

FM/LT Alexandre “ossusplayz” Morgan/Rho 2-4/Wing II/ISDII Warrior

Respite Interrupted

The bar was filled with pilots of Wing II of the ISDII *Warrior*; the only fighter wing currently stationed aboard it. Half of Rho Squadron, wearing flight suits, sat in a corner around a table, relaxed and re-energizing. Forgotten were the days of dreary monotony, cooped up in an ever-running fleet: all that mattered now was the complete heaven Tusorix was to the pilots, and how they could stretch out the hours of paradise that would inevitably come to an end. At least that’s how I felt.

With me in the corner was our outstanding squadron commander, Captain Adom Wietu, his Pantoran skin bluer than ever; the legendary FamePlane, his experience and skill renowned throughout the entire First Recon Division; the ever-loyal Westric Davalorn, who defected to this faction just to keep fighting the Rebels; the Balosar Vapinvanman, always dedicated to his friends; and the Major. That’s what we called Taz, because there was not much else to say about him. He was guarded about his past, never divulging details.

My name is Alexandre Morgan, Rho Eight, proudest pilot of the *Warrior*; nicknamed “Ossus.” I don’t know why I got that name, never even been to Ossus, but however I got it, it’s me. I haven’t served for as long as some other pilots, but none were as glad to be here as me, ‘here’ in both the sense of the TIE Corps and the sense of Tusorix. The prolonged voyage across the Rim had affected me more than the rest of these men. My thirst for vengeance was, for the

most part, impossible to fulfill, and it would seem like it was the same here, too. At least there was beautiful scenery here, stunning vistas of magnificent mountain ranges.

I tuned back into the conversation, breaking out of my personal tangent. They were debating over the best alcoholic beverage that was served here, although I don't drink so a lot of their loudly asserted arguments were lost on me. I do find it ironic how much time I spent in cantinas nowadays, and how every time I order some water. If you simply looked at the amount of time I spent in these places, you would think I was a drunk.

Having no interest in the current conversation, I turned inwards again. It had been months since I killed my last Rebel. My tally, even though I was relatively fresh, was high, but not high enough. It would never be enough, really. Nothing could pay back the wounds they inflicted on me. My wife, my son, my parents, all killed by the Rebels. No amount of Rebel blood could sate my cold rage, no tally marks on my TIE/in could ever satisfy the void they created. But I try anyway. They create formidable foes for themselves when they kill, and I intend that they continue to learn firsthand just how formidable I am.

But there were no Rebels on Tusorix. There were only the rolling mountains, calm beaches, and relaxing heroes of the Empire. But for me, this shore leave was not relaxing. My days, while not as physically restricting as the ISD, were restricting nonetheless: there was nothing to explode, no A-Wings to hunt, no chance to avenge my family. But this time would inevitably come to an end. Nobody else seemed to want it except me, and it seemed nobody else's rage burned as fiercely as mine. If everyone had been hurt like me, had their loved ones taken while you watched, we would not be running from the Rebels, we would be heading straight for them, our ISDs splitting through their ranks like knives through butter, our TIEs

tearing their ships apart, plunging our way out of the Rim and purging the galaxy of scum. But no, we're hiding on a paradise planet.

“Morgan? You there?” My reverie broken, I looked up. They were staring at me, and Vapinvanman asked again. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah, just... just reminiscing.” A truth, in one sense of it.

“Alright, if you say so.” He turned back to the others. “As I was saying, this is the best Ryll beer I've ever had.”

I let out an enormous sigh, one born of both boredom and exasperation at the persistence of this topic, and at that moment, hell broke loose.

Everyone in the cantina was a pilot, and we all had comms. In case of severe emergencies, we all get a loud ping to ensure everyone is aware that we're needed. The Squadrons Commanders get a call, detailing what exactly what needs to happen, and they pass the word along to us.

All our chimes pinged in that moment, the sound deafening, and calls began to come through. Wietu listened for a moment, then got up.

“Rho, let's go. Incoming unidentified craft up in the vac. They want everyone up there.” We all jumped up, joined by all the other squadrons there. “Get to your craft and get up!” he cried.

Luckily, my TIE was close by, in a landing field only a couple hundred meters away. Davalorn's and FamePlane's crafts were also near mine. I sprinted out of the cantina and into the

road, Davalorn and FamePlane right behind me. At this time of night not many citizens were out, and those still awake quickly got out of the way. I ran up to the gate, showed my ID to the guard, and ran up to my ship.

Every time I see my ship, *Octavian*, I am overwhelmed with gratitude, for it is the instrument through which I deliver my justice. Four aggressive wings bookend the spherical cockpit, tally marks on the side. There were currently 260 marks etched into the exterior of the cockpit, each for a confirmed kill since I joined the Corps. I was running out of space on that side of the cockpit, but there was still the whole rest of the ship to fill up. Hopefully this would be a chance to make more progress.

I climbed up the ship and jumped down into the seat, tugging my helmet on and attaching it to my suit. With a couple buttons, a flip of a switch, and a slider pushed to max, my ship turned on. The repulsors hummed, and I took off. I gained a couple meters of altitude, Davalorn and FamePlane beside me, and once I reached the appropriate elevation, I let the throttle loose. The engine screamed its familiar howl, a death sentence for those at whom I train my laser cannons. Comms and radar came online. I could see Davalorn and FamePlane to my sides and slightly behind and the chatter began to sound. Commanders began calling out orders, and ships began to report in. I gave my obligatory “Rho Eight, reporting in,” and commands began rolling out. I didn’t bother to check the comms readout, so I had no clue who was talking, but it didn’t matter as long as they were telling me where the enemies were.

“All pilots, we’ve got a fleet inbound. They’ve already launched fighters, four squadrons of X-Wings and four of A-Wings. Get into formation and hold near our Destroyers until they arrive.”

My blood quickened. Rebels? Here? So there would be a chance to earn more tally marks on the ship. Rho gathered together, a cloud of daggers ready to spit fire.

“Thirty seconds until contact!” the comm said.

Wietu opened his comms on our squadron’s channel. “Rho, show them who’s the best squadron here. We know it, let’s prove it. For the Empire!”

“Long may it reign.”

And then they were upon us.