

Lost and Found

*-*deep space/3 lightyears from ***redacted*** system*-*

The assault transport's interior was dark, only a single red light illuminated the robed figures in its hold. Anahorn Dempsey squinted her eyes and let her force enhanced senses engulf the dim hold. In a split second, the situation was illuminated to her in ways that non-Force-sensitives could never hope to understand. Ten moods were virtually visible to her, and guarded whispers flowed into her mind from the nervous minds of the fresh members of Stingray Battleteam. The BTL worked hard to radiated a feeling of confidence and certainty, though Dempsey could feel the effort behind it. The novices were extraordinary nervous, which was not unexpected, but everyone shared that special sense of purpose. With a surprisingly loud rasp the COM console at the far bulkhead came to life. "Thirty seconds!", proclaimed the quiet voice of a professional pilot. This was enough to send a physical and Force visible ripple through the cavernous darkness. Waiting was behind them, the action was only seconds away. Planning had been thorough, the mission clear, after all it was about one of them. With an unmistakable *clang* the assault transport slammed into the targets side. A second later the automated breaching torches started, burning through the bolts of the airlock in just a few breaths time. An enormous *hiss* and the assault door opened, the artificial light of a space station began filling the hold. Simultaneously multiple lightsabers ignited, as a single creature, similar to the leap of an ancient predator, Stingray Battleteam of the Dark Brotherhood assaulted. Right into the opening, and right into heavy repeating blaster fire. With a grunt the Battleteam Leader fell in a shower of sparks. 'This was not how it was supposed to go...' Dempsey thought as she went through the burned airlock, her lightsaber spinning.

*-*deep space/37 lightyears from ***redacted*** system/ three days ago*-*

After the mocking over the COM had stopped, it took only a few ion cannon hits to disable the shuttle, despite the best manoeuvring efforts. Through the cockpit windows the crew and Admiral Pellaeon watched an unmarked cruiser closing the distance, while on the fringes of their field of view the form of a, positively ancient, CC-2000 Detainer kept it's gravity well generators running. The lurch of multiple tractor beams send the disabled shuttle moving into the capital ship's hangar bay. There was only so much Pell could do. He drew his lightsaber and took a position next the shuttle's main entry door. The pilot and co-pilot drew their blaster pistols, one taking a position to cover the admiral, the other waited in the cockpit. With a loud *screech* the shuttle as lowered onto the hangar deck. Moments later the lightning shower of breaching torches started at the airlock. The door opened and figures in dark blue combat armour started entering the shuttle. The first few dropped in moments, hit by precise lightsaber strikes and blaster fire. Fleet admiral Pellaeon would never know, if it was the fifth or sixth trooper that got him good with the full charge of a stun blaster. 'This was not how it was supposed to go...' Pell thought as his senses dwindled.

*-*ISD II Hammer/outer reaches of Emperor's Hammer territory/ two days ago*-*

Admiral Miles Prower was not amused. And he had clearly shown that to his squadron commanders and their XOs. The Fleet Admiral had vanished without a trace, and even though it had not been his responsibility to provide an escort for the TCCOM he had received the same wrath as Admiral Plif. The holo conference with Fleet Commander had been short and very unpleasant. The ongoing intelligence briefing in the Hammer's CIC was also not going to his liking. Miles chugged his fifth cup of tea, and squinted his eyes at another PAD with another meaningless piece of Security Directorate guesswork. The position of the involuntary pick up (he refused to call it a kidnapping, because seriously?!?), had been pinpointed with reasonable accuracy, the report claimed. A quick look into the appendix revealed a bubble of *only* about one and half parsec uncertainty. The PAD flew to the ground, followed by an empty tea cup and seconds later the remaining reports. Silence filled the room

as everyone was expecting a decision, another cursing or at least something. "We need to look at this from another angle.", the Admiral proclaimed, thinking hard. "Fleet Admiral Pellaeon was not only our CO, but also a Sith warrior." He looked up searching the room. "General Dempsey, weren't you in the Admiral's Battleteam? And General Clark, weren't you as well?" Something about those two names had nested in his head. Dempsey jumped to attention, her lightsaber clearly showing, while Clark stood slowly lifting his arm in apology: "It's my nephew, actually, I'm as force sensitive as a mynock." Miles frown was clearly visible: 'This was not how the plan was supposed to go...'

- unmarked mining base close to Dark Brotherhood grounds/ one and a half days ago*-*

Protector J. Timothy Clark was nervous, and tried hard to not show anyone. This was the final training mission before Stingray Battleteam was to be declared fully operations capable. And training was very relative in the Dark Brotherhood. Surely the pirate base wasn't very big but Tim had already silently killed multiple guards. Standing in front of the main reactor compartment, he let the Force engulf him, searching for lifeforms behind the massive door. Several flickers of thoughts brushed his mind, Clark counted at least five different lifeforms. This was the end of the silent entry phase of the operation, a last steadying breath and he swiftly cut an opening into thirty centimetres of steel. The first technician was exactly where the Protector was expecting him, he had been closest to the door and had closed the small distance, alerted by the noise accompanying Clark's entry. A quick lunge with the lightsaber and the man fell, unfortunately he managed to scream his garbled dying breath into his open COM channel. Somewhere nearby an unnerving alarm klaxon started to ring. The infiltrator ignored it as best as he could, when he continued his way into the room, quickly Force pushing two more guards and another technician from the four story high working platform. He reached the reactor's control panel in a few strides, and stopped aghast. The system has been obviously jury rigged for increased power output, no way he could insert the cascading virus that had been crafted by one of the DB's best slicers. Timothy took a moment to inspect the system's controls and then made his decision. A couple of button smashes and even more, but different klaxons started to go off. With a small flick he disconnect the control system from the reactor proper, turned around and started running towards the exit. "Thirty seconds to catastrophic reactor meltdown." A friendly computer generated voice announced as he reached the main connector of the Asteroid base. Clark checked his chronograph and made some calculations in his head. 'No way I can reach the pickup point in time.' Pushing his COM he walked up to the nearest door: "Pick me up outside the south airlock, and quick please." Exhaling as deeply as possible he entered the airlock and punched in the emergency override. With a mighty gust of wind Protector Clark was sucked out of the station: 'This was not how it was supposed to go...'

- deep space/3 lightyears from **redacted** system/one day ago*-*

Fleet Admiral Pellaeon slowly opened an eye, he pretended to himself that he did it slowly not because of his splitting headache, but because he didn't want to give away his regained consciousness. "Good morning again, Admiral." the now too familiar voice crackled over the nearby COM. His plan spoiled Pell fully opened his eyes, just to again not see the helmet covered faces of the two armored figures standing guards on his tiny cell. "Have you slept over yesterday's decision not to give me any information about Emperor's Hammer fleet operations?", the disembodied voice asked, a barely recognisable hint of mockery flavouring the question.

The Admiral answered the same as the last time: "You have absolutely no chance to get anything out of me, until I see your face.", Pellaeon straightened himself and stood up, facing the door, "And even then, I doubt we'll be coming to a mutually beneficial agreement." His captor spoke again, this time a mixture of annoyance and childlike glee, "Well then, I've prepared another day of excitement for us."

In the bowels of the Starbase, Indras Vonhooven, deactivated his dedicated COM line to the prisoner and opened another to his personal assistant: "He's still being stubborn, prepare the electrical

chamber for noon. Have the interrogation droids give him a double session before that. And make it quick, Darlene.”

Vonhoooven turned in his chair and checked the chronograph. It's been more than 48 hours and he hadn't got a single piece of information. His employers would not look kindly on failure, though admittedly his own spies had informed him, that earlier 'price of failure' had always been paid to the Emperor's Hammer and not those shadowy *Council*.

He would definitely not be taken by those, he swore to himself. The small base was well hidden, but he had no illusions that a thorough search would not reveal the position. A flick on his write mounted PDA and he entered his decision: 24 more hours starting now. If he couldn't make a breakthrough in that time he could at least present the head of an Imperial Fleet Admiral, though, of course, this wasn't how it was supposed to go...

*-*ISD II Hammer/outer reaches of Emperor's Hammer territory/ six hours ago*-*

The plan was out of the box, and surely took some time. Miles Prower came back to the *Hammer's* CIC after a six hour rest. The Dark Brotherhood had been eager to provide assistance, after all Fleet Admiral Pellaeon was a high ranking member of this organisation as well. As his Commodore filled him in on the recent developments, he took a fresh cup of tea and sat at his chair, right opposite the situation board. A path, interrupted by several dozen stops had been laid along the route Pell had taken three days ago. A Carrick class cruiser was ferrying Stingray Battleteam of the DB along this route. At every step the Sith would work to join themselves together, using the Force to find their lost Battlebrother. Eighteen out of twenty-five steps had been made, and so far without any results. Just as the Admiral started pondering whether the plan had been good enough, one of the Communications officers stepped forward and came to quick attention. “We've just received a report, that there was apparently some contact made by our search party, they have decided to divert from the current course to follow up on this.” The man handed his CO a PAD and returned to his position. Miles flicked through the details and made a decision. “This firming up should not take more than three hours.” he rechecked the map display, “Prepare a jump to this system, it should bring us close enough to any possible prison location. And have the ship on general quarters in two hours.” This was exactly how the plan was supposed to go.

*-*Dark Brotherhood Carrick class/6 lightyears from **redacted** system/three hours ago*-*

Timothy Clark exhaled sharply and braced himself on the nearby Anahorn Dempsey. The telepathic effort was exhausting, but finally they had made a split second contact with their missing friend. But this was all that was needed. Dempsey, as the resident TIE Corps officer, made the necessary modifications to the star map and the pieces started to fall into place. Apparently there was a star base out there, hugging the outer asteroid belt of a nearby star system.

And the contact had shown something else, Pellaeon was in enormous pain. Whatever the kidnapers were doing, it was not in the slightest pleasant. PRC Clark walked up to Dempsey, using a towel to dry the sweat from his brows. “So we've found him, what's next?” Anahorn smiled inwardly, it was a good sign for a fresh commanding officer to ask advice from more experienced members.

“Technically we have not found Pell, yet.” Dempsey replied, “The *Hammer* will send out their reconnaissance squadron, who will firm up the information. Then we'll hit them fast and hard.” She smiled, this time visibly, “Whoever is sitting in that star base, they will not expect a Dark Brotherhood Battleteam and an Imperial Star Destroyer to hit them.” Surely they would believe in the secrecy of their hideout and would not expect such firepower. This was exactly how the plan was supposed to work.

*-*deep space/3 lightyears from **redacted** system/half an hour ago*-*

General John T. Clark pulled his TIE Phantom into a tight loop and started firing again. A flash of green laser fire and another of the dozens of space mines around the small asteroid base expanded into a bright cloud of melted ceramics and metal.

"Still no enemy fighters!", Colonel Phoenix Berkana announced over the squadron COM. With Dempsey at her DB Battleteam, Delta Squadron was down to two certified Phantom pilots. Not that it mattered so far. The dense minefield protecting the base would be a deadly hazard to any other fighter. But the primitive targeting sensors had no chance to lock onto the cloaked Phantoms. Initial reconnaissance had not shown much. They were in deep space, so far beyond the system's asteroids field, that they weren't even in the system anymore. The decision making from the *Hammer* had been swift: clear a path through the minefield and hold for reinforcements. Clark's RWR receiver squeezed for a split second, when another laser blast immolated another mine. Then another receiver informed him of an incoming IFF signal, the *Hammer* was here.

Vonhooven checked his info screens with a frown on his face. As expected the Emperor's Hammer had eventually turned up, but his minefield was being depleted faster than expected. He made a few mental calculations and then hit the station wide COM: "Everyone general quarters, make sure to follow defensive protocol." he grabbed something out of his desk and stood. Time to tie up the loose ends.

Miles Prower's bridge crew was working in full concentration, giving out or following pre-approved orders and procedures. With a smile the admiral recognized the timings of the squadron launches. Everyone but the Assault Transports had beaten their last training time, and with one transport filled with a Sith Battleteam that was not unexpected. "Opposition minimal, Sir." announced the Commodore, "As usual Delta's intelligence was impeccable." With a nod Prower turned back to the bridge windows and watched the ballet advancing towards the enemy base. This was exactly how the plan was supposed to work.

*-*deep space/3 lightyears from **redacted** system*-*

Protector Clark came to his feet again, and found himself on a field of carnage. Charred body parts and splintered remains of blasters filled the hallway. He looked down and found three smoldering holes in his armoured breastplate. 'Dempsey had been right about that one', he thought before speaking: "It does not really seem that they did not expect our firepower." His torso hurt with every word, not to mention every breath. He moved through the hall towards his assembled team, everyone had a blaster burn or other detail of combat. Novice Alderic turned to address his BTL: "I've sliced the system for the station's layout and recent orders. Pellaeon must be here!" He pointed at the screen. "Then let's get there as fast as possible!"

Stingray passed through several hallways, trying to combine stealth and speed. To their surprise they did not encounter any more opposition forces on their way deeper into the station. Finally they reached the door to the 'interrogation chambers'. Fearing the worst they assembled around the door and prepared to breach. With a *hiss* the door opened, behind it stood a stern figure just wearing underwear. Electric burns covered Fleet Admiral Pellaeon's upper body. Over his shoulder lay an unconscious figure. "It's about time you came!", Pell exclaimed tiredly, "I've taken whoever is responsible for this station in custody for you." The Dark Side Primarch clapped the shoulder of his former apprentice and new BTL. "I've had to wait until the boss revealed himself."; he flashed a smile as he entered the hallway, "Thus, I had to wait until you found me. That's exactly how the plan was supposed to work!"

THE END (?)

by GN John T. Clark/Delta 1-2/Wing I/ISDII Hammer