

“Station Cresh-236 reports power fluctuations on Number 3 reactor array.”

“I thought these things were *designed* to work on cold planets. You know, like kriffing *Hoth*,” Erinyes spat. The messenger just shrugged helplessly.

“Get Gehn down to power management. Whatever he’s doing isn’t as important as keeping the heat on.” If the Uгнаught could keep a Star Destroyer’s power systems balanced in the middle of a space battle, surely he could do something about Port Kasiya’s grid.

“I found your problem. You won’t like it.”

Erinyes took a pull from her flask. “Of course I won’t. What is it?”

“The weather,” Gehn said. “Cold does bad things to power grids. For one thing, all the temperature changes as current passes through causes metal fatigue. That makes parts break, like wires in a switch or electrodes in a power cell. The higher-than-normal draw means more of those little temperature changes every millisecond. That causes the transfer efficiency to drop as components suffer fatigue. The rest of the energy comes out as waste heat, which makes the temperature fluctuations worse, which... you get the idea.”

“Okay, so how do we fix it?”

“Make it warmer.” Gehn shrugged at Erinyes’ scowl. “There’s no practical solution to keep the lines from fatiguing. Portable heaters will help keep the switches at the substations thawed so we can balance the load and manage any blackouts. We need a way to keep them off the grid, though, or we’ll just make the power draw worse. If we could...” The Uгнаught fell silent, frowning his brow in concentration. He called several schematics up on the terminal in front of him, his eyes darting between them as plans and designs came together in his mind.

Erinyes resisted the urge to tap her foot while Gehn worked, opting to take a pull from her flask instead. Her impatience wouldn’t help him think. Besides, if she asked what he was doing, the answer would probably be technobabble.

“Right,” Gehn finally said. “We can hook a 3056 up to a 4T3. It won’t take long to build the adapters. Each backpack should power the 3056 for... let’s call it twenty-four hours at its expected power draw.”

Erinyes raised her eyebrows. “Twenty-four hours? This thing’s supposed to last six standard days, Gehn.”

“That’s the best we can do. The 3056 normally runs off a type-Esk power supply—” The Uгнаught stopped and sighed when he spotted the all-too-familiar sight of Erinyes’ eyes glazing over. “That kind of generator puts out enough power to fry that kind of heater. The adapter stores the excess so the heater won’t overload. The part of the adapter that stores the excess energy takes 24 hours to fill up. If we don’t replace it after it’s full, it’ll explode.”

“Okay,” Erinyes said. “Can we use the generators to augment the city’s power grid somehow?”

“You want the long answer or the short answer?”

*All of your answers are short answers*, Erinyes didn’t say. “Short.”

“No.” A beat passed. No more words came.

Erinyes blinked. “What was the long answer?”

“That the power output from a 4T3 won’t matter on a city grid, and we’re better off using them to keep the batteries warm, because the power output from those *will* matter.”