Since the fall of Karufr, Andrelious J. Mimosa-Inahj, along with the rest of Clan Taldryan, had been spoiling for revenge on those who had destroyed their home. With Jac Cotelin, once of Taldryan’s most famous sons now seemingly an enemy of the clan, suspicions had been on high for months. The current commander of Taldryan’s remaining forces, a Chiss known only as Rhylance, did not enjoy great support amongst the survivors of Karufr, but he had not yet faced a coup from either the military, or from the many Force users, Sith or otherwise, who for now seemed to begrudgingly respect his command.

When the first reports of a new enemy arrived, Rhylance was quick to demand a change of priority. Instead of continuing to go after Cotelin, Pravus, and the Inquisitorius, the first order of business was to deal with the mysterious ‘Collective’. To that end, Andrelious, deemed the Clan’s best pilot since the disappearance of Halcyon and Keirdagh, was always going to be an important asset.

“Back in the cockpit. Must feel like old times. Let’s just hope no innocent planets get blown up this time,” Kooki stated coldly.

Andrelious had long given up any attempts to distance himself from the destruction of Alderaan. Whilst he had only been eight years old at the time, his spouse had never accepted that he supported the same Empire that had taken away her home.

“If what we’ve heard is true, then this Collective are a very real threat. Far worse than what the Rebellion ever made out the Empire to be,” Andrelious replied.

“I doubt they’re half as dangerous as how they’re being made out to be. I’m not going to let anyone who can’t even touch the Force get anywhere *near* me. Or our children,” Kooki snapped.

Andrelious smiled to himself.

He just wished he had his wife’s confidence.

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Andrelious and his hand-picked squadron of pilots had wasted no time in making way to their destination. Their mission was simple, at least on paper: eliminate an elite enemy unit calling itself ‘Rose Squadron’. The difficulty of the mission would come from the skill of Rose Squadron’s commander, a female Zabrak who had defected from the First Order even after earning many commendations.

Andrelious and his squadron exited hyperspace in perfect synchronisation.

“Nu squadron, report in,” the Sith ordered.

Ten pilots quickly replied almost simultaneously.

“Where is seven?” Andrelious questioned, immediately noticing a missing ship.

“Losing ships even *before* you get here. Welcome, Inahj. I’ve been looking forward to this!” a female voice replied, echoing menacingly over *Sharpshoot II’s* comm.

“Your intelligence file on me is outdated. It’s *MIMOSA*-Inahj now. I suggest that you and your squadron get yourselves ready,” Andrelious warned, opening his starfighter’s throttle. The rest of the squadron followed suit, quickly scattering as Rose Emery and her wingmen closed in.

The fact that one of Andrelious’ squadron had seemingly disappeared left the Taldryanite at an initial disadvantage, but he remained completely unfazed, bearing down on one of the T-70 X-Wings that made up Rose Squadron. Observing its pilot’s pattern, Andrelious quickly adapted, matching the evading X-Wing move for move. When the time was right, he fired a burst of laser fire, smiling under his helmet as the enemy ship burst into flames.

“Nice, but you rely way too much on the Force. You don’t trust yourself anymore!” Emery taunted.

Andrelious watched one of his wingmen fly into trouble. Two X-Wings closed in from opposite sides, ready to quickly finish off the beleaguered TIE Defender.

“Five, use manoeuvre 404!” Andrelious instructed.

The pilot silently obeyed. Her TIE Defender came to a sudden stop. The two X-Wings, caught out by the unorthodox tactic, were unfortunate enough to have been firing their lasers. One of the pair managed to avoid the friendly fire, but the second was not so lucky. Its shields quickly failed, allowing one of the other Taldryanites to quickly mop it up.

Emery Rose snarled in her cockpit. She had expected a tough fight, but she certainly hadn’t expected to take two losses so early on. The Zabrak wasn’t going to give up easily; she steered her X-Wing as if it was one of her own limbs. In no time at all, she outfoxed one of the TIE Defenders and quickly eliminated it with a concentrated burst of laser fire.

The fall of one of the Taldryanites seemed to spur the rest of Rose Squadron on. Putting the loss of their comrades behind them, they did their best to turn the tide of the battle. Nu squadron fought back with just as much vigour, and soon the entire area was filled with spinning starfighters, dangerous plasma, as well as an ever increasing amount of debris and ejected pilots.

The advantage swung back and forth between both groups. Rose Squadron reduced their opponents to half a dozen fighters, but were soon pared back to the same number themselves. Both sides continued to match each other, loss for loss, until only Emery Rose and Andrelious were left.

“I have never been forced to eject. That is *NOT* going to change today!” Emery snarled as she sped straight for Andrelious.

The Sith pulled back hard on his flight yoke, before entering into a series of evasive turns, dips, dives and rolls that would have left an observer feeling very queasy. Even as he tried his best to get away from the Zabrak, he could sense her behind him, matching his every move with perfect precision. Emery tried to fire a pair of warheads at her opponent, but even their advanced guidance systems could not cope with the sheer skill of their target, and flew harmlessly into the remains of one of the X-Wings.

*Sharpshoot II*’s modified power generator began to whine with the sheer effort of keeping up with what Andrelious was asking of it. The amount of times that the Taldryanite had fired his weapons had not helped, either, and the TIE Defender was beginning to show signs of overheating. A yellow light began to flash on Andrelious’ instrument panel, warning that a system failure was imminent.

“No! Just one more minute!” the Sith demanded, avoiding another salvo of laser fire from Emery’s X-Wing. As he entered another series of twists, however, he noticed that his ship was starting to lose power.

Emery Rose couldn’t believe her luck. Andrelious had been a thorn in her side for the last twenty minutes, and, along with his squadron, had turned her beloved Rose squadron into little more than a series of floating bodies. Now, as she noticed her opponent’s ship begin to slow down, she hoped that she could finally end the fight, and put one of Taldryan’s top men permanently out of commission.

Suddenly, another TIE Defender de-hypered on top of Emery’s X-Wing. The Zabrak, as good a pilot as she was, had no chance of avoiding being rammed at near light-speed. She fought with the controls of her damaged starfighter, trying and failing to regain some kind of control over her trajectory. Warning lights and sirens told her of a whole host of system failures.

Andrelious, who had shut down *Sharpshoot II’s* systems just in time to avoid a complete system failure, watched on as Rose Squadron’s leader spun away, her X-Wing rapidly turning into a flaming wreck.

“Better late than never, seven. Better late than never.