

A Challenge in need is a Challenge indeed

PART I

Eagle Squadron prowled through the darkness picking off the TIE Bombers one by one. The squadron had deployed with every ounce of power fed from the shields and weapons subsystems to the engines; additionally, the fighters deployed with only two homing missiles each. A dangerous move, considering the loss of offensive firepower in a desperate fight. The squadron had agreed on the armament minutes prior to the deployment. Sometimes it was better to ask for forgiveness than for permission.

The unshielded and lumbering bombers were not even a match for the X-Wings. The X-Wings engaged at maximum distance, which made the bombers easy targets for homing missiles. As the last mark disappeared, the Squadron regrouped in the distance adjacent to the port side of the Victory Class Star Destroyer.

“We need a way to even this fight out.” Eagle 1-1 radioed.

“1-1 this is 2-1, my guess is we take 1st Flight to link up with 3rd at the VSD. From there, I’ll pull 2nd around to the Strike Cruiser and harass it to the point of engagement. Once it is overcommitted, we’ll bring it to the VSD. Two birds one stone.”

“2-1, do it. Fly safe.”

The two flights split formation and began soaring in earnest towards their targets.

Aboard the Challenge, Thunder Squadron shuffled out of the ready room and towards their craft. The TIE Phantoms perched in the rear of the hangar like wolves poised to strike. Their appearance was akin to a pack of wolves ready to attack. The pilots move briskly, yet silently to their craft and began their startup procedures. The procedures for a combat take off differed slightly than a normal intercept launch. The TIE Phantoms would cloak in the hangar and exit the Challenge unseen. As the crews continued their takeoff procedures, the hangar was cleared of life and the blast doors sealed. Effortlessly, the TIE Phantoms dissolved one by one as they exited their nests.

PART II

Eagle Squadron continued the continual harassment of the Victory Class Star Destroyer and the Strike Cruiser. The two capital ships had begun to drift towards each other during the fighting. High Admiral Dempsey observed the movements from the bridge of the Challenge and nodded approvingly. Turning her attention to the light cruisers who continued their advance towards her position. She was aware that at least two of the cruisers would fall to her fighter squadrons, while the last could be easily handled by the Challenge’s turbo lasers. That left the Victory Star Destroyer and Thunder Squadron had been tasked with taking the enemy out of the situation.

The Pirate Captain of the Strike Cruiser overplayed his hand against Eagle Squadron as his craft drifted aimlessly towards the Victory Class Star Destroyer. The Turbo Laser batteries first ripped through the bridge, then through the Cruiser’s magazine. A large explosion tore the ship in two and flung molten debris in all directions.

Eagle Squadron received permission to disengage and rearm at the Challenge. The craft began their return to the Challenge aware their fight was likely over. Thunder Squadron, flying in formation, closed with the Victory Class Star Destroyer and armed their ion torpedoes.

Inside of the Challenge, Inferno Squadron prepared to escort two transports full of Stormtroopers. The transports had slipped out of the hangar and were circling below the Challenge's sensor dome beneath the ship. As Inferno squadron exited the hangar, the two parties linked up and began their journey to the Victory Star Destroyer.

PART III

High Admiral Dempsey stared out of the Challenge's bridge view windows towards the smoking husks of the pirate cruisers. Flashes danced around the Victory Class Star Destroyer; especially intense towards the docking and hangar bays beneath the ship. She knew she had gambled on sending in Stormtroopers to take over the ship; but something just was not quite right.

"Ma'am, still no biological readings from that Victory ship. It is as if it is being flown by droids or something else." Ensign Lisabeth Vak, a biological engineer was particularly good at her job. She continued to tap buttons on her datapad and her frustration was beginning to show.

A large plume of flame flashed where one of the Victory's shield generators had once been. The ship appeared to be pacified and the battle was winding down. The fighter squadrons had returned to the hangar for refit and departed to complete their post battle assessments. Salvage tugs had departed from the Challenge in order to salvage parts and pieces of equipment that floated about the battle space.

Peering at her datapad, High Admiral Dempsey received a message from her Stormtrooper detachment. "This is Cobra 6, we are preparing to make entry into the VSD. Scans indicate no biological life. The hangar was empty upon entry. Minimal power to substations. Life support systems are critical." The words flashed upon the screen, and for a moment, High Admiral Dempsey may have felt something akin to anxiety.

PART IV

The three squads of Stormtroopers had made their way out of the hangar bay and into the bowels of the capital ship. Cobra 6, in command, took his first squad towards the ship's bridge. He then ordered the second squad to the engineering sub stations in order to power up the ship. The third squad was placed in reserve just outside of the hangar bay in the ship's magazine stores.

The third squad entered the ammunition stow compartment. Their helmets adapted to night vision so they could see through the inky blackness that shrouded the chamber. Cobra 3-6 told his troops to fan out across the area to find a power source. The Stormtroopers stalked through the darkness, what little poor air was in the ammunition stowage bristled with an obscure energy that made the Stormtroopers skin beneath their plastoid armor and body glove bristle.

Aboard the ISD Challenge, High Admiral Dempsey awaited reports back from the Stormtroopers. A standard hour had passed since the last contact with the teams and the tension among the Imperial Army command team had begun to grow. Not hearing from thirty Stormtroopers for the expected length of mission time was unusual.