

You'd think after seven months Darro would be used to the cold but it still bit deep, his bones aching almost constantly. He, along with a small group of men and women, were huddled around a small heater trying their best to stave off the cold when klaxons blared throughout the base. An officer, a lieutenant from the insignia on his coat, ran by yelling "The Imperials have found us. Get your gear and get outside, we need to hold them off as long as we can."

Hearing the order the old man ran for the armory and waited impatiently for the quartermaster to hand him a battered old A280 blaster rifle. With weapon in hand he sprinted as fast as his tired old legs would carry him outside to the trenches surrounding Echo Base. As he exited the dark hangar and entered the light Darro was momentarily blinded by the sun reflecting back off the snow. Through tightly squinted eyes he trudged through the deep snow making his way to his station, an E-Web older even than Darro himself.

Giving the weapon a quick once over to ensure it was connected to its power pack and in good working order the old man began to scan the horizon for any sign of the oncoming Imperial forces. For what felt like hours, but was in reality only minutes, his eyes moved back and forward across the desert of snow but he felt the oncoming Imperial forces well before he saw them coming over the horizon.

Like great metal beasts a quintet of lumbering All Terrain Armored Transports came stomping across the snow making a beeline for the generator powering the bases shields. Alongside them came several All Terrain Scout Transports guarding the slower AT-AT's flanks. As the Imperial forces closed to within range the DF.9's and 1.4 FD P towers along the line opened fire, the blasts slamming harmlessly into the thick armor of the Imperial walkers. That was when Darro spotted the tiny figures dressed head to toe in white body armor running along behind the walkers. Imperial Stormtroopers dressed in thermal armor.

As they closed to within five hundred meters the old man opened fire sending bolts of deadly energy streaking across the battlefield. The bolts passed harmlessly around the oncoming Stormtroopers but a one or two dove for cover in the snow. As the distance between the forces lessened Darro's shots became more accurate and he began to pick a soldier here or there in his flurry of blasts. Squeezing the triggers again he sprayed a near constant stream of energy blasts at the enemy when suddenly his world was turned upside down.

An AT-AT had fired at the DF.9 towers beside him destroying it. The concussion had thrown the old man to the right into the hard packed snow, knocking the wind from his lungs. He lay there for several long moments, his ears ringing, before he opened his eyes. Feeling something running down his cheek he raised a gloved hand and brushed his cheek. The fingertips of his glove came away stained a dark crimson from the blood flowing from the wound on his forehead. He tried to get to his feet but his body just wouldn't obey his commands.

He was going to die on this frozen ball of ice and he knew it but he was damn sure going to go down fighting. On nothing but will power he forced his beaten and battered body to get up and

get back into the fight. As he stood on shaky legs and approached his E-Web he saw the destroyed DF.9 turret wasn't the only thing smoking. The power pack that powered his weapon had been hit by shrapnel and was little more than a smoking lump of scrap metal. Sighing he went looking for his blaster rifle finding it several feet from where he'd left it, no doubt tossed aside in the turrets explosion.

Scooping the weapon up he brushed the snow off and took cover behind a small snowdrift. Opening fire he picked off a handful of oncoming troopers as overhead a squadron of T-47 airspeeders whizzed. The speeders opened fire on the walkers but again the armor of the great metal beasts was too strong. An shot from one of the Walkers main cannons ripped through a T-47, debris raining down on the snow below. Suddenly the airspeeders tactics changed as a pair of the vehicles ran interference for a third trailing behind.

The trailing airspeeder approached the Walker at a low angle flying past it before the rear gunner fired his tow cable, the magnetic harpoon striking the Walker just above the knee joint. Again and again the airspeeder looped around the Walkers legs the cable wrapping tighter and tighter until the line went taught and the gunner detached the cable. The Walker took one or two more stumbling steps before it fell forward out of the fight. A trio of airspeeders came zooming in firing their blasters into the downed Walker, the great metal beast exploding in a fireball.

With a cheer the Rebel troops in their trenches leapt forth and advanced firing their blasters as they moved forward. A pair of airspeeders tried to recreate the maneuver that had proved so successful for their squadmates but they were not as lucky. The lead airspeeder was hit, his ship exploding in a fireball that caught his wingman. The second speeder, clearly damaged, slowly began to fall towards the snow of Hoth. Crashing in the path of an oncoming Walker Darro could just make out a small figure dressed in the bright orange flight suit of a Rebel pilot climb out of the stricken ship and run towards the metal giant.

Suddenly he shot up from the ground and hung below the Walker. A bright blue beam of light appeared beneath the Walker revealing the pilot to be none other than Luke Skywalker. There was a shower of sparks before Skywalker dropped from the Walkers belly to the snow below. As the Jedi ran for his life the Walker shuddered as an explosion ripped its insides to pieces before it crashed to the ground. Suddenly from behind Darro an explosion lit up the horizon as the lead Walker destroyed the generator powering the bases shields.

"The shield has fallen, fall back to the transports." came a panicked voice over the comm.

The old man turned and ran for his life his breath coming in ragged gasps as he muscled his way through the thick snow. Every twenty or thirty paces he would turn and fire off a few rounds from his rifle picking off stormtroopers here and there.

"Imperial troops have entered the base, Imperial troops have entered the..." came a transmission that quickly cut out.

Running even faster now Darro didn't even bother to look back as he fired, instead taking wild pot shots at whatever was behind him. As he fought his way up a steep ridge, scrambling over snow and rock, blasts of laser fire struck the ground to the left and right of him. The suddenly his arm exploded in pain as one of the stormtroopers found the mark. But it was too little too late as the big Human dropped over the ridge and half ran, half fell his way down the otherside. Off in the distance he could see the transports waiting to take the Rebels away from the cold world of Hoth, X-Wings sitting beside them waiting to escort them out.

With one last burst of energy Darro crossed the open ground to the transport and took up position beside the ramp ready to hold off any stormtroopers who tried to halt the escape. For several long minutes he waited, the pain in his arm worsening with each passing second. Just when he thought he could no longer hold his rifle up the shout to board the transport came and Darro rose and slowly stomped up the boarding ramp. Once inside he moved out of the entry way and collapsed in pain and exhaustion as the ship slowly rose from the surface and headed for space.