**Begin Log: T5B5M2 - Stocked, Locked , and Ready to Rock!**

***Taan “Hawk” Ronar: Flight 5.1, Main P.O.V.***

The dreams were more vivid now, as if they were building up to something. Waking up from the latest one, Taan couldn't shake the feeling it had left him with. He was sure they had a message inside.

But what?

If this last dream was anything to go by, Taan didn't relish flying this mission. He sighed, reached for his journal and began recording.

"Journal entry of Taan Ronar.” He paused. “Hopefully not the last one.”

“I had yet another one of those dreams last night.” He continued. “This one was the most intense yet, and the ending scared me. I was fighting another hooded figure, but this time he never revealed himself. The evil around him was so strong he almost created a darkness around himself. So it couldn't have been me. What scares me most, though, is what happened just before I woke up. My lightsaber got knocked out of my hand, and I was thrown to the ground. The hooded Sith ‑ I guess it was a Sith ‑ laughed mercilessly and swung just as I woke up.”

"Is this my fate? To die, unarmed and disabled? Considering our options with the Star Hammer, I'm afraid there's a real possibility there. Make no mistake, though, I don't intend to die for my cause. I intend to make those Imps die for theirs."

‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑

"Flight Five, check in."

"Flight Five Leader, I'm green and good to go." Taan breathed deeply and tried to calm himself. *This is just a training exercise, the fate of the galaxy does not rest solely on this mission...ah, who am I kidding.* "Vender, man..."

*Don't tell me. You've got a bad feeling about this?*

"You know me too well." Taan chuckled. "Good luck out there."

"Five Two! Report in!" Jila said, probably for the second time.

Taan turned his head to see Tacomah with his eyes closed in the adjacent Gunboat. "TACOMAH!"

Tac's eyes flew open and he sat bolt upright. *HERE! On line and green!*

“Good to hear, pal. Stay awake out there, I'm going to need you."

*Don't worry Taan, I just had to do something. I'm fine.*

The massive ion engines of the three Gunboats fired up just as the "drop" command came, releasing the clamps and letting the Gunboats shoot off into the battleground. The response from the Star Hammer group was almost immediate: Escort Shuttles left the Platform, while an entirely different fighter departed the asteroid. Taan brought it up on his CMD, a look of genuine surprise on his face. "Uh, Ven, you're the Imperial expert here. Is that what I think it is?"

*I'd call you a liar if I wasn't seeing it with my own eyes, Taan. I thought the missile boats were all wiped out!*

"Apparently Malachite made sure to grab a copy of the schematics before the collapse of the Empire. If those things have SLAM, we're in serious trouble."

*It's not SLAM I'm worried about. Do you have any idea of the payload those things can carry?*

A warning light flashed in front of Taan's face and he quickly jinked to break the lock that the nearest missile boat had achieved. "I think we'll find out soon enough‑ TAC! HEADS UP!" Taan targeted the nearest fighter and sent a punishing volley of laser fire towards it, but not soon enough to stop it from launching a pair of missiles at Tacomah's Gunboat. Despite Tacomah's incredible skill, the Gunboat simply wasn't fast enough to avoid the impact and Taan winced as the concussion missiles exploded on Tac's shields. "Tac! You okay?"

"I'm fine, I just hafta readjust the shields a little bit!"

"Alright, good. Here's what's going to happen: we're going to play a game of tag. Our orders are to disable the *Gezzoop*, so I'm going to make my run first and you cover me. Once I've done one strafe, we switch roles. Be ready to switch when I give the command. Ready?" Taan split a missile boat apart with a linked cannon burst as he said it.

"Ready!" Tacomah replied.

"Okay. Cover me!" Taan broke off from his attack of the nearest fighter and headed for the *Gezzoop*. Adjusting his laser recharge to full strength, Taan lined himself up behind it and sent a stream of laser fire towards its engines. The shield strength drained slowly, Taan pulling up at the last second to avoid becoming the *Gezzoop's* new coat of paint. "Switch!"

Tacomah pulled around to aim at the passenger liner and Taan lined the nearest missile boat in his sights, but the small space where the role‑change occurred gave one fighter enough time to lock on again and fire another pair of missiles. Taan sent a quick volley the missiles' way to try and take them out before they hit Tac's fighter, but it was too late ‑ the missiles hit, and there was a much more distinct visual acknowledgment of it this time. One engine was failing and part of his left wing had been taken clean off.

*I'm hit!* Tacomah yelled.

"Can you make it back to the *Widow*?"

*Maybe-* Tacomah's response was cut short by another hit, but amazingly the Gunboat was still intact.

Taan quickly checked Tacomah's onboard systems and wondered how the thing was still moving. "Eject!" Taan yelled, hoping he would get out before the missile boats turned around to finish the job.

*I'm out!* were Tacomah's last words before he flew out of the cockpit. He shot up at an incredible rate, a couple of seconds before more missiles vaporized a third of Grey's main strike force. Confident that an extraction team would pick him up later, Taan opened up his comm channel to all Grey fighters. "We just lost one of the Gunboats, guys. Our primary objective is to disable the *Gezzoop*, and it's making a run for it. Who wants to help me take down its shields a little?"

"Count me in," Vender replied and pulled around to face the passenger liner. "He's going to wish he never ordered his men to vape a Grey. Flight One, take care of those missile boats. Flights Two and Three, continue with mission." The TIE Advanced and the two remaining Gunboats closed in on the passenger liner at perpendicular angles, both unleashing a stream of fire that decimated the *Gezzoop's* shields after a couple of runs.

"Thanks Ven, I'll buy you a drink in the bar when we get back." Taan switched to ion cannons and lined up behind the engines once more and began firing ‑ just as a pair of missiles hit. Taan was thrown forward, held in his seat only by the webbing designed for that very purpose. Checking his systems, he realised he'd just lost his aft shields and his forward shields were seriously weakened. He quickly resorted to some evasive maneuvers while readjusting his shields, but laser fire from a missile boat's single cannon broke through and knocked out his weapons systems. "Oh darn..."

*Taan's saber was knocked from his hand as the dark opponent used the Force to knock him to the ground...*

"Vender! I'm shieldless and disarmed here!"

A TIE Advanced swooped over Taan's head and an explosion followed shortly after. *That's one less for you to worry about. Anything you want me to do?*

"Yeah, ANYTHING you can to stop Malachite from leaving while I repair my ion cannons!" Another laser burst, this time from a nearby Escort Shuttle's rear turret. The ship shuddered and Taan looked out to port, only to see the engine leaking coolant. "I have a real bad feeling about this."

*Unarmed and on the ground, Taan was helpless as the figure stood in front of him, his blood‑red lightsaber high above his head, ready to strike...*

"Weapons are online!" Taan pulled around to face Malachite's ship for the last time.

*Taan, don't push that ship too hard. If that engine explodes...*

"You let me worry about my ship, you worry about those fighters!" Taan fired, the ion bursts knocking out most of the essential systems on board the *Gezzoop* including the sublight engines and hyperdrive. "YEE‑HAW!"

*Way to go, Five Lead!* Jila this time, in Control.

*Control, this is One Lead. Current resistance has been eliminated.* Vender's grin was almost audible. *The platform's been tamed, too. Not bad for a day's work.*

*It's not over yet, folks.* Castor's voice replaced Jila's. *Next step is the Star Hammer itself. Come in and resupply though, we've got a long day ahead of us.*

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Dave Trebonius-Astoris: Flight 2.1, alternate p.o.v.***

Dave was broodily quiet as he walked toward the *Widow’s* hangar bay.

All the Greys knew this would be a hard mission, there was no question about that. Then there was also the fact that they were rather short-handed. There were no reinforcements. Dave also worried about the new mystery fighters that they were supposed to be on the watch for. Anytime there were unknowns, especially ones as important as unknown fighters, the danger of a mission was multiplied several times over.

Dave had drawn one of the Tie Advanceds, which would be covering for the Guns.

*My strategy is to keep it fast and agile. The Guns, on the other hand, will have to find some way to keep themselves strong and protected,* he mused as he walked into the locker room beside the hangar.

“Ow! Dave, what was that for?”

Dave looked up. Apparently he had just ran into Bigfoot. Literally.

“My fault, Biggie. I was just worrying about the mission.” Biggie picked up his helmet off the bench. “We’re all worried. All we can do is fly high, as Castor says. You know?”

Dave nodded as he stepped into his flight suit. “We’ll be watching your back, my friend.”

Biggie’s serious look betrayed his own anxiety. “We’ll all watch each other’s backs.”

Dave picked up his own helmet, and he and Bigfoot walked out into the hangar. “May the force be with you, Biggie,” Dave said as he clapped the other man on the shoulder.

“And with you, Dave.” The two split and headed for their respective ships.

----------

As Dave’s Bright dropped out of the hangar, the first thing he saw was the blackness of space. He pulled up on the steering yolk and his viewport was filled with a smattering of ships. Instantly, his mind began categorizing the vessels present: *Platform, the* Gezzoop*, our Guns, Gigantic Asteroid with strange equipment on it, the* Web*, the... WAIT A SECOND!!!!!* Dave looked back at the asteroid which dominated the region of space. *So that’s it, that’s what we came here for. Doesn’t look like all that much.* His musings were interrupted as his tac computer shrilly announced the arrival of additional enemy vessels. Dave frowned and tried to get a identification lock on one of the vessels. His targeting computer, apparently familiar with the shape from its time serving under Malachite’s minions, instantly labeled it a “Missile Boat,” but Dave wasn’t quite sure what that was. It looked like a Gunboat with weapons pods grafted on the side. The other craft were more recognizable. Escort Shuttles and Assault Transports. Lots of them.

*They’re still coming!* Somebody exclaimed over the air.

Was that one of the people in his flight? He hadn’t been paying close enough attention to the voice. Dave switched his comm over to the frequency being used by all the T/A’s. “Flights Two and Three, concentrate on the Trannies and Shuttles. Flight One, on me to take care of these so-called *Missile Boats*. Help out a Gun if you see it in trouble.”

A chorus of affirmatives replied, and Dave lead the two other Flight One T/A’s to dive in at the Missile Boats, which were already targeting their Guns.

Dave watched in horror as the lead Missile Boat spat out three missiles in rapid succession at the lead Gun. *Damn, these things got missiles upon missiles. I bet even their missiles have missiles he thought glumly.*

*Our shields can’t stand up to that kind of battery,* one of his wingmen exclaimed.

“Stay at the highest speed you can, dodge whenever necessary, and the rest of the time stay behind your target.” Dave instructed.

Dancing at high speeds and flashing their lasers whenever the opportunity arose, Dave’s flight of Brights went to work on the Missile Boats. Their job was made easier by the fact that the Missile Boats habitually targeted the Guns rather than them. Soon Taan in the lead Gunboat announced that the Gezzoop had been disabled, and that his flight was headed for the platform. Although they took some fire on the way to the platform, the Guns were able to make it over there without serious mishap.

“Advanceds, let’s help out the guns. Missile barrage at the Platform on my mark.” One of the other flight leaders suggested. Dave pointed his ship toward the platform, got tone, and awaited the countdown. “Fire!”

Dave loosed a pair of missiles toward the platform and noted with satisfaction that about five other of the Advanced TIEs had been able to do so as well, despite the broiling dogfight.

When the platform was disabled, the flow of Transports, Shuttles, and Missile Boats began to abate. “Thorns, stay on your guard and patrol the area until further notice!” Control’s voice wafted through the comm speaker. Dave thought the voice sounded rather tense. *Probably just as tense as everybody out here feels.*

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Tacomah “P2" Somers: Flight 5.2, alternate p.o.v.***

The Missile Boat swooped by on it’s way toward one of the Gunboats.

Tacomah watched as the fragments of the last Gunboat bounced off it’s shields. The only real problem was the *last Gunboat* had been his own, and the chunk of engine from the debris and boy were on a collision course.

As close as Tacomah could figure.

And he was right.

He usually was.

Unfortunately.

The piece of engine was spinning rapidly, the ragged pieces of metal reminding him of a meat grinder. And they were headed for the same place at the same time.

--------

A Gunboat. His assignment was a Gunboat.

*Well, that’s okay.* Tacomah thought to himself. *I’m good in ion craft. Prolly why I drew it.*

According to the plan, there wasn’t actually a plan. The Gunboats were key, and the Avengers were support. But all the instructions were going to come through Control, on the fly.

No pun intended.

Well, not much of one, anyway.

*Anyways, tha orders are goin’ to come as we go, an’ we’re sapposta go with what tha TacTeam comes up with, dependin’ on what’s goin’ on at tha time. There’s tha Star Hammer - what ever THAT looks like - an’ then there’s tha base, an’ then we’re sapposta disable anythin’ that Malachite can escape with. Geez! Like we ain’t gottanuff ta do just by stayin’ alive. An’ what’s up with THAT?! New an’ tougher starfighters that we ain’t seen yet?*

Dave walked by, looking lost in thought. “Good luck, Dave!” The old man’s expression softened.

“Hey! Good luck, P2!” Dave gave the boy a slap on the shoulder.

Taan and Vender went by. “Good luck, guys!” Tacomah called.

“Yah. Good luck, kid!” Taan looked worried. Vender didn’t. Vender kinda looked like he thought he was invincible. Tacomah had heard about him getting a little over the edge in the docking bay.

Bigfoot walked along side them for a few steps. He and Dave exchanged wishes after they’d converged upon the same space at the same time. Tag and Vykk and Ace and the rest all made their way to the locker room.

As Tacomah put his helmet on the hair on the back of his neck stood up. His shoulders spasmed as he shivered. He looked around expecting someone to be looking hatefully at him. No one was.

“I’m buyin’ at Tess’s when we get back.” He called, mostly to cover up the spooky feeling that had made him shiver.

“I thought the Admiral was.” Petre Margul called back.

“He’s gonna hafta wait his turn.” Tacomah answered.

“Yah. Okay. Then I’m going to order up.” Juho added. “Always tastes better on someone else’s tab.”

They all made it into their fighters with about a half minute to spare. The boy took a deep breath and relaxed.

His mother entered the clearing and greeted him.

“Mom.” He said. “We got stuff goin’ on, an’ this is gonna be tha big one.” He sat beside her on the grass. “I gotta bad feelin’ about this one.” She waited patiently, not interrupting or rushing him. “I jes wannid ta tell ya that I love you an’ Dad an’ tha kids.”

“Star of my night, I understand. And what ever happens, I know that you will make us all proud. You always have.”

“Even if I’m scared?”

“The Giver will watch over you. Remember all you have learned.”

“I will.”

“Then you have very little to fear. Certainly not death.”

“Mostly, I’m okay with me. It’s all tha resta tha squadron. An’ I don’t wanna fail them.” Not entirely accurate.

“The Giver will take them in too, if it comes to that.” She said quietly, the feathers swayed as the breeze picked up. There was a pause as they both watched the leaves on the trees. His mother seemed to read his mind. “Light of my life. If nothing else, remember this one thing.” She turned to face him full on. “Love conquers all. If you...”

*TACOMAH!!*  Flight Leader. Taan.

“HERE! On line, and green!” He shook his head, clearing out the last remnants of the home clearing from his mind and answering the comm. A private channel opened to him as the indicator lit, and he completed the power up to predrop status.

*Tacomah. Are you alright?* Control. Jila. *What happened?* She sounded way worried.

“I’m okay.” *Sorta tha truth.* “I just had something to take care of.” That was entirely the truth. “I’m good to go now. I’ll be okay.” The indicator went out as the channel closed. Jila hadn’t needed to respond, and probably had other things more important to do than spend time talking with him.

*Flight Five. Drop in ten.* A short pause. *Three. Two. One.* The three gunboats dropped at the same time and shot out of the *Widow’s* launch bay in formation. Very shortly the area was full of a fighter listed as a Missile Boat and a number of Escort Shuttles and Escort Transports. The Avengers were already going by on their way to intercept the enemy fighters.

A double slam and Tacomah’s shields were in the red. The Missile Boats didn’t require much time to lock and fire. But only a single laser, the boy noted as he flipped through the technical readout. He shifted his laser energy to his shields and veered.

*Those things gotta be loaded with warheads!*

The Missile Boats were fast, and Tacomah found there were no less than two that were targeting him. The Avengers were split between the Shuttles and the Missile boats, but couldn’t keep the Fighters entirely occupied. The young pilot watched as a Missile Boat veered off from attacking one of the Grey Advanceds to fire a projectile at a passing Gunboat. A group of the Avengers, it looked like two flights threw a whole volley of missles at the platform. At this rate they’d need all that help and more.

He finally got his shields back up and targeted one of the closest Missile Boats. He reset his power for speed and fell in behind his target. After depleting his ions into the back end of it, he shifted to his lasers and finished it off and then reset his power to bring his lasers back up.

*Disable the Platform and the* Gezzoop*.* Gezzoop*, priority.* The order came from Control.

His ion lock blinked on as he started firing on the Passenger Liner. *It’s Malachite’s! All this time we mighta got it. But he couldna been on it every time we saw it. That woulda been really stupid.*

The double slam threw Tacomah into his retainer straps. He could smell burnt insulation. Quickly he dropped his shield recharge to his engines, and maxed his lasers. The energy from his weapons helped his shields, but not much.

“I’M HIT!”

*Can you make it back to the* Widow*?* Taan asked in a rush.

“Maybe!” SLAM! Aft shields gone. Steering, too.

*Eject!* Came the command from Taan, who must have checked the readout on Tacomah’s Gun.

“I’M OUT!” Tacomah punch the eject button. His Gunboat rushed on for a few more second before a triple volley of missiles turned it into space debris, of which the Missile Boat that had been closely following him flew through the center.

Luckily, the boy was headed away from the main area of the conflict.

Unfortunately, he calculated that he had about eight seconds before he and the piece of engine that whirled like a meat shredder collided.

---------

*Can’t change path. Gotta change velocity.* The thought flashed through his head as he watched the engine rush on toward their rendezvous. He threw his arms and legs forward, leaving them out in front stiffly. *Every action has a equal an’ opposite reaction.* That action should slow him.

But would it be enough?

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

End log: T5B5M2

**Battle 5, Mission 3: Rock and Roll!**

By R.C.Miller (Castor@RebelSquadrons.org)

A Grey Squadron, of the Rebel Squadrons, Additional Text Briefing

for Grey Squadron’s add-on Mission 3, Battle 5, Tour 5

for the Star Wars TIE Fighter Combat Simulator game.

This is a continuation of the last mission. There is no extended briefing this time other than to bring everyone up to the same point in the mission. Assume that there was no lull in the action at the end of the last mission.

You’ve swapped out your Gunboat with one of the ones that were being held back, so you’ve got your full double load of mag-pulse missiles. The Pit is now prepping the one you had in the run you just completed. Your shields are down, but functional - you’ll have to build them from nothing.

Two of the Avenger Greys are EVA.

The Star Hammer’s support station has been disabled and no longer a concern, as well as the *Gezzoop*. The Star Hammer asteroid station is fully functional, which we’ve just found out because the *Widow’s* sensors were able to read it powering up.

Malachite’s actual location is unknown as of yet.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*