

R&R – RTF Fiction Submission #7 – GN La’an (#10540)

The operational tempo, even in the early phases of the exercise, was high – perhaps moreso for the Warrior herself. Despite the unforgiving pace La’an was grateful for the 6 hour standown he had been granted, the previous mission having taken the better part of a day to complete thanks to the unexpected time taken to creep in to an enemy system and make a number of wild detours on his return to throw off any trail or shadowing fighters. He had opened his eyes again around 5 hours after hitting his bed, vaguely aware that time has passed but feeling more like seconds than hours.

A mug of recaf helped him back to the world and, less than an hour later, he had turned too as something resembling a General of the TC and Emperor’s Hammer. A fresh uniform and another recaf had been required in the end, but he had fallen back into routine quickly enough. The rest of Theta had been split up, with the pilots involved in the recon mission having been stood down alongside La’an, albeit for a while longer, while the remainder maintained part of the task group’s CAP.

Heading down to the main hangar La’an expected to go through his usual after action routines, checking his fighter for damage and running through maintenance tasks with the ground crew. His tired brain was a little slow to react when he stood next to the unblemished hull and for a moment looked confused by the absence of carbon scarring, warped panels or deformation of metal from the heating of laser impacts and the rapid cooling of space.

“Exercise, so exercise weapons – idiot...” He vocalised quietly, hearing a short laugh from the other side of the flight line – obviously not that quietly.

“I made the same mistake if it’s any consolation, that being said I had about 3 hours more sleep than you did.” Horus looked as tired as La’an felt, his uniform was the worse for wear but it looked like he had cracked on with his maintenance routines anyway, despite the absence of damage or need for repair.

“How did Mark look when the Obsidian dropped him back?” La’an queried, having only had the briefest of conversations with his Commander during the immediate after action debrief.

“Furious, think he feels like he missed the action – Rho bagged the picket, I got the joy of dodging through asteroids and you felt the need to make a suicide run in system, bag some fighters and then get chased out again. Pretty sure he was just bored witless sat at the back of the bridge – the *Obsidian* didn’t even charge its weapons.” Mock sincerity made La’an smile, he shrugged at Horus and turned back to his own fighter, mentally working out how likely he was to injure himself or damage the fighter by attempting to do anything approaching practical maintenance. Weighing the risk as pretty likely he headed for the exit, stopping for a brief chat with the pilots and engineers he met en route.

Taking the main turbolift up several decks he headed for the operations centre, a central hub of the ship that was buried deep within it’s armoured hull. The bridge was the centre of a great many command functions and the primary site for controlling the vast ship’s warfighting effort, however a secondary bridge and a host of other functions were driven from a far less exposed position. It was a useful place to visit, with access to sensor feeds and scans, records and comms without the need to visit the bustling command centre or talk your way past inquisitive and territorial bridge crews. In all

honesty he thought the operations crew were often bored, in between periods of extreme activity, and happy to share their information and opinions. It would be a useful source of gossip and a semi-formal idea of how the exercise was panning out thus far. He felt like a conflict was on the horizon, but for now at least the two main groups, as well as the Challenge and Aggressor with their respective escorts were behaving like fighters unsure of their opponents – testing guards with experimental jabs, nowhere near fighting strength but enough to test the defences, gauge their speed and look for an opening.

He was looking forward to the fireworks when the ships found one another, whether by accident or design - exercise or not he would find the thrill of a large scale dogfight exhilarating. With that thought in mind he stepped into the operations centre with a smile on his face, greeting the supervisors he knew he could rely on to be honest. Time to do some research.

