**Tie Defender TS-003
Hangar 7
Dock 3
Skybreach Base Orbital platform**

Jerin adjusted in his straps as he flicked the buttons on his instrument cluster. He ran through his preflight checklist like he had done many times before. The pilot took a deep breath before he gave the thumbs up to his crew chief to close the hatch above him. The scruffy-faced mechanic replied with a nod and a thumb of his own before lowering the hatch. The Major plugged his helmet's communications cable into the plug on his seat and a volley of chatter swept over the radio. Jerin turned the dial to the squadron’s radio channel.

The normal all clear chatter was going back and forth between the pilots and the operations center. The operations center would clear them and then their ships would lurch forward out of the hangar and rise upward and away from Skybreach base’s Orbital Platform.

***“Skybreach Ops, this is Major Egal waiting for go on launch.”***

Jerin waited for his turn as he sat in the cockpit of his Tie Defender. His mind drifted back to training and his plethora of hours spent in the Quadjumpers the squadron had been given to train on. He delved deeper into his memory as he sat twiddling his thumbs impatiently waiting for the operations center to get to him. He played through their missions up until now and how far he and every member of Tython had come in skill since the inception of the squadron.

***“Major Egal, this is Ops how copy?”*** The young man snapped out of his daydreaming and flicked on his microphone.

***“This is Major Egal, I copy you loud and clear.”*** Jerin waited, staring at the little light that would ignite in the dark of the cockpit whenever ops would cut in over their chatter.

***“Major Egal, this is ops, are you green for launch?”***

***“Ops, this is Major Egal, I am green for launch.”*** A few moments passed causing him to sit forward a little and glare at an imaginary member of the operations center.

***“Major Egal, this is ops, you are a go for launch, launch time recorded, good luck Major.”***

***“Thank you ops,”*** Jerin grasped the control stick in front of him with both hands. The Starfighter shook slightly as it was released from its mooring clamps. With a push of the control stick, the Tie Defender launched out of the hangar and began its climb into an orbiting pattern to link up with the rest of Tython Squadron.

As he approached the rally point, one by one each member of the squadron sounded off. Jerin took up his position in the flight pattern as they waited for the last remaining stragglers. An E9 explorer joined them as well as the Hegemon, a retrofitted C-ROC Light freighter that was now a Gozanti class light cruiser. Jerin knew the E9 explorer from previous missions and training to be the Centurion, commanded by Arcia Cortel. It was her personal vessel and assisted the squadron with command and control operations when they were out of range with Skybreach.

A sudden silence fell over the comms channel as if the squadron was waiting for something.

***“Major Egal, are you with us?”*** Lieutenant Colonel Wynter’s voice erupted out of the silence.

***“Sorry,”*** Jerin paused a moment. He had not put much thought towards his call sign yet. Until then he had just been content with Major Egal, but due to the increase of stronger operational security many of the members of Tython squadron had tossed around the idea of custom call signs. Many of them had already chosen their call signs. The Operations center was still within range as they continued their circling pattern, waiting on Dael Provect, their newest Pilot.

Dael had been with the squadron for around a month or so and was considerably more skilled in tinkering with technology than with piloting but he seemed like a bright enough person to survive space combat through sheer luck.

Bringing his mind back from its wanderings Jerin had decided on what he wanted to be his call sign.

***“Hey Centurion, can you put me through to Ops?”***

***“This is the centurion, I can do that, is there a problem Major Egal?”***

***“No problem, I would just like to register a call sign.”*** The statement was met by hoots, cheering and odd noises from the rest of the squadron.

***“Quiet down!”*** Mauro barked, ***“Keep comms traffic to a minimum.”***

***“Putting you through to Ops Major Egal,”***Colonel Cortel’s voice sounded approving to Jerin.

***“This is Ops, do you copy?”***

***“Ops, I copy. I would like to register a call sign.”***

***“Major Egal, this is Ops, whenever you are ready go ahead.”***

***“This is Major Jerin Egal, callsign,”*** a wry smile spread underneath the Phase II clone pilot helmet adorned with an assortment of random stickers, ***“Warpath.”***

**Tython Squadron
Hyperspace
In route to the edge of Arcona Space**

***“Warpath?”*** Tyraal jokingly questioned, ***“Where did that come from?”***

***“I lost my parents two years back when the Hosnian system was obliterated by the first order.”*** The comms went deathly silent. ***“I joined up with the clan shorty after and ran a Short Hauler hauling freight until New Tython’s fall where I went from freighter piloting to a Starfighter and I think I’m getting pretty good at it.”***

***“Well I get that, but why ‘Warpath’?”*** Tyraal shot back.

***“Because my path since my parents died has been a path followed by war and plagued by its effects. I figured why let it follow me when I can lead the war down a path of my choosing.”***

***“That’s deep,”*** the Clawdite snickered in reply.

***“Really, and what is your call sign? Manyfaces? Ya clawdite,”*** Jerin was cut off by a stiff cough from Mauro. **“*Sorry, sir.”***

***“Keep comms channels open, we will be arriving soon.”*** Mauro’s voice was more stern than normal.

***I wonder what’s eating at him****,* Jerin thought to himself as he checked his instrument cluster again.

**Tython Squadron
Area of Operation
Edge of Arcona Space**

The squadron kept their three-man formations spread out as the patrolled the system. The five three-man flights were split up based upon their roles in the formation. At the front of the formation flew Lyra and her two wingmen in a triangle formation. Chrome was to her right and Ethan flanked her to the left. They were the tip of the formation. If any enemy were to attack them head on they would be the first wave to pursue.

About two hundred yards straight behind them was the Hegemon with a triangle formation of Tie Defenders. To the left and right of the Gozanti flew Kasula and Ysera Daegella, known affectionately as ‘the Twins’. These two ace pilots work wonderfully in sync and were, therefore, the perfect choice to play direct intercept for the Hegemon. Trailing a little behind and above the Hegemon was Zeline, a relatively green pilot. Her role was just to ensure the Hegemon could launch its complement of two Tie Line fighters and then assist in combat with them while the Twins protected the Hegemon.

Bringing up the rear of the formation was the Centurion protected by a triangle formation as well consisting of Mair flying point in front of the Centurion and Jafitts to the right of the E9 explorer. Dael mirrored Jafitts position on the left of the Centurion and their roles were to guard the flank and defend the Centurion.

To the starboard flank of the cross formation flew Mauro flanked by Petth and Aaleesha. Their jobs would be to pursue and fight off any forces to the starboard side of the formation. Opposite Mauro’s flight on the port side of the formation flew Jerin with Tyraal and Korroth flanking him and their roles were the same as Mauro’s flight but to the port side of the Hegemon.

The flight was relatively peaceful. Jerin spent most of his time looking off into space and adjusting his flight path when the Hegemon called out a course change. The time dragged on as they made their full patrol pattern around the system. At each planet they would take up an orbit around them and the Centurion would scan it with its powerful electronic warfare suite. During those scans the squadron would tighten their formation to help protect the vessel and the Hegemon would move to flank facing aft of the Centurion to give the vessel and the squadron a 360 degree defensive grid should anybody decide to attack.

The final planet to scan was a smaller planetoid towards the outer edges of the system. It had a pair of rings orbiting it around its equator. Jerin shifted in his seat. He was growing impatient with nothing to do but lock his heading in with the Hegemon and input course corrections and watch out for debris.

***“I miss the Collective.”*** Jerin didn’t even realize he had said it out loud.

***“What?”*** Tyraal asked surprised, ***“where did that come from?”***

***“Well, I miss them like a crazy ex,”*** the Major replied. ***“It was exciting and fun, nevermind the fact that they would kill you just soon as look at you, but they were exciting.”***

***“We have very different ideas on what exciting is, Warpath,”*** Korroth's stern voice broke in over the radio.

***“What is your idea of exciting?”*** Jerin fired back, ***“watching paint dry?”***

Laughter rose from other members of the squadron as the Squadron approached the planet's outermost ring. The Squadron cleared the outer ring quickly and began its flight over the void between the rings.

Alarms began going off in Jerin’s ears as the on board computer silenced the entire squadron’s chatter.

***“This is the Hegemon, three dozen small contacts breaking away from the inner ring of the planet.”***

Jerin turned his gaze towards a cloud of small dots rising up out of the inner ring and making a straight line for their formation.

***“Hegemon, this is Mauro, break off and jump to hyperspace. All flights. on me.”*** Jerin thought it was curious he didn’t give the Centurion orders. The young pilot pushed the thought out of his mind as his flight joined up on Mauro’s flank. Fourteen Tie Defenders sped off at full speed towards the incoming swarm. ***“Centurion, you and the two Tie Line fighters will provide support with Zeline until you can make the jump.”***

***“Roger that Commander.”*** The centurion took up a defensive posture behind the Hegemon with its pair of cannons faced towards the incoming cloud of enemy fighters. Unknown to her, it was faced the wrong way.

A large explosion wracked the Hegemon and caused the Gozanti class light cruiser to list heavily to its Port side. A corvette emerged from the darkness of space as if it had just materialized. It took Zeline a moment to completely absorb what had just happened.

***“That ship,”*** Zeline paused, ***“It just appeared out of nowhere!”***

***“Mauro!”*** Jerin barked over the radio. ***“Send me back to help with that vessel!”***

***“No, they can handle themselves,”*** Mauro calmly replied back. ***“We need the manpower to deal with the Starfighters.”***

Jerin shook his head as he scanned over his panels again before locking his missiles onto one of the incoming ships.

***“Then let’s make this quick, shall we.”*** The Major readied himself as he took a deep, chest-heaving breath and let it out slowly.

**Bridge
Nighthawk
Hyperspace
Enroute to Satele Shan Distress signal**

Constantine ran his gaze over the report again. The report spoke of a mysterious ship appearing out of nowhere to assail Arcona ships; then it would disappear into the vastness of space like a ghost. The young Commander stared back at his Student before handing the older man the datapad.

***“What do you make of these reports, apprentice?”*** The Seer relinquished the datapad to the older Hunter.

***“I’ve heard of some experimental ship used by the Republic before the Empire’s reign,”*** the older Human replied as he gave the reports a concerned stare.

***“Do you think this is it?”***

***“From all the reports corroborating the details and the physical description of the craft and its capabilities, it could have been modified to have a heavier weapons array to do this kind of damage.”***

***“Sir!”*** a younger woman's concerned face beaming with confidence interrupted the two men.

***“Go ahead, Yeoman,”*** Constantine replied.

***“We just picked up a distress signal from the Odanite Defense Force ship, The Hegemon. She is requesting assistance from any nearby vessels.”***

***“What is their status?”*** Zul’s voice knowingly asked.

***“They are under a large enemy assault at the edges of our space.”***

***“What are Odanites doing all the way out here?”***

***“They are part of a cooperative force enhancement project between the two clans, Arcona and Odan-Urr,”*** the Battle Team Leader cut in. ***“They were out there to help us extend a drag net to try and flush out this stealth Corvette.”***

***“Then if they have not encountered the stealth craft then we should relay it to command and have them send assistance,”*** Zul flatly stated, ***“we are on a very important mission to put an end to these rumors of a stealth craft.”***

***“Sir,”*** the young lady interrupted Zul again. ***“They report being attacked by an unknown ship that snuck up on them and attacked them. Their fighter squadron is currently engaged with three dozen M3-A Scyk Fighters.”***

***“Sounds like our mysterious Corvette, doesn’t it, Apprentice?”*** Constantine smiled at Zul as he turned to the helmsman. ***“Drop us out of hyperspace and plot a direct course to the distress signal and let them know we will be along shortly.”***

 ***“Sir, we picked up the distress beacon over the Sentinel Network, we can’t exactly send a direct message to them.”***

***“Then we will show up in style,”*** Zul remarked.

***“Coming out of hyperspace commander,”*** the Helmsman said as the ship dropped out of hyperspace. The Helmsman adjusted the bow as the navigator seated next to him punched the coordinates the communications officer had given him into the Navicomputer. The echoes of the hyperdrive spooling up reverberated throughout the ship as Constantine began issuing orders. The Nighthawk crew manned their battlestations as they began the short jump to their allies.

**Orbit**

**Unnamed planet**

**Edge of Arcona space**

The two forces came together like two waves smashing together in the wake of a large ship. Explosions erupted as missiles from the Tie Defenders sunk home. The two forces split off with one Tie Defender limping off trailing smoke.

***“Chrome how bad is it?”*** Mauro’s voice cut in over the chatter.

***“Looks like im out of this fight,”*** Chrome replied in a worried tone, ***“Im going to go cozy up next to one of those asteroids for now. I will give you an update once i've given her a good once over.”

“Roger that.”***

Jerin banked hard around with Korroth and Tyraal trailing close behind him. He saw a group of seven ships bank off to come around on them. They were not fast enough as the superior Tie Defenders came upon them like a hungry predator. The three fighters tore threw the formation taking five of the banking ships out before they could react.

***“This will be easy!”*** laughed Tyraal.

***“No it won't, we are just thinning the chafe.”*** Jerin banked again to come around on the two remaining Scyk fighters. Their movements were different from the others who seemed too easy for the trio to wipe out. ***“We are made up of ace pilots but we aren’t the only ones in the galaxy, Wraithe, remember that.”***

***“Hey, you used my callsign,”*** Tyraal excitedly responded.

***“Warpath four bogey’s have fallen into formation behind us,”*** Korroth paused, ***“It seems we have fallen into a trap.”***

***“Korroth, go up port then dive and cut back,”*** Jerin paused as he rolled away from a consistent grouping of blaster fire aimed at his cockpit from another enemy coming at him from above. ***“Wraithe, I want you to barrel roll into a climb then pull up into a rolling arc back towards the main group.”***

***“Roger that,”*** Korroth replied and immediately pulled up and to his left, yanking him away from the formation and pulling two fighters with him.

***“Good luck, Warpath.”*** The Clawdite did a double barrel roll before disappearing into a vertical climb. This pulled two more of the fighters off of Jerin to chase the Knight.

Jerin rolled over to his left hard and pulled the nose down into a dive which caused him to drop below the visual range of the following Scyk fighters. He waited a moment before yanking his control stick back to the right hard and killed the throttle. This maneuver put him under his pursuers who were still midway through their own turn to meet him. They were met by effective blaster cannon fire. The Tie Defender’s superior mobility and speed had made up for their lack of numbers as Jerin did a scan of the area of operation. Debris littered the field of battle but almost none of it was Tie Defenders. There was some from what looked to be a single wrecked Tie but the young man did not linger on the thought. He had a job to do.

***“All nets this is the Centurion, We have an unknown vessel exiting hyperspace in the middle of the combat zone,”*** the voice of Arcia Cortel blared through his headset into his ears, causing the young ace to flinch. ***“Brace yourselves.”***

Out of the darkness of space erupted a single Marauder class Corvette. A few tense moments passed before a voice came over the radio.

“We heard you may be in need of some assistance with this bunch.” Suddenly the eight dual-turbo laser cannons opened up on the Scyk fighters. A handful of them attempted to turn and run. They were met by the swift and agile members of Tython Squadron on one side while a squadron of T70 X-Wings assailed them with the Nighthawk to push them into the superior fighters. It only took a few minutes to cut the remaining Scyk fighters in half. The tables seeming to turn the last dozen enemy vessels turned tail and ran into the asteroid field. The joint forced turned their sights to the hegemon and the centurion still battling it out with a now flaming Corvette.

The ships pointed nose and long fuselage with quad engines on the back proved to Zul and the Nighthawk crew that this was indeed the remnants of the clone wars. A stealth corvette previously used by the republic but never put into mass circulation. It was heavily modified for combat but now it seemed to be in a losing battle as a pair of Tie Defenders danced around the ship in perfect sync.

***“Looks like the sister’s ignored your order Mauro and cleaned up for us.”*** Tyraal snickered to himself in his cockpit.

***“The ship doesn’t look like it wants to give up without a fight.”*** Jerin interjected into comms.

***“On the contrary young Odanite pilot, they just asked for a ceasefire to surrender themselves and the vessel to us.”***

***“Well,”*** Jerin exhaled heavily, ***“Now that we are done with that unpleasantness, who wants some tea?”***

Laughter rang back over the comms as the ships encircled and took up a defensive perimeter around the mysterious ship.