

Admiral Zekk's Rainbow TIE

Lieutenant Aardvark lay sleepless in his bunk. There is little downtime for TIE pilots, especially the new ones who are expected to fly the bulk of the routine patrol missions. Not enough combat missions for his taste but when there is an opportunity for combat, it's exhilarating. That made it hard to wind down but when sleep came, it was a blessing. No such luck now - the pilot's thoughts turned from patrols and reports to other things - a new Commodore was on board. In the tumultuous years following the treachery of the rebels at Endor and the loss of our beloved Emperor (long may he reign in our memories), changes of command were frequent, but this new Admiral's arrival caused quite a stir on *The Warrior*. For one thing, rumor had it has a family and even brought them on board the ship. Perks of the job, thought Aardvark, though he also wondered whether that was wise. Other than his squadron mates, Aardvark didn't have a family but if he did, he questioned whether a warship was the proper place for non-combatants. Still, an Imperial Admiral is a prime target for assassination or kidnapping attempts and that extends to the Admiral's family. They might be safer on board, after all.

As a rookie, Aardvark spent most of his time dodging the brass, but Admiral Zekk was tough to avoid. For one thing, he's got a Wookiee that follows him around – rumor of a life debt. What's more is that the Commodore seemed to be everywhere and even struck up conversations with the pilots, revealing that he has a sense of humor. However, naval traditions are etched in stone and there is a long-standing tradition to make pranks on new transfers. This usually doesn't extend to Admirals, but Aardvark thought this Admiral might be one to let it slide. Or if he didn't, maybe the punishment wouldn't be too harsh. What's the worst that could happen? Extra patrols? Of course, the Wookiee might tear him limb from limb, but even that might be worth it. The thought of bringing glory to Kappa Squadron by pranking an Admiral made Aardvark almost as excited as lining up for the kill shot on a rebel X-wing.

The young Lieutenant knew that the Admiral kept sharp by personally flying combat missions and frequently took a TIE out to see the battle group up close. Lieutenant Aardvark often played cards with some of the maintenance crews and once, even slipped them some contraband bitterfruit liquor that his patrol “liberated” from a smuggler that they took into custody. While it's just you alone in the cockpit, a pilot's life depends on the maintenance crews. You don't want them cutting any corners so it pays to keep in their good graces. And those gifts and favors can pay off in other ways, too. This job was going to require a little bit of assistance.

In case emergency repairs are needed, a TIE pilot is expected to know the inner workings of his craft and keep sharp by performing routine maintenance. Therefore, it isn't unusual to see a pilot working on a fighter. Since the Admiral's personal craft wasn't yet aboard *The Warrior*, a quick glance at the upcoming flight schedule told Aardvark just which fighter needed some “extra attention”.

Making his way to the hanger, Aardvark enlisted the aid of some of the more trustworthy and daring techs and made his way to the TIE that Admiral Zekk was due to take out on his next flight. After filling in his co-conspirators on the plan and plenty of assurances that Aardvark would accept full responsibility for any fallout, the techs agreed to help. It also took a promise of another case of “donated” contraband liquor. A quick tweak of the thruster nozzles and an adjustment of the flow

parameters was all that was needed. Once the Admiral left the hanger, after the first roll input, the ionized particles that controlled the fighter's attitude would begin shining like a rainbow over Radhii and leaving a streaming trail of color in the fighter's wake. Aardvark chuckled to himself, "This will be great!" And he also thought, "I hope the Wookiee also has a sense of humor."

