

## Consequences

*By Tanorath-drgn*

### **Cadet (Senior) Quaren I.D.A.F. Command Training Program**

Finally! A DN-V posting! Only took two years and a bunch of favours. Even my former mentor, Captain Tano'rath put a good word in for me to get me into this assignment and as a senior trainee, I was looking forward to more hands-on training and perhaps a little more autonomy. That being said, though, I've also heard a bit about the C.O. of this ship being a bit of a stickler for the rules. Apparently, he isn't the fondest of my former mentor either.

Makes you wonder why he took me on, but well, I suppose he wants to show that he's not biased. I shot Tano'rath a message requesting an appointment to discuss my concerns, but I received an automated message from Command stating that the *Defiant* had lost comms contact a while back. They were probably on a mission at the time and he did reply eventually, telling me not to read too much into it.

Either way, I packed my bags and took a shuttle out to the border, where the basically brand new ship was on a routine shakedown mission – just mapping the general area and updating our charts.

The on-boarding meeting was pretty routine, with the ship regulations being presented to us and everyone being reminded to behave. Captain Yathut also made sure to emphasize that he did not appreciate his crewmembers bending the rules, let alone breaking them. He also made sure to glare at me and I suspected that I knew why.

For whatever reason, I ended up spending very little time on engineering duty, despite specifically requesting it and ended up with a lot more drudgery instead. Lots of sanitation and housekeeping work, but well, it is what it is. Not much happens on these missions anyway...

A far cry from my time on the *Defiant* this is.

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### **Snr Captain Tano'rath Cmdr, DES Defiant**

I sighed as I flicked through the latest message from Quaren as we slinked around our assigned quadrant on patrol duty. Talorath looked over as I sighed and I couldn't help but remark, "Yathut is being an arse again."

“What, that fucking lieutenant who had it out for you?” Talorath replied, raising an eyeridge at me as I spun my screen round so that he could read it, “didn’t they post him on the third fleet to stop you from stabbing him?”

“Oh, I was past stabbing, believe me. Fucker’s a captain now,” I replied with a snort, flicking my tail as I leaned on my armrest, “What you reckon? That’s shit hey.”

Talorath frowned as he read the message and shook his head, “That’s not fair to Quaren. Not at all.”

“Yeah, no, but not enough grounds for me to raise it to Hector I reckon,” I replied, sighing again, “He’s not learning shit scrubbing pipes on that shiny new ship.”

Talorath chuckled, “I think all he’ll learn is shit.”

“Yeah, you can say that again,” I couldn’t help but smirk a little, “I think I’ll request him for final assessment, that way he’ll get the right kind of dirt on his hands.”

“For once, I don’t disagree,” Talorath replied with a snort as his comms unit buzzed with a message, “anyway, what do you think about having maintenance start on all the low-priority jobs like the stuck toilets on deck six? Seems quiet for now.”

I was about to nod before my comms unit buzzed too and I turned the screen round to find an incoming high priority message from Command. “You know, every time you recommend it, this shit happens, just do it next time.”

Talorath cocked his head, “How bad?”

“Priority two. I have to take it in the office,” I replied as I got up, “Prime engines, we’re gonna need them. I suggest you read your messages.”

Talorath nodded as I got up, grabbing my half-eaten bit of jerky off my other armrest as I jogged my way to my office.

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**Cadet (Senior) Quaren**  
**I.D.A.F. Command Training Program**

As I was helping to clean out a plasma conduit, I felt the ship shudder a little before the red alert klaxon went off.

I was, thankfully, with the chief engineer, on one of my rare engineering duty assignments and the red Drakonian snorted as the alarm went off, seeming to expect me to run away or something, “Relax, Cadet, we can take a few hits. This isn’t a buggy.”

If anything, the crew seemed to think that the older ships were made of paper and I can see why the more seasoned lot on the Defiant don’t like the newer crew compliments. New equipment doesn’t make you invincible – it’s one of the first things they teach you these days, but well, it is what it is and it doesn’t stop them from making fun of the older fare. All I could really do was nod along, “I’ve seen some action, sir, I’ll be fine. Should we move back to the engine room?”

“Yeah, I think that’ll be wise,” He replied as he beckoned for me to follow him as he crawled his way to the sealed exit.

I checked my sidearm – a habit that I acquired during my time on the Defiant and one that I had never broken. The chief engineer, Reyth gave me a bit of a sideways look but didn’t say anything.

Reyth reached the exit doors before I did and he motioned for me to stop and be quiet as I slid up alongside him. He was checking his weapon too and it didn’t take long for me to see why.

Through the greasy and dusty viewports, I saw the furred and reptilian forms of Alliance commandos rounding the engineering crew up, barking orders to them and shoving the technicians and officers around. I couldn’t hear what was being said, but from the shoving and unnecessary beatings, it wasn’t too hard a guess.

I could, however, hear Reyth growling lowly as he gritted his teeth, “No way they got in so quickly.”

As one of the commandos started walking over to our little hatch, Reyth turned to me, “I won’t stop you if you want to walk out, Cadet, just don’t tell them I’m here.”

I turned to my left, knowing that there was a port leading to a maintenance crawlspace there. I unlatched the seal and pulled the hatch open, “Lets go before they see us.”

Reyth shooed me up the hatch before he joined me and shut it. There was no way to tell if we had been discovered, but the lack of gunfire was a good enough indication. “Good start, Cadet. If they’ve taken main engineering, then the bridge is probably gone too. We should go to the secondary bridge.”

I nodded as I shifted to let him shimmy his way past me. The tunnel wasn’t big by any standards, with recesses for cables and whatnot and everything was lit by dim red LED’s meant to be easy on our eyes. It was a bit of a struggle to keep my wings and tail out of his way and at some point, we almost kissed, but I’m sure Reyth doesn’t swing that way, so it’s fine.

Reyth glanced down at me as I started following, an almost psychotic gleam in his eye as he smirked slightly, “Ready to die for the Empire, Quaren?”

I don’t know what he has seen and I don’t think I want to know.

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**Snr Captain Tano’rath**  
**Cmdr, DES Defiant**

Hector was, as always, not happy. Especially since I had taken more than half a second to appear at my desk, “We’re assembling a force of five ships to reclaim one of our ships and you’re late.”

“I can’t take a priority two on the bridge,” I replied flatly as I dragged my chair as far as the groove would let it go and sat down, wings, tail and all, “ambush?”

Hector snorted, fluttering his wings slightly in irritation, “No, an intel issue. Ambush wouldn’t warrant this fanfare. We know there’s a leak somewhere and now we know where. Brand new ships don’t just give themselves up to the enemy. The others will join you on your way.”

“That’s an I.I.S. job,” I replied, rubbing my chin as I heard the engines start to warm up as I had ordered, “What’s our role?”

“Your role is to get to the target before they do.” Hector replied with a snort, but his finger-claws drawing lines across his desk added the rest.

I couldn’t help but raise an eyeridge as Hector’s wings flared slightly, “Sir?”

Hector snarled, finally letting go of his table and gripping his armrests instead, "The case is already closed. Give the traitor what he's due."

My comms unit buzzed again with the personnel file and photo of the target. I frowned a little as I sat up, but Hector spoke before I could.

"Yeah, of all people. I defended him too, but there was too much evidence," He paused only to spit, "explains the ridiculous losses lately. Bring the ship back in one piece or destroy it, it must not fall into enemy hands. Keep in mind that there's a cadet group on the ship as well."

"I'll...do my best," I muttered as I flicked through the files and notes as quickly as I could. There was a lot and there were so many covert transmissions and blacked out files that it was hard to refute it, "Are those my orders, Admiral?"

Hector rubbed his chin and leaned in far closer to the camera than he needed to. He's obviously not... happy. I've never seen him so worked up before... "You're fast, right?"

I pocketed my comms unit, half knowing what was coming. "I..uh.....yes...sir?"

"Beat the I.I.S. ships. Remind him that the Fleet will have him when they're done." Hector replied with yet another snarl, "If they're ever done, for that matter. Hector out."

"Understood." I replied as the channel cut out and I bolted out of my little office and onto the bridge.

Talorath was already leaning on the backrest of my chair flicking through his copy of the briefing, "Are we--"

"Yes. Intercept course, full throttle, now. Weapons and shields hot." I snapped, flopping into my chair and nearly sitting on my own tail in the process, "Handshake with the other ships as they join us, prepare boarding parties."

"How bad?" Talortah replied, cocking his head at me as the ship accelerated to FTL.

I glanced over at him, "Hector was ready to throw the table across space. I've never seen him that angry before."

“You know, I didn’t think you’d be that upset.” Talorath replied as he flashed the photo at me, “It’s a serious issue, yes, but you have a reason now.”

“It’s one thing to make jokes about it and another thing for those jokes to be true,” I replied with a snort, adjusting my screen as I opened a shipwide channel. It took a bit of thinking before deciding on what to say.

“All hands, this is the captain. We are currently on an intercept course for the D.E.S. Tremos, which is currently surrounded by four vessels of Alliance origin. Assistance will be joining us shortly and we will be required to reclaim the vessel. If that is not possible, the Tremos will be destroyed. If any of you do not wish to fire upon your colleagues, you may choose not to participate. Otherwise, all departments are to report in as soon as possible. Red alert, battle stations. Prepare for stiff resistance.”

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**Cadet (Senior) Quaren  
I.D.A.F. Command Training Program**

“Alright, so,” Reyth remarked as he pried the cover off an electrical board, “you remember when I told you to always keep your tools with you?”

I raised an eyeridge as I shifted, making sure the older Drakonian could get a good look in the panel as I shone a light in for him, “Yeah?”

“Well, did you?” He replied with a snort as he looked over the various control cards and cables.

I held up one of my wrenches in response and he nodded, taking it, “You’re cutting command links aren’t you?”

“No,” He replied as he squinted at a few more markings in the board while wrapping the handle of the wrench with some electrical tape that he had produced out of one of his ten million pockets. I assumed he was going to start unbolting things and pulling cards out.

“Then what-“ He didn’t let me finish.

Instead, with a flick of his wrist, Reyth smashed through the entire rank of control cards then proceeded to toss the wrench into the board, causing it to arc and fizzle before the entire thing fried itself and went dark. “Cutting implies we want it to be clean and repairable. We don’t.”

My mouth worked for a moment before he thumped me on the shoulder and gestured for me to follow him. “So...”

I could have sworn he giggled slightly, “We are engineers, we break things just as badly as we fix them well. You threw your lot in with me, now you’re going to help me break the ship. Now, lets cut propulsion control.”

“Got it, then comms?” I replied, already crawling along the pathway with him as he closed the panel behind him with his tail.

He snorted, “At the same time preferably, I’ll show you a few tricks. We’ve better figure out who gave the ship up too – nobody just waltzes in like that.”

I nodded and away into the gloom we crawled.

If not for my watch, I would probably have lost track of time. Reyth brought me all around the various maintenance corridors, making sure to stay far from the actual corridors and such of the ship as we smashed and occasionally shot our way through the key systems. He would sometimes stop at a debug workstation to track things and was surprisingly happy to find that we had also taken the primary weapons down as a bonus.

There seemed to still be pockets of resistance aboard the ship and they seemed to be keeping our uninvited guests busy, having caught onto the cascading systems failures as their own people at work. To add a little to the chaos, we cut lighting power to several decks too.

It was hard to find who had turned all the internal countermeasures off – everything was too well encrypted till Reyth let loose a snarl when he recognised the type of encryption. Only senior staff has access to that and who knows which officer was the traitor. I suppose, though, it doesn’t really matter at this point.

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**Snr Captain Tano’rath**  
**Cmdr, DES Defiant**

“Alright I’m reading all the other ships falling into formation. Have jammers ready to go,” I remarked, rubbing my chin as the ship hurtled towards the target, “Have boarding parties do their final checks.”

“The other ships report ready. Weapons hot and troops ready,” Talorath replied, tapping away on his screen, “I’m seeing a lone Alliance cruiser on long range scans, nothing more. Seems like we went a bit overboard.”

“I suspect Command has a point to make,” I replied with a snort, “Advise the troops just before departure of the priority target. I will handle him personally on Command’s request.”

“Oh, yeah, you wanted to know if there were any Drakonian lifesigns on the Alliance ship, yea?” Talorath added, flicking some data my way as he tapped away on his screen, “Probes showing none. It’s an older ship too, nothing special.”

“Good. Target them for first strike,” I replied with a snort, flicking my tail. Not even the courtesy of sending a new ship after ours to keep up appearances. “Target their fuel and reactors, we don’t want them calling reinforcements or running. Boarding parties to be sent simultaneously.”

Talorath nodded as he talked away into his headset and I did a final check on my arms and armour. Don’t really know what to expect and I don’t exactly want to find out, but well, it’s part of the job.

Briefings were handed out to team leaders while the various fighters and shuttles were prepped. There wasn’t awfully much to do other than to remind people to mind their lines of fire so that they didn’t hit the friendlies. There were already rumours about resistance on the ship and the cloaked probes we sent ahead showed a lot of the systems were without power or experiencing intermittent dropouts.

I spent the time in between going through the veritable mountain of proof against the traitor. There were intercepted secret messages, leaked plans and documents, all with his fingerprints all over them. If this is a plant, it’s a damn good one and I doubt it is, unless hes gone and done something to majorly tick off the I.I.S...

As we got close, I grabbed my rifle, handed the bridge over to Talorath and walked down to join one of the teams.

We were on the clock, of course, the I.I.S. ships weren’t that far off and it would be a matter of hours before they caught up and we would have to mop up whatever we were doing...and probably whatever they were going to do. Either way, the shuttle and fighter engines were primed as we waited for the ships to drop out of FTL.

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**Cadet (Senior) Quaren**  
**I.D.A.F. Command Training Program**

It felt like days but it was probably hours as Reyth and I crawled around the maintenance pathways, destroying new system routes as we fought by proxy with the Alliance engineers who were trying to get the systems back online.

They had flooded a few compartments with gas and vented a few others, but we reversed that and locked them out of life support for a short while. A few of the troops had also come after us, but Reyth knew these ships like the back of his hand and he quite easily gave them the slip. He even led a group of them into one of their own clouds of gas, knocking them cold.

Given the situation, I would have been happy to let them lie, but instead, Reyth took a deep before he scuttled in and came out with a pair of rifles and two knives. He handed me a set as we headed off.

We had also tried to get a distress signal out, but the comms array was already down for maintenance and a quick peek with an exterior camera showed an Alliance cruiser parked alongside our vessel. They'd pick it up instantly and sound the alarm.

There are only so many junction boxes you can smash up and circuits you can short out, though, and we eventually started making our way to the secondary bridge. The system showed that that area was sealed and locked off, with the Captain's transponder showing as present there. Because we had sabotaged the internal sensors, though, we had no idea if he was just seeking refuge there or being held hostage...

As we crawled and shimmied our way along the maintenance corridors, we began hearing a few bangs and the ship shuddered a few times. There would be the sound of weapons fire here or an explosion there.

It didn't take long for Reyth to stop and listen before he looked over at me, relief in his eyes, "Those are ours."

"What, the weapons fire?" I replied, cocking my head at him as we started moving again.

"Yeah, but it could be a trap. Lets stick with the plan and see what happens," he replied with a snort as he pointed me in the right direction, "Who do you think did it?"

"Don't know, the Captain didn't give me much bridge time so I don't really know anyone," I replied with a shrug, "I mean the tactical officer, what was his name, uh, Eron, seemed a bit twitchy, but tactical officers always are a bit like that, I'm told."

“What do you mean you didn’t get much bridge time? You’re coming up for final assessment!” Reyth snapped, turning round to glare at me, “You should be living on the bridge and with your chosen department! Weren’t you with ops...nevermind.”

“No, I opted for Engineering,” I replied flatly, the irony more than weighing on me as we continued moving, “I heard it was something about my previous mentor.”

Reyth snorted as we continued moving, getting close to the secondary bridge now, “I read your file, or well, skimmed it. Captain Yathut doesn’t like Tano’rath, but that’s more than a bit much. I’ll have a word with him after this for you.”

“You don’t have to,” I replied with a sigh, “My assignment is ending anyway, or well, supposed to end.”

“We’re here, shush!” Reyth remarked, lowering his tone as he beckoned for me to join him at an air vent.

The vent looked down into the secondary bridge, showing our captain, Yathut, standing around with three other Alliance officers, having a chat as they sipped drinks. In the background, the other bridge officers were either slumped over their consoles or bound up and cuffed. They glared and stared but to no avail. The room was still decently well lit and the captain didn’t seem to care. There was blood on the floor near some of the stations and claw marks on some of the touchscreens and the cramped room made everything look bloodier than it should. While Reyth seemed to be considering a course of action as we looked down through the slats of the vent, the room’s door hissed open.

Our sabotages to the internal sensors meant that the group had no idea till four of our marines stormed in and shot the Alliance officers in the blink of an eye. Yathut started and stumbled forwards, reaching over to his command chair for his sidearm. They had obviously been drinking, didn’t take a genius to figure it out.

Meanwhile, following in the rear with a rifle was a familiar figure – Captain Tano’rath.

“You!” Yathut snarled and lunged at his counterpart, fumbling with his pistol in the process.

Tano’rath, clad in full assault armour surged forward with a snarl and swung his rifle, hitting the other Drakonian square on the jaw with the butt of his rifle before slamming the butt hard on Yathut’s temple, causing the green-scaled Drakonian to crumple to the floor, out cold. The two conscious bridge officers gave a ragged cheer as the marines cleared the room, freed them and tended to their wounds.

Tano'rath himself glared at Yathut with disgust that he barely bothered to conceal before he spat over his shoulder. "Cuff him and drag him to the brig, take the scenic route."

Reyth was watching almost wide-eyed before Tano'rath turned and looked straight up at us, almost making eye contact with me, "You lot can come down now."

I was about to pop the hatch open before Reyth shook his head. Could be a trap.

Down below, Tano'rath shrugged and turned to walk out the door. One of the marines grabbed the comatose Yathut and dragged him by the tail out the door. The other followed close behind, presumably to stun Yathut again if he woke up. I suppose that answers the question of who it was...

One of the marines asked Tano'rath if they should linger and he waved a hand dismissively. He gave another glance up our vent before shrugging and heading to the door, "Nah, if they want to stay in a fucking ventilation shaft, that's their problem. The retrieval team will get em out whenever."

Reyth frowned and looked over at me, "That's not protocol."

"No, but that's Tano'rath," I replied as I popped the hatch open and slipped down, flaring my wings to slow my fall.

Tano'rath himself was almost out the door and he stopped to watch me and then Reyth slip out of the vent. He smiled slightly the moment he saw me and walked back over but caught himself when he saw Reyth settle next to me. "Cadet, Lieutenant. Am I right to assess you as unharmed?"

"Nothing major, sir," Reyth replied as he saluted and I followed, "I-uh"

"What just happened is that I just arrested a traitor," Tano'rath replied flatly, flicking his tail as he glanced around the room at the other command crew, "I can give you the evidence to review if you want, but there is a shit ton of it. I am Captain Tano'rath from the *Defiant*, part of the task force sent to retrieve this vessel. The medics will be here shortly to tend to the wounded but I suggest you follow me to sickbay"

"Sir, with all due respect, I must return to engineering," Reyth protested as Tano'rath pointed us to the door.

Tano'rath himself smirked slightly and shook his head, "Ship aint going anywhere for the next few hours after you slagged half the control boxes, Lieutenant. Good work, but I need to make sure nothing inside you is slagged, so if you please."

Reyth was obviously expecting to be ordered to leave and seemed to be almost confused at being given a choice. Tano'rath, who obviously had other places to be ran out of patience and started walking out the door. Reyth just quietly fell in step behind the captain and I followed.

Tano'rath left us in the care of a pair of medics in our sickbay as he excused himself, having to presumably deal with his prisoner back to his vessel. He promised to be back and from his tone, I could already tell that he took no pleasure in his task.

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**Snr Captain Tano'rath**  
**Cmdr, DES Defiant**

Everyone knows the commander's creed. Not everyone knows the weight it carries.

*Duty first to species, then to crew, then to Empire.*

In line with tradition, the former captain Yathut was first dragged down the corridors of his vessel, then made to walk when he came to by the two marines. Traitors deserve no dignity, especially those who shoot those whose lives were entrusted to them.

I suppose we would have just stunned him and led him away normally if he was a lieutenant or something, but he isn't and with more than a quarter of his crew injured or dead from this escapade, there wasn't any pity, let alone leniency to dish out.

I didn't take the same shuttle as him, regulations prohibit me from entering into such a risky situation. He was instead already in the brig on board the *Defiant* when I boarded my shuttle.

I don't really know what made me walk to his cell, actually. My job here is already done, I don't need to talk to him – there are no statements to take, nobody to call either. Fleet officers don't question traitors, that's for the I.I.S. to handle. As for the call, well, he lost that right the moment he threw his duty out the airlock.

Old times sake, maybe. We were friends once, but once we enlisted, we went almost opposite ways. He by the book, me by my own way. I climbed the ranks quicker than him thanks to both circumstance and ability and he grew to resent me for it.

Either way, I walked into the brig, still in my armour and placed my helmet on the console, nodding to the sergeant in charge, who gave us the room.

Torn uniform, missing scales, a big bruise on his temple and a torn wing.

Clearly tried to escape. Failed, of course.

He sat quietly nursing his wounds, which had been dressed, though nothing more. As the sergeant left, he looked up. Confusion at first, then his expression soured, turning into a scowl. "Come to gloat, have you?"

I half considered grabbing one of the folding chairs from the nearby locker, but I didn't want to linger that long. The I.I.S. will be here soon anyway. I just shook my head as I leaned my rifle against the console. "No. I just wanted to know why."

"Why should I tell you?" He snarled, glaring over at me, "You, of all people."

I turned to retrieve my helmet, "Then don't."

I could hear him get up and walk over to the barred door and force field. "Is that all you came here to say?"

"Is there anything else for me to say, Yathut?" I replied flatly, gesturing to the cell, "I just wanted to know, but if you won't tell me, I'm sure the I.I.S. will."

That flared his anger a little, "...Is that a threat?"

"No, it's a fact." I replied as the doors hissed open and in walked Lieutenant Telricktus. "Time's up. Goodbye, Yathut."

Yathut's mouth worked but he recognised the black uniform that Telricktus wore – Imperial Intelligence Service. Whatever he had to say died on his lips.

Telricktus himself looked over at me, then at Yathut. He frowned and in an unnatural show of emotional aptitude, he gestured to the door, “Do you need more time, Captain? I can wait outside.”

“No. We’re done here,” I replied tersely, picking my equipment up as I headed to the door, “He’s yours.”

Telricktus nodded as I headed to the door. As I left, two I.I.S. troops walked in, one of them already unlocking a set of cuffs to use. They nodded to me and I nodded back as I left.

I was half expecting Yathut to say something, but he just kept quiet.

I ended up spending the rest of the day helping to get the Tremos operational and perhaps to keep my mind off things. Reports were sent to Hector and everything was acknowledged and squared away. Counselling was arranged for the crew and I ended up appointing the chief engineer, Reyth, who I had met earlier, as the acting captain to limp the ship home under escort.

Telricktus whisked Yathut away for questioning at one of the various I.I.S. sites. I was informed that he cited threats to his family as his reason for committing treason, but they also found promises of a cushy retirement for himself in the communications that we had intercepted. There was also a handsome fortune squirrelled away for him on a neutral planet. All property of the state now, of course.

To think I went to university with him and that my trainers in command school compared me to him as I would break too many of the rules, while he would stick to the straight and narrow.

After several months of questioning, Yathut stood before a court martial and was found guilty of high treason, among other things. There is only one penalty for such a long list of treason charges and no recourse.

As the counterintelligence operation was set in motion to deal with his cronies and associates, Yathut was put up against a wall and put out of his misery.

When the news broke, I took the day off. Didn’t really know what to do, but well, I knew I wasn’t going to be in any shape to do my job. I had a few drinks, thinking that it would take my mind off the whole thing, but it didn’t. I ended up flicking through some old photos from my younger days and wondering why it had to end this way. Tal and I used to joke around about Yathut being so by the book to cover him being a spy or something along those lines. Now that it had turned out to be true, that humor evaporated.

There's no way I could have changed this outcome. If I had refused to take the mission, they would've sent someone else. Either way, I still think about it sometimes. Even keeps me awake some nights.