

Musings of an Astromech Droid

Colonel Stryker, Firebird Squadron

The black and yellow Astromech designated R6-D14, also known as Sparky, rolled through the hangar conducting his customary inspection of Firebird Squadron's craft; the technicians on the Challenge were competent for biologicals, but only a droid could really tell when a ship had been properly maintained and configured. Since Sparky's master was the Squadron Commander, it was up to him to make that check - and keep the more unruly of Firebird's complement of Astromechs in line.

The Y-Wing designated Firebird Nine, assigned to Lieutenant Commander Cook and his droid C2-B5 (who, despite the designation, was from the R2-series of Astromechs), was next on the list; it was a difficult craft to interface with, the nonstandard Rotary Laser Cannon and the accompanying software had altered the programming to the point where the ship was rather...odd...

Still, that particular ship was easier to get along with than Firebird One - the X-Wing and Sparky had been paired for years, having rolled off the production lines and into Infiltrator Wing hands at about the same time Sparky had been assembled. The ship had been endlessly tinkered with by its pilot, and it too had developed its own...idiosyncracies. Biologicals often failed to understand such things, but they were limited by their inefficient organic brains.

Still, so long as they did their part and brought their ships (and Astromech partners) back in one piece, one can overlook those limitations...

Sparky hooted joyfully to a passing tech, who gave him a respectful nod; outside of the pilots, only the Hangar 5 technicians treated the squadron Astromechs as anything other than equipment, they knew the worth of the stocky little droids and how more than once their own fallacies had been spotted and corrected before something warranting disciplinary action had occurred. In return, the Astromechs benefitted from more personal attention when it came to upgrades and refits, and the odd personalised oil bath was always appreciated!

Exiting the hangar, Sparky meandered down the endlessly dull corridors; everything was so sterile and orderly, which, to a Protocol Droid, might seem perfect. Sparky, however, missed the Redemption and would often gather with the other veteran droids in the unit and reminisce over the gracefully curved corridors of the captured Mon Calamari cruisers they had been assigned to, and the differences in demeanour among the crews. Aboard Infiltrator Wing cruisers, Droids had been part of the crew; aboard the Challenge they were just a collection of parts conducting duties that would, on any other Imperial vessel, be allocated to Mouse Droids.

Still, being considered a second-class citizen even among droids was better than the alternative; he and his master were flying again, not simply from system-to-system while journeying through the cosmos, but in combat – like he had been built for. Plus, what Astromech **didn't** know the story of Tonin, King of the Droids? The Rebel droid, now presumably destroyed along with his pilot, the traitor Gara Petothel, had fought with Wraith Squadron and then commandeered an army of the tiny Mouse Droids and aided in the ultimate defeat of the Super Star Destroyer Iron Fist. Droids like Tonin and R2-D2, while on the wrong side of the war in Sparky's opinion, were heroes to Astromechs galaxy-wide; even repeated memory wipes were unable to fully erase that hero-worship, and

Infiltrator Wing droids were remarkably resistant to memory wipes ordered by anyone other than their owners – they represented the renegade arm of the Emperor’s Hammer, and like their pilots, did not kowtow to rank plaques just because it was expected of them. R5-D7 had made a case for the Challenge’s Commodore, having been ‘appropriated’ by the High Admiral when she had ventured out into the abyss alone for over a week, for a biological she knew her stuff, it was said. Dempsey was not of the Infiltrator Wing, she was far too professional for that, but she would do.

Rolling through the doors to his master’s Quarters, Sparky did a quick scan and showed that he was not home; he was likely in the Mess Hall or attending a meeting with other Squadron Commanders. That suited the little Droid, it meant he could get some uninterrupted charging time and maybe, just maybe, he could figure out a way to get his master a female companion – he’d often said command was lonely, and even a Droid fresh off the assembly line could tell that a partner would do him the world of good.

Perhaps Lieutenant Colonel Denys?

With that thought in mind, Sparky rolled into his charging socket and powered down all but the systems he would need to complete his task; it was time to add ‘matchmaker’ to his list of skills, and for that, he was first going to need an education in Human sexuality and courting rituals – and hoped it wasn’t as inefficient and disgusting as several of his fellow Droids had said...

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