thran watched as the men opened the freighter's cargo door. They pulled a fat Abyssin and a short bat-faced Chadra-Fan from the ship. The two wholesalers were obviously protesting the requisitioning of their vessel, but once the soldiers' rifles leveled on the duo their protestations gave way to gracious bows and acquiescence. Thran smiled to himself.

Words were effective tools for some, but for others the business end of a blaster was a more effective manner in achieving a desired end. That type of direct action was needed in soldiers. The squad had proved effective in that department throughout their long careers. The officer had likewise proven effective in his line of duty, though his weaponry of choice was shrewd tactics and cunning. Thran paused a moment, in a way it reminded him of yesteryear. He, the cunning Sith and his close compatriot, the Obelisk Angelo Dante, his blunt object used for bashing, were a hell of a team.

He looked out the hangar door over the moon of Ragnath. Perhaps the Dantes had left their villa before the invasion, he thought. Unlikely as that may be, Angelo and Kell were perfectly capable of taking care of themselves. His sentimentality about their well-being was broken by the return of the Officer.

"Mi'lord, Commander Pellian of the *Revenant* and Commander Finnall of the *Wraith* have answered our call. Their ships are on standby and will be arriving in one hour. I have briefed both of them. Captain Leena Vale has also volunteered her flight of VT-49s. Captain Tyren of the *Glaive* and Captain Pavond of the *Trident* have offered their TIE Hunters and Assault Gunboats to assist our efforts. The additional firepower and fighter support is a welcome addition to the roster."

"Very good, Commander. I shan't inquire under what authority you have convinced these Captains to break from the Admiral's orders. I feel I shall bear the burden of the consequences at a later time. When we get to the *Geist*, I shall relieve the Captain of command at which point, you will assume the role of leader of this strike. I trust you are prepared."

"Yes, Mi'lord."

"Good."

Pogo, the often-selected errand boy of the squad, came sauntering over. He gestured to the ship.

“Rubber Duckie, sir. Stupid lazerbrain, he wasn’t supposed to know his codename...Ignore that first part. Boss, we got a real shitheap there. It’ll get us down to the crater ok, but no promises after that. Damn ship is older than Cap. I’ll never pick up a new girlfriend in this lump of bantha dung.”

“Very well, Pogo. Let’s get a move on.”



Thran entered the bridge of the *Geist* unimpeded by the warrant officer standing guard near the lift door. He took a look about the bridge. Though far smaller, the designers at Kuat Drive Yards had done well to preserve the Imperial aesthetic in the design. On either side of the central walkway, two recessed pits were full of the ships technicians and system operators. It felt like the stooges at the design bureau had just reduced a Star Destroyer’s bridge to fit within the hull of the smaller ship. He liked it.

He looked up to the forward viewport. The ships Captain stood with one of the duty officers, reviewing a report of the ship’s consumables. The man was thick around the waist, balding, and wore the tired eyes of a man who’d spent more time sleeping than standing. Thran was disgusted by him.

“Ah, Mr. Occasus, to what do we owe the pleasure of your...”

“Captain, you are relieved of command of this vessel.”

“You can’t do that! I’ve served on this ship for eight years! Under who’s authority?”

The Sith didn’t furnish him with a verbal response. Instead, the manifestation of his lightsaber in his hand brought silence to portly officer. The roar of the orange blade igniting set lumps in his throat. The technicians and other duty officers on the bridge looked to the commotion. They quickly averted their eyes back to their work.

“Mind your tongue.”

“I’ll...speak...to the Admiral about this!”

The portly man waddled away from the command post. He muttered curses to himself. Thran turned to the officers and crewmen of the *Geist*.

“We are assuming control of this vessel. The Empire is in dire need of heroes and you have all been selected to meet her call. Commander Tosten will now be in command of the *Geist*. He is your new CO. Our mission is simple. We are going to cripple the enemy’s invasion force and give our men on the ground as much support as we can. Commander Tosten will now fill you in on the details. I trust you will all take to him quite well. In the event that you do not, you may bring any complains about his command directly to me. I shall see *ALL* your worries resolved. *Permanently.*”

Junior Commander Tosten stepped forward. He looked over the ships system displays, analyzing them and fitting the ships armament to optimize the priority target list. He stepped forward and began issuing orders to the officers and technicians. Thran stepped away from his position, allowing Tosten to ready the *Geist* for what would undoubtedly be the biggest fight of her life.

“Sire, what shall we do?”

“Ah, Cap. Get your boys patched up, brief the ships security detail on what is coming, then join me in the galley. That fat captain surely has some booze in his old office, I’m going to dig that up and we’ll settle in while the Navy’s finest do what they do. Don’t you worry, we’ll get you back in the dirt soon.”

“A-firm, Sire. Shall I find us some glasses too?”

“You haven’t gone all refined and prissy on me, have you Cap? Too good to drink right from the fuel tanks?”

“No, Sire. I was merely thinking...I’ll see to my duties.”

“There’s a good man.”