



Escape from Hiigara - ale_e_inn :: Unknown ::

It was a calm and sunny day in the capitol city of Hiigarius on the serene planet of Hiigara. In the capitol building, the senate was discussing a new environmental bill. In the colleges, professors were teaching students basic hyperdrive theory. In the park, children were playing with their pets. And in a satellite station, data from a sensor satellite was showing objects in hyperspace approaching Hiigara.

The report was on a small, featureless diskette delivered by hand to the senate. "Here you go sir," the messenger said, handing the disk to Niicara, the president of the planetary space program, HASA (Hiigaran Aeronautical and Space Association).

"What is it?"

"An urgent report from the local satellite station."

When was the last time THEY sent any urgent messages? Niicara thought. *I never even knew they had that kind of authority.*

"Why wasn't this sent electronically?"

"It's top secret."

This really is odd. A SATTILITE station sending a top secret message?

"Thank you."

"You're welcome, sir."

Niicara placed the disk in his computer and activated the program that contained the report.

Report #45-2375-01 from satellite station #45-2375

Date: 3/12/35

Priority: AAA, urgent

Classification: Level 2, hand-deliver and show only class-A or class-B officials. Destruction not required.

The extreme-long-range satellite #ELR5-B has detected a large group of objects in hyperspace on a direct course toward Hiigara. They have been automatically designated f1-35. They are coming directly from the known location of a major Taiidan base. The supercomputers give a 84% chance of f1-35 being a Taiidan military fleet, a 13% chance of f1-35 being another species escaping from the Taiidans and seeking refuge, a 2% chance of a diplomatic or otherwise peaceful Taiidan fleet, and a 1% chance of sensor error. This situation qualifies (under directive 24-672) for either increased interstellar caution, dispatching of an interception fleet, evacuation of Hiigara, or any combination of the above courses of action. The ETA of f1-35 is approximately 4 months. #ELR5-B and its shorter range counterparts (MLR3) will have a definite picture of f1-35 in 1 month. Our

current forces are insufficient to repel a Taiidan invasion force consisting of the amount of objects observed. The supercomputers recommend preparations for a partial evacuation of Hiigara.

45-2375-01, yup, it's their first one. Military fleet? 4 months? That satellite has a pretty good range. It'll take forever to evacuate Hiigara. I know we planned for this when we heard of the Taiidans, but it would take years. Then again, we could just evacuate SOME of us. We could do it in 4 months, but its inhumane to the rest of us. This is going to be a long four months.

The senate was busy squabbling over a fuel price bill when Niicara ran in.

"Can't you use the doorbell like everyone else," someone in the crowd said.

"It's very important," Niicara said, "there's a Taiidan fleet headed this way!"

"WHAT?!" The senate went silent.

"I received a report showing an 84% chance of Taiidans coming."

Chairman Dafiira spoke. "Oh, eighty-FOUR percent, the tone in your voice was that there was 100% chance."

"Either way, there's a lot of ships coming, and they'll be here in four months."

"Again, the tone in your voice was saying something like 5 minutes."

"What do the supercomputers say?"

"To, uh, increase caution, intercept fl-35, or, uh, evacuate Hiigara."

"fl-35?"

"That's the objects' designation."

"Do that in FOUR months?"

"We can intercept in 2 months," Niicara pointed out.

"EVACUATE in four months?" Members of the council started talking to each other.

Dafiira quieted the restless council. "Okay people, lets take a vote on this. Everyone submit a proposal on what to do, I'll pick the most rational ones, and we'll vote on them."

When the vote was over, it was nearly unanimous to simultaneously dispatch a scouting party to intercept & investigate fl-35 and to prepare to evacuate as many of the Hiigara as possible.

The space station where the scouting party was being prepared for launch was clean, polished, and huge. *I wonder why they polished it?* Neign thought as she walked down the halls. She entered the bay where her trusty scout #56 sat waiting for duty. Out the window, she saw the cold darkness of space, along with stars, beautiful Hiigara, and various construction projects, with the carrier her fighter and the gravity well generators will travel in on the dangerous mission to intercept the mysterious fleet.

She remembered the commander's explanation for her question about what the generators are for.

"All the gravity well generators are to get the attention of the fleet, if it is a fleet. The generators aren't powerful enough to bring them out of hyperspace, but we're hoping they'll notice the strain on their engines and stop to check it out."

As she was watching various ships running around, she noticed that large scaffolding was being deployed. Scaffolding always meant they were starting to build something, but that's a lot of scaffolding. *They're making something big. I wonder what it is.* She noticed in the distance more large scaffolding, and more out another window. They're making a lot of something big, must be space stations. Her watch started beeping, signaling her that its time to take her scout to the carrier.

Neign flew her scout slowly toward the carrier, the whole time wondering what all the scaffolding

was for. She had convinced herself that it were space stations, until she saw a construction robot carrying a hyperspace induction module toward one of closer construction sites. *A space station with hyperdrive? Now she was totally confused. Then a thought struck her. Maybe that fleet we're going to is Taiidan. Maybe those are evacuation ships. Is Hiigara in trouble?*

Then again, it may be a false alarm. Maybe we're going to help another race by building spaceships for them to flee. We've done it before. Why not again? It must be a lot of people though. The autopilot of the scout took over and it carefully docked itself inside the carrier Interception. I wonder if that's a coincidence that it's named like that and its first mission is to intercept.

On Hiigara, in a small HASA office, Niicara watched the soft orange light, a rather weird effect on the atmosphere that results from hyperspace induction in space. This particular light was caused by the *Interception*'s jump. *Only a week, and already we launched the interception carrier. 3 more weeks until the satellite gives us a good picture of f1-35, and a month after that until our carrier establishes contact.*

Three weeks later, the report came in.

Report: #45-2375-02 from satellite station #45-2375

Date: 4/12/35

Priority: AAA, urgent

Classification: Level 2, hand-deliver and show only class-A or class-B officials. Destruction not required.

Satellites #ELR5-B, MLR3-A, MLR3-B, and MLR3-C have completed a RHF scan of f1-35. F1-35 is an artificial group of ships. Not all ships can be identified, but 100% of identifiable ships are a complete match with Taiidan military or ground invasion vessels. 50 ships have been spotted, but there is a 94% chance that there are more than are currently detected, 96% chance that f1-35 is hostile toward Hiigara, and 95% chance that evacuation will be necessary if f1-35 is hostile. However, the chances of successfully evacuating ANY ships after f1-35 arrives is 21% if f1-35 is hostile.

Niicara's blood ran cold. *I don't like those odds. I have a feeling f1-35 is the designation of our doom.*

In the carrier *Interception*, the blue of the hyperspace was almost hypnotic. Captain Tiigaw was reading the morning news, direct from Hiigara, laughing when he reads the comics.

"Sir!"

"Yes, what is it, Lieutenant?"

"We're preparing to drop from hyperspace, sir."

"Go ahead."

The blue of the hyperspace reverted back into the serene blackness of space. The gravity well generators were deploying themselves towards the optimum locations to alert f1-35.

"Our computations indicate that f1-35 will arrive here in about 10 minutes, sir."

"Prepare the gravity well generators then."

"Yes, sir!"

Neign reviewed the instructions in her mind. "Our gravity well generators will hamper our own

hyperdrive as well as f1-35's hyperdrive. It will take 5 minutes for us to move out of our gravity wells to engage the hyperdrive. This means that if f1-35 is hostile, we need to hold it off for 5 minutes while the *Interception* prepares to flee. Make sure I'm docked with it though, or I'll get left behind." She activated the launch sequence for her scout, and scout #56 went gracefully sailing away from the *Interception*, followed by other scouts flown by other brave pilots.

"Gravity wells online, sir."

"Very good. How long until we meet f1-35"

"10 seconds, 5.....4.....3.....2.....1.....now."

"Sir!"

"Yes, what is it?" Diival, the Taiidan commander replied.

"Our hyperdrive is being bogged down by large numbers of gravity wells. Should we exit hyperspace?"

"Go on ahead, we have time."

This 'll delay our invasion of Hiigara, but I don't think this 'll take too long. I've been longing for a nice, big battle. The blue of the hyperspace dissolved into blackness and sensors detected a single carrier with a few scouts.

When the commander saw the Taiidan fleet, his first words, after gasping for air were "GET US OUT OF HERE!!"

"It will take 5 minutes to escape from our gravity wells."

"We're dead get the scouts to try and hold them off so we can get away."

"Yes sir."

"Make sure to transmit all sensor data back to Hiigara so they know that these guys are hostile!"

"Yes, sir!"

The valiant battle between an entire Taiidan fleet and a Hiigaran carrier was going badly. The scouts were barely denting the hulls of the Taiidan ships, the Taiidan corvettes were tearing through the Hiigaran scouts, and some Taiidan ion cannon frigates were getting closer and closer to coming in range.

"2 more minutes, sir!"

"Can't this thing go any faster?"

The Taiidan ion cannon frigates came into range and opened fire. The order came through to Neiign and the other remaining scout pilots: "Return to the *Interception*, return to the *Interception*, it is preparing to engage hyperdrive." Neiign flew full speed toward the badly damaged carrier, and managed to dock with it. The Taiidan ion cannon frigates lined up for one last shot.

"Sir, bad news, the *Interception* has been destroyed."

Niicara felt bad for sending that brand new carrier to its death. His friend, Tiigaw, was the captain of that vessel. *Why didn't we just wait the month for the satellite to determine f1-35's nature? At least we know now that f1-35's hostile.*

The sensor data showed that the Taiidans were collecting resources for the jump to Hiigara. They only had 2 months to go before the Taiidans attacked Hiigara. It would be the last 2 months of a lot of people's lives.

Onboard scaffolding 346-C, where the evacuation transport *Escape* was being constructed, Liimsa

was overseeing construction of her very own ship. She knew her incredible engineering skills, in addition to her leadership skills, would come in very handy. It is almost impossible now to separate the facts from the rumors about f1-35. Some people say it's 1,000,000 ships and 100,000,000 troops, some say its just a lie designed to keep people away from a secret government operation. Some say it'll be here in only 2 months. And some think its already here, waiting to strike. She didn't believe any of those rumors. President Niicara told her and the captains of the other evacuation transports that it is probably an invasion force and it'll be here "soon." 1,000,000 ships, ha! Two months, ha! And the people who say they're aliens from another planet, well the Taiidans are. Anyway, the *Escape* has to be done as soon as possible, or ASAP as the people in HASA call it.

I hope I'm not stuck with these idiots when I command this thing, Liimsa thought as she repeated for the 6th time to a designer about why cryogenic sections #75 and #105 need to be connected to power terminal #7 instead of #6. *I should hook the stupid thing up myself, but no, I can only supervise. The people over at HASA are way too strict*, she thought, signing an equipment purchase form. *Why do I have to sign purchase forms all day? Oh, yeah, the workers are clumsy and break stuff, even though NOTHING CAN FALL IN ZERO G!*

The engineers are way too strict, Niicara thought to himself. *No, you can't touch that. No, you can't do that. No, that's my chair, blah, blah, blah. They have it easy, while I have to sign papers all day. Gee, I'm getting a lot of purchase forms.*

Only one month remained before f1-35 arrived. On the still incomplete *Escape*, Liimsa was talking to a subordinate engineer when over the intercom she heard something smash and "OOPS" came through the speaker.

Later, she was almost interrogating the engineer who broke the crystalline core for the weapons power systems.

"Do you know how much that thing cost?"

"\$100?"

"Over 10 million dollars!"

"oops."

"How on Hiigara did you manage to break that thing?" *It can survive ion storms, but not clumsiness.*

"I dropped it."

"And?"

"It fell."

"In zero gravity?"

"Yeah."

"I would like to see that."

"OK, next time I'll drop it on purpose so you can see it."

"You're fired."

Another day, another accident, another purchase form. *This ship has set so many world records. Most accidents, highest cost, least job security, most number of times 1,000 purchase forms needed to be ordered. Why did I have to get duds for crew? This had better be worth it.*

class="body">Another day, another accident, another purchase form. *This ship has set so many world records. Most accidents, highest cost, least job security, most number of times 1,000 purchase*

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The day before the Taiidans arrived was a hectic one. Construction of all evacuation vessels, including the *Escape*, was complete. All of Hiigara was preparing for the assault of the Taiidans. And, of course on the *Escape*, there was the sound of breaking followed by "oops" and "HOW DID YOU MANAGE TO BREAK THAT?!?"

That night, Niicara reviewed Liimsa one last time: "You will need to partially orbit Hiigara before you engage the hyperdrive."

"Why?" she asked.

"Because if we aren't pointing directly away from Hiigara, the planet's gravity will alter our hyperspace course, and the computers don't have the time to correct for this. You will need to partially orbit the planet so you can point directly away from it and towards your destination at the same time, allowing you to make your hyperjump."

"How long will it take?"

"Between 5 and 30 minutes."

"Hold off a superior Taiidan force for half an hour?"

"Unfortunately yes."

A day away at maximum hyperspace velocity, the Taiidan fleet was making its own preparations.

"Sir!"

"What is it?" Diival answered.

"We're a day away from Hiigara, sir"

We would have been there by now if I hadn't stopped to destroy that one carrier, Diival thought. Then again, it had as many gravity wells as a large fleet, so I assumed it was a last-ditch defense force.

"Fine, fine, make sure the troops are ready, the fighters fueled, and everything else is ready to capture Hiigara."

But why did the Hiigarans sent out such a pitiful force to try to destroy us? Are they that weak?

Top Hiigaran citizens and officials of all ages and genders collectively got into their pods to be sent to the evacuation craft. President Niicara was among them. The highest officers still awake were those commanding or maintaining the evacuation craft. The only top-ranking officer on the *Escape*, Captain Liimsa, was busy going through the pre-launch checklists and yelling at the clumsiness of the *Escape's* crew. Everything was ready for the ship's launch tomorrow. *Why aren't we leaving now? Maybe because that would make us easy targets if they arrive early.*

The day came. When f1-35 dropped out of hyperspace in Hiigaran orbit, it was welcomed by several ion cannon frigates opening fire. The Taiidan ion cannon frigates returned fire and destroyed the Hiigaran frigates. The Hiigarans were outnumbered 10 to 1. They literally placed their own ships between the Taiidans and the now launching evacuation ships. Hiigara launched all of its vessels to hold off the Taiidan onslaught. All of the Hiigaran evacuation craft began orbiting to their assigned locations and vectors, pointing towards suitable planets well outside the Taiidan sphere of influence, and prepared their hyperdrives for the jump.

Of course I get a dud planet, Liimsa thought when the computer announced that their destination is a planet named Kharak, a desert planet with marginally suitable polar areas.

"Hyperdrive will initiate in 20 minutes," the navigation officer said.

"That long?"

"A lot of orbiting."

Great, 20 minutes to hold off these idiot Taiidans. She remembered about how president Niicara told her that the odds of a ship making it out were 21 %, which means even less for the crew she got stuck with. "No, no, no," the president had said, "the odds of any specific ship is less than 4%. The odds of mission success is 21 %." *That means we're pretty much dead.*

The ship rocked with an ion cannon impact.

"Report!"

"Damage to lower hull, sir!"

"Get on fixing it!"

"Yes, sir!"

The battle was going badly. They'd already lost a third of their evacuation ships.

"The one ion cannon frigate that attacked us has been destroyed by our scouts, sir!"

"Good. How long until we enter hyperspace?"

"5 more minutes."

"We're dead."

The Taiidan corvettes were tearing through the Hiigaran scouts and cruisers, and more Taiidan ion cannon frigates were getting closer to coming in range. Half of the evacuation ships were space dust, as well as millions of Hiigarans in their pods onboard.

"2 more minutes, sir!"

"Can't this thing orbit any faster?"

The Taiidan ion cannon frigates came into range and opened fire. Two thirds of the evacuation ships were already gone.

"Our hull can't last much longer sir!"

"Get that hyperdrive going, and start recalling scouts."

"Yes, sir!"

The *Escape* was the last Hiigaran evacuation ship remaining. The order went out: "Return to the *Escape*, return to the *Escape*, it is preparing to engage hyperdrive. The scouts started flying to the *Escape*, and began docking with the badly damaged evacuation ship. The Taiidan ion cannon frigates lined up for one last shot.

The *Escape* lurched into hyperspace and sped towards Kharak, on the far rim of the galaxy. The ion beams crossed the position where the *Escape* formerly was half a second after the *Escape* disappeared into hyperspace.

"Kharak ETA: 7 months, sir."

"That long? Oh well, we can relax for 7 months then, and decide what to do afterwards."

As Liimsa was walking down the corridors one day, she passed a crew member (one of the less clumsy ones) carrying a large black stone.

"Hi Giist, what's the rock?"

"Oh, this? It's a project I've been working on. I've polished off a surface here. On it, I scratched in a simple rendering of our galaxy. Here, I've marked where Hiigara is, and here, I've marked where Kharak is. I'm going to describe this more accurately when I have the time, maybe describe

the Taiidans or something. It's a hobby I've been working on."

"Keep on working on it, maybe it'll be a handy keepsake someday." *Yeah, right. That thing's never going to be a keepsake, much less handy.*

Engineering was relatively quiet during a shift that wasn't necessary, in Liimsa's opinion. She couldn't quite remember why she assigned herself to that particular shift. Suddenly there was a snap, "oops," and the ship came out of hyperspace. *That's why. I got HIM on this shift.* "What did you break now," the commander tried to politely ask, internally furious about the ship leaving hyperspace. "The hyperspace induction module."

"You didn't!"

"It was an accident."

"With you, it's always an 'accident.' Now we'll need to fix the thing, collect a ton of RUs and hyper-jump again all because of you! If it wasn't for the laws, I would have executed you a long time ago!" *It's going to take forever to collect RUs here. And we're still in Taiidan territory.*

Weeks later, the resource collectors finished retrieving enough resources, with the clumsy officer piloting a collector as a punishment. He flew actually rather well for someone without any training at all.

When they were preparing to engage the hyperdrive, sensors detected several ships approaching. Taiidan patrol ships. The patrol's weaker sensors probably haven't detected the *Escape*, as they were only at 2/3 of their maximum velocity and weren't on a direct course.

"How long until our last resource collectors get back?"

"The Taiidans will arrive before they do. And the Taiidans' engines can outrun ours."

"And at only 2/3 speed?"

"Unfortunately."

Fast patrol. "Dang it. Start moving away from the patrol to buy us some time before they see us. What can our construction bays build before the Taiidans get here?"

"20 fighters, 10 corvettes, or a frigate."

"What kinds of craft are there in that patrol?"

"Anti-strike craft, mostly. Probably to fight pirates. They surely didn't have a large ship like ours in mind."

Hmm, one frigate might not be able to take all them on. "Go for 5 multi-gun corvettes and 10 defenders..... hey, what happened to the sensors?" Liimsa asked when the sensor display started going static.

"Oh, we've entered a dust cloud, sir."

Liimsa remembered her physics about ion beams and dust clouds, and got an idea. "Since we're entering the cloud, does that mean the patrol will, too?"

"Of course."

"Then cancel my last construction order. Start building an ion cannon frigate."

"Yes, sir."

Because of the *Escape*'s moving, the resource collectors were able to return before the Taiidans. Construction of the ion cannon frigate had completed and the frigate was running alongside the *Escape*.

"How long until they see us?"

"They are already in the dust cloud, and that is obscuring their sensors. The moment we leave the cloud, they will pick us up."

"All right, go for plan number....." She looked through her manual, looking for her plan. "Okay, the plan's not in the manual. I'll tell it to you orally."

"Sir, we have detected some ships leaving the dust cloud ahead of us."

"Really?" the captain of the Taiidan patrol asked.

"Confirmed. We are reading two ships. One is a frigate class, and the other is a large but unidentified ship."

"Change course to intercept and increase speed to full. Send out a probe to investigate."

A probe left the hangar of the unnamed patrol craft and headed in the direction of the 2 unknown vessels.

The probe's onboard computer started processing its sensor data the moment it left the dust cloud.

The first and last thing it transmitted was an ion cannon frigate preparing to fire.

The ion beam instantly vaporized the probe and plunged deep into the dust cloud. The dust cloud was filled with sparks as the beam charged the cloud and everything inside it. The *Escape* engaged its hyperdrive and sped off towards Kharak as the shock wave from the cloud zoomed outwards in all directions, smashed into, and obliterated the unmanned ion cannon frigate that was being remote controlled by the *Escape*.