

Lambda-class shuttle *Xanthippe*

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Disgraceful, Alethia thought as she read over the notes on her datapad. The day had been full of surprises, most of them worrisome. Leia Organa had □ finally □ been arrested after years of hiding behind her Senate seat or her father. That was the extent of the good news.

Major Archenksova had been summoned by no less than Wullf Yularen himself to brief senior leadership on Organa's extensive acts of treason. That news was a double-edged sword. One the one hand, there was no better path to advancement than face time with a moff, and it was well past time that someone in authority actually acknowledged her thorough documentation of rebel financiers and sympathizers on Alderaan. In the Expansion Region or beyond, such filth would have long since been arrested, interrogated, and executed. But even the New Order had to bend to the Imperial Senate and the Core Worlds' ancient patronage networks □ for now. And thus Alethia's time ferreting out insurrectionists for Imperial Security had been disappointingly hands-off on Alderaan. Perhaps that would change now.

However, no amount of devotion to the Empire could blind Archenksova to the ruthless reality that was life among its uniformed services. It was very possible that her meeting with Colonel Yularen would lead to great things. It was at least equally likely that she would find herself scapegoated for failing to prevent the very same treachery she had been dutifully reporting on.

The incident report forwarded to her by the Ubiquitorate for her in-flight reading was making the latter outcome uncomfortably realistic. That the Rebellion had a substantial, albeit relatively insignificant, fleet bought and maintained with Alderaanian credits was bad. That said fleet had brazenly attacked the archive on Skarif was worse. But that Organa, on her official Senatorial vessel, had engaged Imperial forces, made off with stolen, highly classified documents, and then been personally apprehended by Darth Vader... someone was going to bleed for this, and Alethia just hoped it wouldn't be her.

"Major," the pilot's voice chirped from a comms panel on the bulkhead next to her. "You're going to want to see this, sir."

Alethia stowed her datapad with a sigh. She'd grown up on Coruscant. The approach was impressive, true, but she wasn't some yokel from the Rim who needed to see it every flight. Nevertheless, she humored the man and walked up to the cockpit.

Apparently she wasn't going to Coruscant. It took her a moment to process what she was seeing. She'd heard rumors, but she'd never imagined...

"The DS-1 Battlestation, sir." The pilot beamed as though he had built the massive thing himself. "That'll put the fear of the Emperor into them."

"Quite," Archenksova scowled. The pilot's tone was unacceptably familiar, but he wasn't wrong. The station dwarfed even the largest platforms and vessels, even some small moons that Alethia had seen. The rumors she had dismissed as propaganda or hyperbole had actually failed to do the station justice. *No wonder Organa had panicked.*

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