

Reclaiming the Past

Chapter 1: The Memory

Flipping a few switches in the cockpit of his Y-Wing, Lieutenant Commander Jaxx Nassin's comms hummed static into his ears as he began to broadcast.

"Challenge FlightCon, this is Firebird 2-1. I'm beginning final approach. Over.", Jaxx transmitted.

He let out a long yawn as he let go of the comms talk button on his flight stick. The last few weeks had been grueling. Imperial Storm, the annual war game, was currently underway across the Emperor's Hammer TIE Corps. Jaxx had spent much of the last month participating in Imperial Storm aboard one of the Infiltrator Wing's old and dusty Mon Calamari cruisers trying not to come down with a case of spore lung. Now with a bit of downtime in between the mock battles, Jaxx was able to return to the Imperial -II Class Star Destroyer *Challenge* and move what little belongings he had from his old berthing to new quarters. The reprieve was certainly not to last, though, as the Infiltrator Wing was soon to be called into action again.

A few moments passed until the static over his headset broke and a deep male voice responded, "Firebird 2-1, this is Challenge FlightCon. Please transmit your clearance code. Over"

Jaxx depressed a sequence of lighted buttons on the left-hand side of his console, and then flipped a switch to transmit the ship ID of his Y-Wing. "FlightCon, this is Firebird 2-1. Transmitting clearance code now. Over."

Thirty seconds passed, which seemed a bit longer than usual to Jaxx. Perhaps flight control was feeling just as tired as everyone else in the TIE Corps after having been pushed hard the past few weeks.

Finally, the static in his ears broke once more and the deep voice buzzed over his receiver, "Firebird 2-1, you are cleared to land in hanger bay 32. Over and out."

"Copy that, FlightCon. It's good to hear. I'll be landing shortly. Firebird 2-1 over and out."

The *Challenge* loomed overhead as Jaxx's astromech, R3-N9, beeped and whistled over the bomber's closed circuit comms channel that it had prepared the small craft for landing. In moments, Jaxx's Y-Wing passed through the hangar bay ray shields and lurched as it began pushing through the recycled atmosphere of the ship. Condensation quickly built up on the transparisteel cockpit from the temperature shift of the cold vacuum to the heated hangar. Jaxx flipped a few more switches to deploy the landing gear of his craft as the deck crew used lighted batons to direct him into the planned landing zone.

Jaxx Nassin, a member of the Emperor's Hammer TIE Corps infamous Firebird infiltrator squadron, was assigned to fly stolen New Republic craft in order to sneak behind enemy lines and disrupt the operations of the treasonous government who had supplanted the Galactic Empire as the governing body of the galaxy. This particular Y-Wing was his own personal bomber he had procured in a life before the TIE Corps.

Jaxx powered down his Y-Wing as the deck crew deployed the boarding ladder from the left-hand side of the hull. The generators formed decrescendo from a high pitched, fast whine to a lower pitched, slow thrum eventually fading into silence as they spun down. The canopy bolts released, wheezing as the exterior atmosphere mixed with the cockpit's stale atmosphere as the canopy was raised. Jaxx exited the craft, and his boots had barely struck the hard steel plating of the deck before a data pad was thrust into his view.

"Sir, if you would please ensure everything is correct.", an aged and impatient crew chief requested of the pilot. The data pad currently displayed a dulled readout of the checklist required for landing craft to ensure proper accountability of pilot and hangar crew roles. Jaxx initialed his required steps with a digital signature and handed the data pad back to the crew chief. The chief thanked the Lieutenant Commander and then proceeded to direct his hangar crew to inspect the bomber craft and initiate any maintenance items they found. Meanwhile, Jaxx went to the bomber's cargo storage and retrieved a dark grey canvas duffel bag with his call sign "Hijacker" stitched to the side. The duffel was filled to capacity with his clothing and personal affects that he had kept aboard the MC-90 *Renegade*.

Jaxx looked up at his astromech as the deck crew worked to attach the droid hoist to him, "Nines, why don't you go to the droid service bay and get a once over. It's been a while since we've been on the Challenge, and you're starting to sound a little squeaky. You can meet up with me back at my new room afterwards." R3-N9 chirped a satisfactory response and Jaxx turned on his heels to leave the hangar. It always felt odd coming back from an infiltrator deployment as Jaxx was often decked out in a New Republic orange flight suit. The anticipatory glances he would receive from the crew would often times put him on edge making him yearn for a moment to change into his Imperial Navy duty uniform.

The innards of an Imperial-II Class Star Destroyer were fairly well laid out, unlike the Mon Calamari cruisers. Turbolifts were laid out to expediently shuttle personnel between decks, and decks were laid out in a grid to necessitate maximizing the space of the ship. Navigating the maze like corridors was the most difficult part, but with a deck, quadrant, and room number, you could figure out where to be.

Jaxx made his way to the turbolift and punched in the deck number for officer row. The lift doors closed and the lift elevator rumbled and hummed as it began its ascent. The humming slowed as he approached the officer deck, and the doors slid open with a swish as the fluorescent light from the hallway overpowered the dull lighting of the elevator car. Jaxx exited the lift and began walking down the network of halls until he had finally come to face the door of his new quarters.

"8-19-A221. This is it.", whispered Jaxx to himself.

The small door whizzed open from the press of the button pad next to it, and Jaxx peered into the empty room. The lights inside were dim compared to the harsh hallway lighting, and his eyes took a few moments to adjust. Glad to not have a welcoming party, Jaxx entered the room and let the door snap shut behind him.

The room was adequately sized. Imperial-II Class Star Destroyers had to house quite a few crew members so having the space of a 50 meter squared room was a luxury few didn't have. Quarters such as these were furnished with a set of bunk beds recessed in the far wall flanked by writing desks against the opposing walls. Crew mates of these type of spaces were still expected to use communal heads, so there wasn't even a sink for shaving. Jaxx

rubbed his bearded chin, thankful that his stint in the Infiltrator Squadron afforded him the option of growing his hair out.

Throwing his duffel bag on the floor next to his new bunk, Jaxx let out a sigh of relief at having finally made his move into the new quarters. He had recently been promoted to Flight Leader of Firebird's second flight, and Flight leaders often bunked together in cabins meant for two people. His new bunkmate, Captain Travis Cook, was out on patrol currently, leaving Jaxx to relax in the tiny shared space by himself.

He approached the empty wall locker previously belonged to Commander Turel and opened it to start unpacking his belongings. Turel had opted to retire back to the Modified Frigate *Phoenix* for personal reasons. The wall locker wasn't entirely empty as a few items in it, but nothing that required dispatching a shuttle to return any lingering personal affects to Turel. A ratty pillow, some shower shoes, and...what was this? From underneath the pillow, a glimmer of glass caught Jaxx's eye. The pillow coughed out some of its fluff all over the floor as Jaxx moved it out of the way to reveal a full bottle of chalquilla.

Jaxx exclaimed to the air, "Oh, jackpot!" Picking up the bottle, he turned to his new desk.

Uncorking the bottle of the Challenge's finest, Jaxx sat heavily into his desk chair and decided to drink straight from the chalquilla bottle rather than dirty a glass. It was a relief to be out of the flight member berthing. It was nothing against his fellow squadron mates, but there was absolutely no solitude when you were racking with a dozen other people in a small space. He took a long pull off the bottle and propped his tired feet up on his new desk.

Glug.

The chalquilla was a bit stiffer than usual. The still was likely cleaned prior to this batch, meaning more impurities didn't make it into the final bottles. It was already starting to go to Jaxx's head, making the room sway slightly as he was getting lost in his thoughts.

Glug.

It was odd for him to go this long without someone playing some loud music or a squadron mate asking him a question. Jaxx was able to sit back and take in his surroundings without interruption, which allowed him to notice small details he would never have seen otherwise. His attention went to the bunk beds. Travis had already taken the bottom rack, leaving the top rack for Jaxx. It was only fair, Travis was the Firebird XO and was assigned this room long before Jaxx's promotion. The mattress was made, but the navy blue top sheet had seen better days. The top sheet was showing signs of fraying, and as the room swayed slightly from Jaxx's oncoming inebriation, thin spots could be made out showing the white flat sheet through the thinner navy blue material.

Glug.

"I'll have to get laundry to send me more blankets." Jaxx mused to himself.

Glug.

It was weird having the kind of resources available through the Emperor's Hammer. Before joining the TIE Corps, Jaxx was caught up with a group of pirates known as the Galactic

Corsairs. Jaxx had had some rough times after he washed out of the Imperial Academy, eventually falling in with the Corsairs.

Glug glug.

The Corsairs weren't all that bad, but Jaxx only had a few fond memories of his time with them. His nickname, "Hijacker", came from his time there. He was adept at cracking into critical security systems, and his fellow Corsairs ended up saying he was hijacking the system. Hence the name.

Glug

His biggest regret from his life with the Corsairs was that he lost his family's modified C-ROC *Gozanti*, the *Penultimate*. The *Penultimate* was one of the last ships built by his father Hannis before he stepped off the line and into being a supervisor. Hannis had purchased it after Corellian Engineering couldn't find a buyer for a lot of them. The Imperial Navy didn't want the C-ROC, and so the ship sat for a few years collecting dust. Eventually, Hannis conned management into letting him have one for a small margin above what it would cost to scrap it. Of course, the company stripped a bunch of parts from it before selling it at a loss.

Glug

Jaxx learned a lot about working on space freighters from his time helping his father fix up the *Pen*. A lot of good memories were welling back up.

Jaxx, hand me that spanner. No! Not that one! The other one!

Jaxx, turn the valve wheel to the left. No! Your other left!

This ship will be yours someday, son. Maybe you can get off this mudball and do something bigger and greater than what your old man could.

Jaxx was young when his father died and the *Pen* was the only thing he had left of his father.

Another deep sigh escaped Jaxx's lips as he lifted the ever lightening bottle of chalquilla to them. It had been a few years since he joined up with the Corsairs. Jaxx had modified the *Pen* so he could dock his BTL-A4 Y-Wing *Hawg* inside the hold. The Corsairs were on a hit and run attack, striking out at a New Republic convoy. Intel had said to expect minimal resistance, but apparently the New Republic hadn't gotten the memo. The New Republic escort B-Wings had managed to disable the *Pen* among a few other of the Corsair's craft and were preparing to send in drop troopers to arrest anyone they found aboard the disabled. The still functional Corsair craft had already fled the area leaving the survivors alone to face the repercussions of attacking the New Republic.

Glug

What Jaxx had to do next had haunted him ever since. He was the only crew member aboard the *Pen*. His co-pilot was a droid he had grown accustomed to, RX-73. Unfortunately, during the ion attacks on the ship, 73 had been fried since he was scopped into the *Pen*'s nav computer. Jaxx had to abandon the *Pen* or else he knew he would be spending his remaining years breaking ships at the Karthon Chop Fields. Jaxx took one last look at the

cockpit and the still smoking body of RX-73 before sprinting the short distance to docking bay where R3-N9 was already completing pre-flight aboard *Haw*.

It felt like an eternity from when he opened the bay doors to launch *Hawg* to when N9 whistled that hyperspace calculations had been completed. Jaxx took one last look over his shoulder at the *Pen* as he watched the New Republic clamp a transport to it to prepare for boarding. A moment of hesitation passed as Jaxx's hand hovered over the switches to engage the hyperdrive engine. He was debating if he should stay and fight back to save his family's legacy. The Y-Wing was rocked by a few laser bolts bouncing off the deflector shields, and Jaxx knew he had no chance. He was outgunned.

Jaxx engaged the hyperdrive and watched the stars stretching towards him. Normally, he loved watching the entry into hyperspace as it reminded him of younger better years, but this time he felt like the stretched stars were pointing backwards taunting him that the *Pen* was being left behind.

*Glug glug glug *clank**

The empty bottle clattered against the steel deck plate as Jaxx sunk deeper into his desk chair thinking about how much he missed the *Pen*. Life with the Corsairs had its ups and downs, but Jaxx could always rely on the *Pen*. It was the one constant that kept him sane while living life from one convoy attack to the next. It was a reminder of where he came from and what his family had done for him.

He had tried to find the *Pen* following the years after. It was a modified C-ROC after all. Those were worth something to the right people! But no matter where he looked, Jaxx just couldn't find her. He begged the Corsair boss, a large Rodian by the name of Olsaa Zteevi, to help him.

Olsaa, imagine it! If we find the Pen, we'd have one of the best Gozantis in the galaxy on our side again! She's always served us well, and you know she'd continue to produce if we got her back. Here's the old registry code, you've gotta know someone who can find her!

Jaxx... We don't need that cheap Gozanti to keep making money. We did fine before you brought her to us, and we'll do fine without her. Besides, she's a hot impound with the New Republic. It'd cost too much to track her down, and you'd be paying that debt off into the next life. Let her go.

"Dat damned, one eyed, shcaley...poor excushe for a...", slurred Jaxx at the empty bottle on the floor. Olsaa had the contacts to track wiped registries, but it wasn't sound business to go on a 'wild shyyyo chase' as Olsaa had once put it.

Jaxx dangled his arm over the side of the chair, grasping at the air over the empty bottle. He mumbled to himself, "After errythin' I done fer the Corshairs, that bastard Olsaa couldn' bother ta help me."

Feeling the chalquilla fuel the fiery inner rage building up in the pit of his stomach, Jaxx wanted to watch the bottle shatter on the far wall as a form of catharsis to help calm his mind. He couldn't reach the bottle while sitting in the chair as his fingers were a few inches from grasping the cold glass. As he strained to reach for the bottle, his chair began to tilt onto its wheels. Feeling his fingers finally touch the object he desperately wanted to smash, he found he had leaned too far. The room wafted and spun around him as his chair came out

from under him, and he landed on the cold metal floor with a loud thud. The bottle spun and raced away from him across the small room.

Jaxx let out a soft groan following the rough landing.

He laid on his back for a few moments staring at the ceiling as his brain slowly computed how he arrived on the cold deck and how he could hopefully make it into the top rack. Travis wasn't due back from patrol for a few hours. Jaxx figured he could sleep off the chalquilla in the lower bunk before getting a rude awakening for being in the wrong bed.

Grabbing the edge of the writing desk, Jaxx managed to pull himself up and slowly stumble his way to Travis' bunk, nearly colliding with the wall beside it as the whole room spun around him. As he collapsed onto the semi soft bedding, his mind began to wander back to the *Penultimate*. Someone onboard the *Challenge* could surely help.

"Those mechanics...always fix me up. Where dey getting' the stuff?". The thought rung in Jaxx's ears as he tried to think about where the TIE Corps was requisitioning parts.

Rolling over and putting his face square up to the wall of the bunk, Jaxx decided he would pay a trip to the mechanic bay soon and ask for a few favors. Memories of the *Penultimate* whirled in his head as he slowly dozed off into a chalquilla induced slumber.