

The space around the secret storage station was awash with explosions and bolts of laser energy, green, red, and blue all mixing together. It was a scene of quantified chaos, with me orchestrating one side while, far along on the other side, an Imperial was trying their best to hold their own.

Two squadrons of TIE fighters had swarmed out from the Victory-class *Deceptor*, while *four more* came pouring out of the station. Not only that, but the station itself was much more heavily armed than we anticipated. On top of that, the two Arquitens were captained by competent officers, who utilized their size and speed, as well as the station itself, to their advantage.

Watching the battle from the viewport of the *Hope's* bridge, I could see our starfighters clashing with Imperial forces... and absolutely trouncing them. TIE fighters, accustomed to being the fastest and most nimble in the battle space, were being eviscerated by our modified A-wings, or MA-wings, I had learned people were calling them. Between the starfighters' superior speed, agility, and shields, as well as the fact that each of the pilots on board had enhanced reflexes past what humans could normally achieve, the TIE fighters did not have a chance. There were a few damaged ships, and two MA-wing that were destroyed to the point that they needed to be recovered, but so far, against seventy-two total Imperial pilots, we were handily coming out on top.

Of course, the Heavy ARCs were helping with that as well. In between releasing a torrent of proton torpedoes, the dangerous light gunships would punch through clouds of TIE fighters, dodging and weaving between turbolaser blasts, only for their gunner to chew through starfighters that tried to chase them. Then, like an added layer of insult, they would switch to another bombing run, hammering the *Deceptor's* shields.

Through all that chaos, great beams of energy tore through, missing all starfighters but slamming into each capital ship's shields. The green of the Imperials competed heavily with the *Hope's* blue, the *Deceptor's* superior firepower clearly showing.

"Shield at eighty percent," an officer reported, his follow-up swallowed by a slightly more urgent voice.

"Sir, the *Forge* is reporting at seventy percent," the other voice called out. "They are chasing the Arquitens around the station, but they can't keep up, and the station is hammering them."

"Tell them to focus fire on the station as they fly around, but keep chasing the Arquitens. Take out the turrets but nothing more," I ordered. "Bring us around the station as well, so we can pin the Arquitens between us and slow them down. Tell the *Tool Trio* to get ready and tuck the *Wonder* under us to protect it from the station. Sensors, report!"

"Nearly two-thirds of their starfighter screen has been destroyed! *Deceptor* down to fifty percent shields and dropping. Station shields are weakening as well, but they are falling in sections, with exposed areas more protected."

The station was big, much bigger than I had expected, but well within what we had planned for. It was built into an asteroid, with most of the station concealed beneath its rocky exterior. There were, however, several sections, including two massive separate hangars, three large armored sections, as well as two large and sealed exterior doors, the kind that usually hid hangars. In this case, they were most likely access points to a large storage level, if what my gut was telling me was correct.

The station was also equipped with weapon emplacements, making it a highly dangerous target. We had anticipated it being armed, but not this well armed.

"Pull the Hyenas and Tri-fighters off of the *Forge* and *Anvil*, have them focus on the station," I responded. "Make sure they are being careful, but take down their turrets."

As I called out orders, the *Hope* shifted as we moved, turning away from the Victory-class, though still engaging it. The *Deceptor* began to shift as well, looking to close the distance, probably so it could use its onboard proton torpedoes. Another barrage of explosives slammed into the Imperial ship, this one much larger than the previous, as all Heavy ARCs managed to engage together.

"*Deceptor* shields at forty percent!"

"Send them a request to surrender, then put more power into swinging around the station!" I responded.

The *Deceptor's* push to engage closer was cut off by the station, an added bonus as our real target, the Arquitens, were forced to slow and shift their direction, especially as we opened fire with our heavy tubolasers, the larger weapon batteries dumping massive amounts of energy into both of the smaller ship's shields.

Of course, neither of those ships wanted to stay close to the *Hope* any longer than they were forced to. They peeled off in different directions, trying to dodge our turbolaser blasts. One tried to sneak out along the station, while the other blasted out towards empty space.

"Release the *Tool Trio*," I ordered. "Have them chase down the furthest starship. Tell the *Anvil* and the droid fleet to move in to follow after them, working together to pin it down. *Forge* is with us, finish the other ship before it escapes range or dips behind the station again!"

All of our heavy turbolasers fired together, and I could see the *Forge* opening up as well, slamming energy into the closest Arquiten. The energy from our weapons slammed into its shields, causing them to glow brightly, before a series of internal explosions occurred, bursting free of the ship's hull before the shields dropped. The shield generators had detonated as we overwhelmed them with energy.

"Hold fire! Offer a surrender!" I called out to comms, who spoke quickly into his console, the Twi'lek woman trying to get a response from the enemy ship.

Before the comms officer could say anything, something about the ship's movements caught my eye.

"All spare power to forward shields! Emergency Starboard roll! OPEN FIRE!"

The smaller ship, which was just under a fifth the size of the *Hope*, turned and angled towards us, even as dozens of turbolasers smashed into its hull, cutting and melting the armored plating and detonating various turrets and sensor systems. Still, the ship moved, aiming itself at us and pushing forward. Thankfully, I had spotted the attempt to drive itself into our starship, so that when our laserfire finally detonated its engine, between our roll and the shields being focused forward, the now dead ship ricocheted off the energy barrier, rather than plowing through it.

Even so, the whole ship felt the impact, several warning lights going off behind me as consoles received minor damage reports, and nearly knocking me off my feet.

"Our shields are down to forty percent, Sir!"

"Pull us around so we can focus fire back on the *Deceptor*," I ordered. "Have the *Forge* follow us in, target the station's turrets as we move until the *Deceptor* is in range!"

Turbolaser fire from the station had slowed, as the hyenas had done their jobs and bombed most of the emplacements to smithereens before I ordered them to chase down the second Arquitens. What they didn't get before being redirected was now being melted to slag between the combined efforts of the *Hope* and the *Forge*.

As we pulled back around the station, I caught a glimpse of the *Tool Trio* and the *Anvil*, laying fire into the last Arquiten. Its shields were knocked down as the three C-ROCs used their heavy turbolasers to slag its hull, each of them dancing around and behind the *Anvil* as cover, even as the larger ship poured its own firepower into the warship. Even as we came back around the station, the *Deceptor* coming into full view, I could see secondary explosions tearing apart the smaller ship. Unfortunately, I barely even recognized that victory, as we had a very big problem bearing down on us. While we had been tearing down the two smaller ships and helping the *Forge*, the *Deceptor* had gotten much closer than I anticipated.

As we left the protection of the station, they were well within proton torpedo range.

"Cut engines, all power to forward shields!" I ordered. "Pull the *Wonder* forward and prepare for torpedo bombardment!"

Only about thirty seconds after I relayed my order, the Victory-class opened fire, dozens of large proton torpedoes launching from various tubes, all of them heading for the *Hope*. Our point defense system went wild, but only managed to destroy a couple of the incoming missiles. Meanwhile, the *Wonder*'s much more nimble weapons were slightly more effective, but dozens of torpedoes still slammed into our shields.

The explosion was bright, almost blinding, lighting up the interior of the bridge even as the viewports darkened to protect us, rocking the ship enough that I would have been tossed to the floor if I hadn't managed to activate my mag boots, locking me to the floor.

"Shields at fifteen percent! Sir, we can't take another one of those!" The bridge cried out, recovering enough to read their console again.

"All power to weapons, all available ships focus fire on the *Deceptor* now!"

The space around the large Imperial ship was suddenly bright with energy, as everyone emptied themselves on it. The *Hope* and *Forge* hit it from the front, while the *Anvil* and *Tool Trio* zipped in around back and opened up. On top of that, the shield was bombarded by waves of proton torpedoes as a fourth barrage slammed into it, followed by a fifth as the Hyena group arrived on the scene. Explosions dumping their energy into the protective bubble...

Until it wasn't there anymore, a handful of torpedoes slamming into the hull of the ship, carving craters into the armor plating.

"Offer a surrender, switch to ion cannons, and hammer the proton torpedo launchers!" I ordered the turbolaser bombardment switched on immediately, electricity and sparks playing over the ship as ion energy was fired into its weapon systems.

"Sir, no response, and the ship is still firing at us. Shields at ten percent."

"Fuck... Alright, kill the bridge, start disabling weapons," I ordered. "Strip it down until they surrender."

For the next two minutes, I watched as our forces systematically disabled the ship, blasting its engines with ion energy, frying or blowing up its weapons, and turning the bridge into slag. All the while, we waited for a surrender that never came. Eventually, through no fault of anyone's, something sensitive was hit, and an internal explosion rocked the large Imperial ship, cutting all its power suddenly. Even the glow of its hangar bay mag shield faded, the starship continuing to drift on its last course, out into space, just past our port side.

For a long moment, the bridge was quiet as we all waited for the other shoe to drop, for the *Deceptor* to power back up and start attacking again. When nothing happened, I made a call to all ships to check for any damage or issues.

"The *Forge* is at twenty percent shields and climbing, the *Anvil* is at thirty and climbing. Our shields are at ten and climbing," One officer responded as I watched the holoprojector.

"Squadrons are reporting a total of eleven damaged starfighters, three of which were forced to eject. Two pilots recovered, one lost."

"Damn," I said, letting out a long breath. "Okay, once our people are safe, I want any knocked-out TIEs collected, any surviving Imperial pilots escorted to the detainment cells. I want the Heavy ARCs making a run around the station, clearing the last bits of resistance from the weapon emplacements, and destroying the shield projectors. Ground teams will be leaving in ten, and I want one squad of ARCs and one of MA-wings escorting us. Comms, link me up."

The comms officer gave me a signal after a moment, letting me know I was being sent out to all of our ships.

"Well done, everyone, but the work is just beginning," I explained. "There is no way they didn't get a distress message off, and our research says we have less than twenty hours until the nearest Imperial reinforcements can arrive, but I want us gone in fifteen. That may sound like a lot, but we don't know what kind of issues we may encounter. Follow your secondary tasks, prepare and follow your orders. Admiral Deacon out."

Once I finished addressing my people, I passed command of the *Hope* back to its actual captain before quickly making my way to the starship's massive hangar. The large top doors were already opening, preparing to start recovering all of the TIE fighters my pilots were able to disable using their ion cannons. Each TIE was worth about twenty thousand credits used, so even if we only recovered a handful, we would still make an easy couple of hundred thousand credits. They sold quick to, as they were fast and relatively cheap armed ships, perfect for defending and navigating homesteads and colonies.

And with all our space, we had no reason not to pick them up, especially as the freighters we were transporting were flying up and out of the larger starship, preparing to take on cargo.

Once I was in the hangar, it didn't take me long to find the LAATi transports, prepped and ready to fly, all of them waiting for me. Tatnia and Ahsoka were waiting for me outside one of the nearest transports, and together we climbed in. As the transport doors closed behind me, I pulled on my helmet, feeling it seal down around my head.

"Alright, let's go! Stick with our escort and land us in the closest hangar!" I instructed through the comms.

A quick confirmation from our pilots later, and I could feel the ship lifting off from the hangar deck, the thrum of repulsors carrying us up and out of the *Hope*. Suddenly, everything was quiet as we passed into the void, leaving the protection of the large starship behind. The silence stretched longer and longer, the humming of the ship our only distraction. Finally, after what felt like hours, but was more likely only a minute or so, our pilot spoke up.

"Heavy ARCs reporting all threats around the nearest hangar are cleared," our pilot said through our comms. "Approaching landing site now."

After another long moment, suddenly all the sound returned, and a thump reverberated through us. The side panels of the LAATi slid away immediately, revealing the interior of the massive [Imperial-style](#) hangar. Already, blaster bolts tore through the air around us, leaving black marks against the transport ship but bouncing off our armor.

Before I could even call out the heavy laser cannon emplacements along the far wall of the hangar, two different LAATi gunners fired thick green beams of energy, cutting into the far wall and through the emplacements, slagging the weapons and causing several secondary explosions. I was throwing bolts of lightning down range as we quickly started to clear the hangar, establishing a beachhead on the station.

Suddenly, as we began to push forward, Ahsoka's voice was calling through the comms, sounding urgent. I instinctively looked over to her, the Togruta around ten meters away, deflecting blaster bolts as easily as she breathed.

"Deacon! Stop! We need to switch to stun weapons!" She called out over the comms, shouting instinctively to be heard over the laser fire and explosion.

"What? Why?" I asked, confused, reabsorbing a lethal spell to focus on her. "What's wrong?"

"They are clones!" She responded, blocking a dense barrage before knocking half a dozen troopers off their feet with the Force. "All of these stormtroopers are clones! I can feel them!"