

RTF 2023 Part 2 Fiction. SpaceShip! By Colonel Mordred

Hyperspace between XH233 and XJ291, deep into Chaos region.

Two weeks of the same monotony, jumping to a system, scouting the main bodies and jumping out. Tempest was running toward the Dali Campos star region inside the Chaos.

The plan was to jump from XH233 to XJ291, a regular 4-hour jump and from there fan out to the neighboring systems. ISDII Conquest was a day behind them, laying the much-needed hyper relay network to support their operations deep into the Chaos and keep constant communications with Aurora.

Every jump was a risky for bigger ships in this region, but for a TIE running them over and over tempted fate.

Which of course means Mordred pulled the short straw.

The squadron was gliding lazily into the hyperspace tunnel, when they reached a bumpy stretch. Lightning illuminated the port side of Major Colo's Tie Defender, energy spiking through the systems as the solar panels absorbed all energy.

"Everyone, close formation, the anomalies are getting worst." Maj Colo ordered.

"Roger" could be heard from the entire squadron.

"Uh? What do you mean worst?" Mordred's somnolent voice was the last to be heard before a screeching noise took over.

"Tempest 1-4? Are you asleep again? Mordred?"

"Sir, this is Tempest 2-1, Tempest 1-4 drifted outside formation and was engulfed by lightning!"

"Everyone, I need options! We can't leave that moron behind!"

"We have none, sir. We have to pull through the storm."

"The Colonel was probably pulverized or taken back into real space. Odds are he's drifting in the black in interstellar space."

"Don't worry about Mordred, LT, his landing to crashing ratio is beyond reason, you can't kill the man." said Major Morgoth.

"Alright, focus people, the storm is not over yet. we'll return for SAR once we know more. We'll probably find him into a neighboring backwater planet nearby..."

In a neighboring backwater planet nearby

An intermittent beep woke Mord up. groaning as he moved, Mord tried to make sense of what he was seeing. He was strapped to his seat, which was almost 90 degrees. With an effort, he pushed the quick release and dropped into the cockpit's left panel. His training hit and he went through the mental checklist.

-Is the gear ok? Sparks all around the cockpit denounced a catastrophic failure in his TIE's system. Comms? Negative. Life Support? Negative. Sensors? suboptimal.

-Is the planet habitable? subzero temperatures but breathable atmosphere.

-Nearby settlements? sensors detect a structure 3km away, radio comms active.

"Alright, old man, a bit of snow is fine, the suit can handle it."

He pushed the eject button and the top of the cockpit blasted away. Mordred retrieved his survival equipment, his E-11, stepped out and promptly sunk into 10 feet of the fluffiest snow ever.

"At least that explain how we survived the landing..."

Climbing out the snow, he took a minute to look at the remains of his trusty fighter. It landed on its left flank, an eerie red glow inside the cockpit with the occasional flashes from the sparking equipment.

With a salute to his old friend, Mordred turned towards the settlement and promptly sunk into the snow.

Cursing and wishing he had a flamethrower, he started navigating the soft snow pockets.

After ten minutes he already had the hang of the terrain, and his helmet enhancements could highlight the soft terrain as he advanced.

One hour later he could see a structure looming in the horizon. He stopped behind a snow mount and pulled his macrobinoculars to examine the building. No one in imperial uniforms, nor other known factions of this region. He pondered his options and found them lacking. In the right side there was a landing pad with a medium freighter, he could hijack the freighter and fly away from this location... If he could fly the freighter. It was an older model, and these tended to be finicky...

"What are you doing?" A voice came from behind him.

"I'm checking if they are friendlies." Mord whispered.

"Oh stay away from the cantina then, but the rest of the guys is ok. Are you an imperial? That's a weird logo."

"Emperor's hammer faction. Now be quiet, I don't want them to hear me."

"They've already heard you, impy." A new authoritarian voice joined them, making Mord jump. Only then he finally noticed the Squib laying on the snow at his side, with his own macrobinoculars also looking at the building. Behind them was a zeltron woman, and even under the heavy cold weather clothing Mordred could see her statuesque figure.

"Oh hi guys, uh, awkward..."

"Relax Impy, I believe you are the owner of that pile of junk that crashed in my backyard, right?"

"Yeah, I believe I was caught in the hyperspace storm."

"Damn it, that means it's getting worse. We'll have speed things up. We are leaving the planet before we are stranded here, you are free to join us."

18 Hours later

Zarabella finally relaxed once the freighter entered hyperspace. It was an old KK-2000 Nubian, prone to overheating, undercooling, breaking seals, ruptured fuel lines and other assorted random features, but it was all they had. They even lucked out and found 4 days worth of food on the freighter's cargo hold, so the 40 passengers would have something to eat free of charge.

Some of them were looking a bit more green than usual after eating but nothing that could possibly jeopardize their trip.

Just as she closed her eyes the ship jostled around violently.

Cursing in her native language, Zarabella rushed to the bridge to find both sullustan pilots looking greenish and kinda slimey.

"What the heck guys?!?"

A series of tweets from the astromech on her side told what she needed to know. The food.

"Zara! I have lots of sick passengers, what do we do?!?" A young girl named Temba ran into the bridge.

"See if there's a doctor for the passengers!"

The girl ran away to the cabin and started asking the passengers. By the third row she found a rodian lady.

"Stewardess, I think the man next to me is a doctor."

The man next to her asleep hugging a vat of bacta. Temba poked him cautiously until he woke up.

"Sir. Excuse me, sir. I'm sorry to have to wake you. Are you a doctor?"

"That's right. I'm Dr Rumack"

"We have some passengers who are very sick. Could you come and take a look at them?"

"Yes. Yes, of course."

Rumack picked up his bacta vat and followed Temba.

"Zara, I've found a doctor!"

"Doctor! we have a problem, we have many sick passengers and lost both pilots. Can you revive the pilots?"

"I can't tell."

"You can tell me, I'm the chief here."

"No, I mean I don't know."

"Can't you take a guess?"

"Not for another two hours."

"You can't take a guess for another two hours?"

"No, the bacta won't take effect for another two hours. We need a new pilot."

"Temba?" Zara asked the girl. "Find my that imperial."

– Confirm that the main viewport TV is on and the VCR viewing channel is selected.

– Turn on the VCR.

Operations

1 Press the MENU button U to display the Main menu on the TV screen.

2 Press the Cursor buttons (34) S to select [CLOCK SET] then press the OK button T.

3 Set each item by pressing the Cursor buttons (341) S. Press the Cursor button (2) S to return to

the previous item.

At the set time (H:M) point:

– When it is kept pressed, the indication changes in 30 minute steps.

– There is no need to press the Cursor button (1) S. 4 Press the MENU button U.

– The clock starts."

Mordred carefully followed all the steps, but when he pressed the last button the ship lost half it's power and the TV was now displaying 03:35.

"Chief! We are in trouble! It's 03:35 now!"

"Oh dear you must've set it to 12 hecta. We need 24 hecta. Do a reset and set it up again."

Mordred swiftly pressed the buttons.

"It's blinking now. Why it's blinking?"

"Try this, Colonel.: If the clock is less than two minutes slow or fast, it can easily be reset to the proper time.

1 Press the MENU button U to display the Main menu on the TV screen.

2 Press the Cursor buttons (34) S to select [CLOCK SET] then press the OK button T.

3 When the current clock display on the VCR is between 11:58.00 and 12:01.59, press the MENU button U as soon as you hear the 12:00.00 signal. This resets the time to 12:00.00."

Mordred was sweating. He hovered his finger over the Menu button when Otto started to whistle happily. Billy the Squib had arrived and pushed the old Chiss away from the panel. In a couple of clicks the VCR Clock was synchronized and Otto began the corrections.

"There are certain things only a child can do, Colonel." he smiled smugly.

Chief Aabatt continued to guide through the ancient controls, and once Mord was able to translate it to his acquire knowledge of fighter piloting. Now they just needed a route to escape the storm.

"Otto, do you have this?" An affirmative whistle answered Mord. "Ok, I'll go check on Zara."

Mord left the bridge and ran to the back of the ship, where Zara was supposed to be calculating a route.

Zara was doing something, alright, but Mord was not prepared for this. On the wall she had a huge target, with circles around and values attributed to the many possibilities. From the other side of the room, the Zeltan was throwing darts to the target and making a quick note on the result.

"3 parsecs, then 5.563 per 3.211... okay..."she threw another dart" Oh good to know... 4 parsecs and 1.012 per 2.90... Oh hey Colonel, I'm guessing from the lack of shaking that we are going on course?"

"We are going on minimal hyperspeed on a straight line, now it's your show."

"I guess it is. Just need to plot the latest intercept course with my plotting."

"Otto says we are heading S47.142 E32.245, zeroed on our last destination. From his calculations we are 25 parsecs out."

She ran through her notes. "Alright, so we are in this node. Let's go"

They went back to the bridge and started the maneuvers.

Meanwhile in the ISDII Conquest, Stryker was ordering the crew to get ready.

"Lit all beacons have two emergency shuttles out there if they need boarding. Main tractor array on stand-by."

At the bridge, the doctor opened the door.

"I just wanted to tell you both good luck. We are all counting on you."

But Zara and Mord barely paid him any attention.

"We drifted too much! That last anomaly! There's simply no way around!" Zara cried on the copilot seat.

"Then let's go through it!" Mord said, giving all power to the freighter hyperdrive. Lightning covered the ship, blinding their vision.

On the ISDII Conquest Bridge, Admiral Stryker talks to himself.

"It sure is quiet out there. Too quiet."

"Sir, we have a sensor return, approaching from XK291 vector 9.38 at 0.3 hyperspeed!"

"Mordred, you are coming too fast!" Stryker shouted on the comms.

In the freighter bridge, Mordred was completely covered in sweat.

"I know! I know!"

Zara took the comms.

"He knows! He Knows!"

"Otto, Zara, get ready to collapse the bubble! This gonna hurt!"

Embraced by energy, the ship broke through the anomaly.

"Kick it, now!" Zara yelled.

Mordred clicked a switch and the hyperspace tunnel collapse into the view of a planet, right in the front of a mighty Imperial Star Destroyer.

The crew erupted in cheers, the rigid Imperial decorum lost for a moment while everyone grabbed the viewports and watched the old ship drift by. Ad Stryker took over the comms with a smile on his face.

"Mord, that was probably the lousiest jump in the history of this control station. But there are some of us here... particularly me, who'd like to buy you a drink and shake your hand."

"Thank you sir." Mordred acknowledged and rejoined the others in the main hold, to help with the medical evacuations. The tractor beam pulled the Okala Blue slowly into the main hold.

At the bridge, Stryker's voice continued.

"...and, Mord, I just want you to know, that when the going got tough up there, when the chips were down...Loneliness, that's the bottom line. I was never happy as a child. Life day, Mord, what does it mean to you? For me, it was a living hell. Do you know what it's like to fall in the mud and get kicked? In the head? By an iron boot? Of course you don't. No one does. That never happens. Sorry, Mord. Dumb question. Strike that."

Finally docked, the emergency response took over and everyone was finally treated. Only Otto was left behind, skulking the now empty kitchen and erasing the due date on every meal pack he could see.

Two days Later, Mord was being debriefed by the Admiral and Captain Colo.

"So you crashed your TIE, again?" The Tempest Leader already knew all that, but hearing the recounting was always triggering for Colo, specially when Mordred was involved.

"I just drifted a bit, blame the lightning!" Mordred raised his hands in his usual defensive non-threatening position.

"Alright you two. What matters is we got our pilot back, a navigator as requested by the TCCOM and a freighter filled to the brim of escaped convicts."

"The what now?" Colo and Mordred said together.

"Apparently that location was a meeting point to many wanted criminals, in both imperial and republic space. Security is having a fit over it. So to that end, Colonel Mordred, good work. Now, Captain, you can punish him as you see fit for breaking formation."

"Wait, but..."