

Corridors Best Left Abandoned

Data Log by LT Gian Webb

The glory of flight quickly fades once your boots are back on the solid deck of a Star Destroyer. Nothing makes the realities of combat hit home quite like the long list of repairs and inspections that follow. And aboard the *Hammer* out in the Unknown Regions, everybody needs to pitch in and do their part. As such, that's how I found myself roaming corridors beneath the bridge, armed with a clipboard, flashlight, and my trusty TIE pilot helmet, just in case of dangerous spores, molds, or even potential areas of vacuum caused by a hull breach.

As the most junior member of Epsilon I got last pick when it came to inspections. With the squad bar and hanger getting snatched up quickly, I got stuck going through long abandoned laboratories and storage rooms. It was the sort of corridor that security rounds just glance down, as long as it isn't actively on fire, it wasn't ever really worth their time. And while none of the stormtroopers would ever admit it, these parts gave them the heebie-jeebies. Not that I could fault them, I kept thinking that every door would contain some vicious creature and the shadows cast by my light played vicious tricks on my mind.

But the job went on without incident. Save for a coating of dust, most rooms were fully satisfactory. As I worked towards the *Hammer's* stern, the air chilled. There must be some sort of ventilation problem for engineering to look at. Even so, by the time I had reached the final room on my check list the air was frigid. My breath fogged up the eye pieces of my helmet. The fog combined with the dim lights within to make the inspection of this final room quite difficult. According to the papers, this was supposedly a dark Jedi storage compartment, though it was clearly long forgotten about.

In the years since it was last visited by any other soul, the movement of the *Hammer* had done a number on this room. My flashlight passed over toppled shelves and strewn floors. Data cylinders, holocrons, stone tables, and assorted scrolls with now forgotten information were scattered about the room, having tumbled from their containers which lay open and

upturned. Like any good initiative taking imperial pilot would, I began to place these valuable artifacts back into their respective boxes and bins. I was able to get most irregular shaped objects back into their corresponding containers, but ordinarily shaped data logs were placed into whichever box was closest. But one irregular object had no storage. It was a deep blue stone tablet with fractured edges and embossed characters that I could not recognize, let alone understand. I found myself disoriented as I moved the tablet, unable to find any designated storage. Then suddenly, the air in the room was sucked out.

I jumped with a start as life support alarms blared in my ears. The *Hammer* was now colder and darker than every before. Guided only by my flashlight I rushed to the door. Whether this was reactor failure or enemy attack, all hands would be needed. After a month of blaring alarms calling us to stations, the ship was eerily quiet. As I dashed from passageway to passageway the only sound was my heavy breath echoing in my trusty pilot's helmet.

I reached the emergency ladderwell and turned upwards. I was just below the command bridge, if anybody knew what was afoot, that's where I would find them. The approach to the bridge was intimidating during the best of times, as it usually was accompanied by some sort of incoming discipline following a personal failure. However, when illuminated only by flashlight during these uncertain times, the passageway became downright haunting.

The stormtrooper sentries were still posted, yet they did not challenge me as I approached, out of breath. In fact, they stood motionless. Or more accurately, they floated motionless. Peacefully in the air, rotating gently. With the ship shut down it would only make sense that the artificial gravity wouldn't be working. And yet, I could still move through the ship as normal. It felt like I were an observer to these events, not actually this seemingly doomed *Hammer*.

The command bridge only confirmed my suspicions. As the doors silently, yet powerlessly, slid open I saw no other souls immediately. I crept forward, worried that at any moment some dark being may leap out. I could see light around a turn ahead, coming from the navigational command center. I rounded the corner and saw a beautiful and terrible sight.

Through shattered bridge windows I looked over the muted gray bow of the *Hammer*. It was illuminated by a pale blue star, taking up most of the window. We were far closer than I had ever ventured before in a craft. And beyond that, space, with its nebulas and distant stars dotting the darkness. And it was beautiful. There I stood, alone on this bridge, a solitary soul staring out into infinity. And yet, I still felt cold. I was taken back to my emergency ejection training. A wildly unpleasant experience where we were abandoned floating in space until picked up by a wingman. My feet were solidly planted on the deck, but I was still fully alone. Nothing between myself and space but my reliable pilot's helmet, having stood by my side for numerous missions.

A solitary display blinked out green text. The last log entry was from the final day of 40 ABY, almost a decade from when I last saw this dear ship. Had I skipped through those years? Was this a prophetic vision? An elaborate training exercise by the admirals? There was no way to know. But when faced by times of uncertainty, there has always been one constant in the TIE corps. With nowhere else to go, I turned toward the hanger. I knew not what to do, but I knew that I was a pilot, and that was a start.

The long march down to the hanger was equally quiet. Passageways were either empty or littered by long past troopers floating gently through the air, their white armor looming as my flashlight beam crossed the hallways. I burst into the hanger, then my foot missed the ground.

Then my next step missed, and I found myself floating through hanger, gravity no longer holding me down. I shot past the TIE Rhodiums, Epsilon's Defenders, and what looked to be my very own Missile Boat. Then I looked forward, moments before running face first into the nose cone of a moored Lambda shuttle.

I shut my eyes to brace for the impact. I hit something, but it wasn't a ship, and I wasn't floating any longer. I felt cool metal deck beneath me. And as I lifted my helmet up and looked around I found myself back in the storage closet. A message came over my helmet comms, there were other people here, I was back on my *Hammer*. But I needed to be sure. I rushed out and up to the bridge. I needed to figure out what had happened. Were we in danger, though

years down the line? Or was this all just a bad nightmare? This room, and all its dark contents could take care of themselves, it wasn't my problem any more.