

Recovery

31 ABY

Morale? Welfare? Recreation? In the aftermath of what turned into an existential operation against a buggish hive consciousness, where our fleets now stand torn apart, and it is ‘all hands on all decks’ to keep our ships from falling apart? *That’s quite the tall order*, I thought to myself.

My boss handed me a datapad, his white gloved hands left no marks on the pristine screen. “It’s quite the tall order,” he said. “Bold, even. But I have faith in you.”

“You do, sir?” Words of praise were seldom from him.

“No.” My fledgling smile evaporated. “I have faith you know there are plenty of your subordinates who want your position.”

I sighed. “Well said, sir.”

He nodded. “I know.” He gestured towards his office door. “All the details are on the pad.”

Taking it as the dismissal it was, I saluted my way out the door and into the hallway. His hallway was remarkably unlike the others in the ship, I noticed. No crew were fixing panels, no residual sparking, no patchwork. Either his area remained miraculously spared from the near-universal damage of the ship, or it had been prioritized. I stared for a moment, thinking, before moving on. A shuttle awaited me in the nearby hangar.

Halfway through my walk a MSE droid came careening down the hallway, screeching and beeping prolifically on its seemingly-drunken swervings. I stood out of the way quickly, fearing a broken foot if the droid was as strugglesome as it appeared, but it slowed to a stop in front of me. I stepped off of the wall where I had pressed myself.

“What do you want, tiny?” I asked, not entirely impolitely but entirely uncurious.

It beeped indignantly. I’d assume it was affronted if it had had a logic circuit. It uncovered the tray on its top and presented the message for me. I bent down, picking it up, and unlocked the message with my code cylinder. Tucking it back into my breast pocket, I keyed the holotransmitter to play the message.

A tiny version of my boss appeared. With no pause, no greeting, he began to talk.

“I forgot to tell you. Start with the *Warrior*.”

The message ended, and the tiny boss retracted.

I would roll my eyes if anyone were around to see it, but instead I nodded in deference to the now-disappeared boss. The droid wriggled anxiously, beeping more, trying to communicate something.

“Sorry, tiny. I don’t speak Binary.”

The droid couldn’t have been more frustrated. It shuddered, rocking on alternating pairs of wheels, and turned to continue down the hall. It somehow, without a head or a neck or shoulders, looked over its shoulders expectantly. It was somehow endearing.

“I know where the hangar is, tiny,” I said, conjuring what patience I had. It beeped and rolled off slowly, waiting on me to follow. I sighed, obliged, and walked behind it.

Even at its slower speed, it swerved, and I, desperate for entertainment in the face of the daunting task, followed precisely.

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My new friend, now officially dubbed Tiny, and I wound our way through the halls and into the hangar. A Lambda shuttle waited, the pilot seated on the outstretched ramp. He, upon seeing us, slunk into the cockpit, his wide head bending low. He was clearly not pleased about the assignment.

Tiny and I were left alone before the ship. “Well, I guess this is goodbye, huh?”

Beep.

“I’m glad to have met you, Tiny.”

Whistles.

“Good luck.”

An inquisitive twirl and whoop.

I guessed. “With whatever you do next.”

A sad boop.

I guessed again. “One day, Tiny. One day.”

If a droid could sadly walk away from a goodbye, I witnessed it then. As forlornly as a black rectangle could retreat, Tiny retreated, off to deliver another message, and hopefully to make a new friend.

In the cockpit, the Ithorian pilot grumbled. His translator hung around his neck spat out in a mechanized, and decidedly not as intimidating manner, "I'm not pleased about this assignment."

I ignored him and sat in the passenger seat farthest from him. Nothing irritated me more than a chatty hovercab driver, and this wasn't far from that.

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The pilot quickly picked up my social cue, and said nothing. The short flight to the *Warrior* was therefore easy. I spent the time thinking of any strategy I could to attack the problem head-on. *This is going to be quite a problem*, I thought.

"This is quite a problem," the fellow in charge of the recovery told me as we walked through the ship. "I think it's best we attack this problem head-on." I hadn't caught his name, and didn't think it would be necessary.

The *Warrior* had been one of the few ISDs that began the Ishtari campaign that didn't have to end its usefulness with an early trip back to Tusorix. Thus, it was in the worst shape. Walking through I saw gunnery crew with welding torches; I saw exhausted pilots holding panels in place while their friends scrambled to find the proper size Harris wrench or pilex driver; I saw droids and servicemen alike all working together, a beautiful scene of camaraderie and a unified force.

And they all hated it. The urgency and proximity of the danger had shaken most of them, and their post-stressor activity was repairing.

I turned to my nameless compatriot. "Do they have a common room? A center for relaxation out of their bunkrooms?"

He chuckled. "We call that a 'bar' here." I didn't find that too funny. He knew what I had meant.

The bar turned out to be the mess hall. Or, rather, the mess hall turned out to be the bar. It was rather confusing to me, and most decidedly out of regulation. Nothing better to increase moral, welfare, and recreation.

The black partition curtain was ripped, the tables haphazard. The cordoned bar area was in great shape by any metric, but the surroundings were not to the same standard. It felt unbalanced, chaotic, and in no way restorative. As I had predicted.

"Are all of the main systems and critical functions of the ship repaired?" I asked my companion, after a hefty amount of pondering and contemplation at the empty room.

"Almost." He sighed violently. "There is still one section without power."

I quickly pondered and contemplated more. "Let's stop all of the cosmetic fixes. Move the good engineers to that sector if they aren't already, and pull all the pilots and crew back to their normal duties. Simple."

"Simple?"

"Yes. Get a few of them to fix this place up a bit, and give them all a couple days off."

The man sighed again, just as loud as the first. "Of course morale will increase when nobody is doing any work and spending all their time at the bar. We've got a ship to fix."

"Have faith. And, anyway, that's a different problem. This problem comes first."

The man sighed once more. He seemed to always be in excess of oxygen, and was determined to expunge it from his body as deafeningly as possible. He pulled out a datapad and tapped some buttons. "Have it your way. What to do about the ship, though?"

I adopted my most reassuring countenance. "We'll figure that out, good sir. I've already got a plan forming, and I'll have your ship up and running and beautiful in no time."

He nodded and left, sparing me a fourth ground-shaking exhale.

I had no plan, in fact. One day at a time.