

As we approached the end of our lightspeed journey, everyone gathered at the bridge and common room of the *Talos Chariot*. It had been quite a while since we had all last been together, working on one mission and basing out of the *Chariot*, so it actually felt a little nostalgic. Our ship had been like our home, and while I wasn't usually one to let wistful thoughts get in the way of progress, there was something about our ship that was special.

In truth, I had been considering replacing the *Talos Chariot* as the flagship of the 1st Group for a while now. Yes, it was punchy for its size, as was the *Forward Charge*, but both of them were on the small side compared to the rest of the groups. That had its advantages, sure, but as our targets got bigger, so did the threats. The *Chariot* didn't even have the heavy weapons modification in its nose.

Granted, I did love the teardrops attached to the hull, but those could only get us so far, since they weren't exactly built to take on capital ships. I would have to bring it up sometime after this mission, or next time it was calm enough to work on. For now, however, we got to enjoy the familiar amenities of the *Chariot*, relaxing in the lounge while Calima piloted the ship.

Eventually, unfortunately, that relaxation ended as Calima called out that we were dropping out of hyperspace soon.

"Alright, people, look alive," I commented, making my way to the bridge. "We have no idea what is waiting for us, so we treat it as a danger zone and adjust our judgment as we secure the facility ruins."

The rest of our group dropped out of hyperspace around us a moment after we arrived, and together we began descending towards the planet. Our handy list gave us some loose coordinates, the best that our clone members could manage, and enough for us to get close to the surface and scan with our sensors. It didn't take long for us to find it, but we still approached slowly, taking plenty of time to survey the area around the base.

As far as our long-range sensors could tell, the planet had no large-scale life forms, and only a smattering of smaller forms scattered through the small amount of livable space on the planet. It was an unforgiving world, which was probably why the droids chose it.

Once we had our target, we moved in, most of the group landing around the outskirts, while the *Forward Charge* remained in the sky, giving us better sensor readings, both on the ship and the surrounding area.

The facility was separated into two parts, and all that we could see was in bad condition. A simple military base, a hundred meters wide and maybe twice that long, was the first thing you noticed. It was completely wrecked, with crumbling walls and craters marking a good amount of its interior, which was already mostly rubble.

The military base was directly connected to another building, which had once been some sort of tower, maybe thirty or forty meters tall. It might have been impressive once, but now it was all but leveled, collapsed away from the broken and crumbling military base.

"Not exactly promising, Boss," Julius pointed out as we stepped out of the Chariot, the gravely, broken surface of the planet crunching beneath our feet. "Are you sure we are going to find anything useful here?"

"No, I'm not," I admitted. "But according to the clones, the facility goes much deeper than this, so we won't know until we start poking around."

The *Liberty Rush* was the last of our ships to land, and quickly deployed a few dozen B2s and some faster-moving tanks to secure the perimeter. At the same time, my team and Corvak's people moved into the ruins, slowly making our way through the wreckage in search of anything useful.

It took us about two hours of scanning, digging, shifting rubble, and cutting through broken doors to finally find a path down to the tower's lower levels. As it was clearly going to be cramped, Corvak left half his team on the surface, covering our exit as we began to explore deeper.

The going was slow at first, as we had to clear more debris, but the deeper we went, the easier it got. Four floors down, and we were able to walk around in the clear, Racer following behind us, occasionally hovering over debris.

"This place seems pretty well cleared out," Ahsoka said, scanning through a room with a flashlight, the entire thing empty save for a few desks and a chair.

"I'm getting a feeling we might not be the first people to clear this place," I admitted with a frown.

Unfortunately, despite my suspicions, we could leave without finishing our search. We split up into pairs and spread out, clearing the facility room by room. As we reached the bottom floors of the entire underground portion of the facility, it became clear that the building had been thoroughly stripped down, either by the CIS recovering its assets or by some other scavenger looking to make some money.

Either way, there weren't enough systems for us to piece together anything useful. We did find a few interesting things, some working computers, some servers, and a bit of tech I didn't recognize, but that was hardly what we were looking for. We ended up stuffing it all into crates for Miru and her team to puzzle over when we got back.

We then ran one last quick sweep as we backed out, evacuating the military base and loading our droids back into the *Liberty Rush*, before boarding our own ships and taking off. Despite our lack of success, we were determined to continue, so not long after we reached space, we took another jump, heading to the next possible location on our list of destinations.

We checked two more sites over the next week, and both of which came up empty. The first was a large battlefield, where clones were attempting to destroy a CIS mining facility. According to our clones, they were successful, but some of the equipment had been pretty deep underground and might have survived the attack.

We did actually find some mostly automated mining equipment, which we marked for pick up, but the remaining undamaged area did not have the infrastructure to carry any valuable intelligence.

The second place was an even worse dud, a Separatist fuel production station that had been disabled but was left pretty intact, according to the clones, at least. Unfortunately, the station was gone when we arrived, most likely swallowed by the gas giant it had orbited. With nothing to investigate, we quickly picked another location from the list and jumped away.

During all of this, we received a few bits of news from home. Our other teams both returned from their missions, both of their trainee squads now understanding a bit better about what the Skyforged Vanguard was all about. Those two newly "trained" teams would be stationed on the *Hope*, allowing it and the *Wonder* to now go on their own missions. After a two-day break from missions, the two groups took two more squads under their wing, taking them out on new missions. I was a bit surprised by the quick turnaround, but not about to look a gift horse in the mouth.

According to the reports, the original two missions returned with plenty of recovered assets to pay for the mission. They also stated that both groups returned with ships that could become part of 5th Group, pending approval when we eventually returned home.

Hopefully, a combination of 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Groups going out on more missions would mean a fully stocked group ready to go sooner rather than later.

Speaking of home, after spending almost two weeks bouncing around the mid and outer rim, the time to make our own trip back was approaching. We have seen several failures now, and while I wasn't nearly ready to just toss the idea out yet, it was definitely approaching a good time to head home, recharge our batteries, refuel, and restock.

Before that, however, we had one more spot to try from the list. It was relatively nearby, so it made sense to clear it before heading back to Nirn.

According to a few of our clone pilots, a group of venators had ambushed a smaller group of CIS ships, managing to take them down in short order. Most of the starships were still in space, empty dead hulls torn apart by Republic forces. There was one ship, however, that had entered the nearby planet's gravity field and atmosphere as it attempted to escape. Unfortunately for the crew, its thrusters were disabled while trying, causing it to fall onto the planet's surface.

The hope was that its crash was mitigated enough by its repulsors that there might be something worth taking from its system.

Our mission here had three main points. First, we would investigate the system for any recent activity. The system was remote enough that there shouldn't be anything around, so spotting something was a bad sign. If the system was empty, it would be a great way to pick up some salvage. So, our second part was to fly in, investigate any wreckage, and tag anything we

saw that might be worth investigating before heading down to the surface to complete the third part, which was to search the grounded ship for anything worthwhile.

Assuming it wasn't a smear on the side of a mountain or something.

We dropped out of hyperspace a reasonable distance from the planet, wanting the extra space to calibrate and start our scans. As we slowly approached, the group spread out, running scans to find the heart of the conflict. Already, we could pick up small bits of debris, some pinging off our shields. Eventually, as we circled the planet, which itself was a tiny, cold, mostly barren rock with very little atmosphere, we located the central cluster of space debris.

At first, we ignored the wrecks, turning our scanners away from them to scan for any nearby energy emissions. This was the only real attraction in the system, so anyone sniffing around before us would have come through here. Luckily, after scanning for a good twenty minutes, we couldn't find any sign of ships passing through.

We turned back to the wreckage, slowly flying in between the massive ships, scanning them for anything useful, observing the torn and destroyed hulls as we passed by. In total, there were five major wrecks in orbit of the small, barren planet. A single [Munificent-class](#) star frigate, a [Recusant-class](#) light destroyer, and two [Hardcells-class](#) transports. There was also a venator with its bridge blown off and vast chunks of its undercarriage mangled and burned.

All of the ships were missing at least twenty to thirty percent of their mass, and none of them had any chance of being repaired. They would, however, make for excellent salvage.

"Okay, let's get some scans of the Hardcells first," I order, pointing through the viewport of the *Chariot*. "They are primarily transports, so chances are they are stuffed with goodies. Whether they survived is a different question. Have the *Hound* scan the venator. The bottom is a wreck, but at least three of those heavy turbolasers look intact."

Our comms droid nodded, and soon the group split up even further, running scans over the larger ships, feeding the *Chariot* data so we could shoot it back to the Salvage Fleet. The fleet of haulers, L-2783s, repair ships, and more had grown considerably since they last had a project like this, and I was looking forward to what they were able to recover.

When our scans were complete, we consolidated them into a single data packet, which we sent via hyperwave to the Salvage Fleet. They would arrive here in a few days and get to work, hopefully finding some hidden gems in the debris. Once our message was sent, the group began the slow descent towards the planet's surface, already scanning for the crashed ship. The size of the planet and the lack of appreciable atmosphere was actually working in our favor, as both made it easier to scan for the wreck, both with our sensors and visually.

Still, it was a whole planet, and while the clones insisted the ship didn't get far, I had no measurements for what sort of distance that was.

We worked in a spiral pattern, starting from just under the space battle above, working our way outwards. Honestly, once we spotted the wreckage, it was clear we probably could have skipped the scans and just looked visually.

The wreckage of the ship stretched out several times longer than the ship itself, which was a Providence-class. Despite that, the core of the ship was surprisingly intact and recognizable, though still clearly damaged. Its thrusters were gone, its bridge snapped and crumpled, and its hull ground into the dirt.

"That's a lot of ship to search through," Tatnia pointed out. "This might not be a quick job."

"We have the general layout already," I pointed out. "We can explore if you want, but the central core is my first destination, followed by the flight logs."

We landed around the ship, positioning ourselves near the easiest access point, the open hangar bay along the back side of the starship. There, we would be able to easily boost ourselves inside with our repulsor. As usual, the *Forward Charge* remained in the air, keeping an eye out for any incoming threats.

As we climbed down the *Chariot's* boarding ramp, I could hear the click of the internal heaters in my armor turning on, the temperature reading outside my armor reading a dangerously low number. Thankfully, with how thin the atmosphere was, there was very little in the way of wind. I still instructed everyone to carry spare power packs in case we needed more time.

Nearby, a few speeders and B2s were deployed from the *Liberty Rush*, quickly spreading out in small teams. The ship was too big to cover completely, so they focused on securing our exit point, which, for now, was the same as our entry point.

"Alright, everyone. Same idea as the last few times," I said through the comms, getting various confirmations in return. "Stick together, keep your eyes open, watch out for environmental hazards as much as active threats. If anyone loses connection, retreat back to the last checkpoint. Everyone ready?"

After everyone confirmed they were set, I led the group upwards, using my repulsor pack to gain access to the large hangar bay. It was a considerable jump up before our boots made contact with the deck, the two teams stepping further inside.

The inside of the hangar was a broken, torn-apart mess. Several dozen starfighters, which were barely recognizable, had been slammed into the walls and floor as the ship impacted the ground. Fires had clearly raged in several spots, and since the entire area was so large, it made spotting the bend that had been beaten into the ship's superstructure easy.

"Watch your footing, everyone," I warned again. "No idea how badly those fires damaged the paneling."

With the hangar in such a state of utter disrepair, it took several minutes to find exits that were intact enough to function. When we did, we carefully sliced into the control matrix of the door and fed it some power, forcing it to open with a rough grinding noise that was cut with the sound of snapping and cracking gears, the door only partially opened. Thankfully, there was just enough room for us to cross through.

Our primary targets, the flight logs and the central core, were kept in different parts of the ship, meaning that our two teams almost immediately needed to split up, with my crew moving down and forward, while Corvak's team needed to move directly up. I wasn't overly concerned, however, as I was sure we could handle just about anything the ship or planet could throw at us.