The assembled vessels of the Taldryan fleet were outnumbered three-to-one. For Consul Rian Taldrya, the only consolation was that the Collective had ambushed them a few light years away from his Clan’s prospective new home system, but with most of the Clan engaged in the battle, there would likely be few survivors to carry out his work.

“We need to get out of here!” Rian ordered.

“We can’t, Consul. The Collective have brought along an old Imperial Interdictor,” Quejo replied, gesturing towards a dagger shaped vessel in the distance.

“So if we were able to eliminate that?” the Consul questioned.

“We’d be clear to jump, but there’s no way anyone’s getting through their fighter screen. There’s just way too many of them,” Quejo explained.

“Andrelious and I probably could,” Halcyon interjected. “A few torpedoes in the right place and that Interdictor’s useless,”

“We’d need plenty of cover,” Andrelious added. “While we’re dealing with the Interdictor, just try and get the fleet away as fast as possible. The shields should be able to hold if you angle them correctly,”

­**-x-**

Andrelious and Halcyon launched in their TIE Defenders, followed by the squadrons of Taldryan’s fighter corps.

“All squadrons, keep the enemy busy. As soon as we take the Interdictor off-line, stop what you’re doing and get out of here. Your navicomps are pre-programmed with the coordinates for a rally point. We’ll catch up to you,” Halcyon ordered.

The squadron leaders replied in affirmation as the two Sith pilots split off, jinking about to avoid enemy fire. They were both approaching the enemy Interdictor with an almost single minded determination.

“Let’s take this dragship down. For Taldryan!” Andrelious cried.

The pair of TIE Defenders sped towards the Interdictor, leaving the rest of the battle behind as the two factions continued to trade laser fire.

“This is Zenith leader! The enemy flagship’s just dropped its shields,” a voice declared in a confused tone.

*Why would they do that? Our bombers will rip it to pieces*! Andrelious thought.

Moments later the Ektrosis Aedile got his answer. The enemy’s flagship stopped firing its turbolasers, and quickly pointed itself directly at the *Paragon*. Before either Andrelious or Halcyon could react, it fired a green laser reminiscent of the Death Star’s superlaser, immediately destroying the Taldryan flagship.

Andrelious swore he could hear its occupants scream.

“This is Halcyon! I’m taking command. Everyone, get ready to jump. Andrelious, back on target! Now!” the Proconsul commanded.

Andrelious just about managed to muster up the motivation to fire his entire warhead magazine at the enemy Interdictor, but already his thoughts were moving away from the battle. With the *Paragon* down and a large part of the Clan wiped out with it, there would be little to stop the Collective. Without opposition, the Seeker realised, they would soon find the few Taldryanites who stayed behind.

That included Kooki. And Poppy. And Etty. And Mostynn.

“Interdictor’s out of action! Jump NOW!” Halcyon screamed.

The gravity of the situation was beginning to take over inside Andrelious. Instead of following his comrades into hyperspace, he slammed his fists hard onto the control panel. Sparks flew as the Sith continued to smash his ship’s controls.

As the wrecked electronics started to catch fire, the Seeker closed his eyes.

*KOOKI!*

**-x-**

When the explosion he was expecting didn’t come, Andrelious opened his eyes again. He was astonished to find himself back in the hangar of the *Paragon*. He checked his ship’s chronometer; it was back at the time that he had originally launched. Sure enough, he noticed Halcyon’s TIE Defender launching nearby.

*I don’t know what in the name of Palpatine is going on here, but I’m not seeing this ship blow up again!*

For the second time in less than ten minutes, Andrelious launched. Once again, the rest of the Taldryan fighter corps followed him into battle.

“All squadrons, keep the enemy busy. As soon as we take the Interdictor off-line, stop what you’re doing and get out of here. Your navicomps are pre-programmed with the coordinates for a rally point. We’ll catch up to you,” Halcyon ordered, clearly unaware as to what was happening.

“All bombers. Get ready to fire on the enemy flagship. They’re going to drop their shields to fire some kind of superlaser. Stay within range. The moment they turn their shield off, hit the front of the flagship. I will be joining you,” Andrelious added.

“Andrelious, what makes you think they have that technology? Only Oligard’s flagship is known to have such a weapon,” the Proconsul responded.

“If I’m right, I’ll explain later. Once the flagship is dealt with, I’ll join you in handling the Interdictor,”

Halcyon had no idea what his colleague was saying, but he could sense that Andrelious’ sincerity. He steered his TIE Defender expertly through the waves of enemy fire as his targeting computer acquired a lock on the Interdictor.

“This is Zenith leader! The enemy flagship’s just dropped its shields,” a voice declared in a slightly more confused tone than the first time.

“Now! Hit the front!” Andrelious ordered, firing a salvo of his own torpedoes. Zenith Squadron’s B-Wings followed suit.

The enemy flagship stopped firing its turbolasers, and started to turn towards the *Paragon*. Andrelious smirked as the first torpedoes hit the unshielded enemy ship, shearing off parts of the hull. Moments later, the entire ship exploded, throwing huge pieces of debris everywhere. Several of the Collective’s escort ships were too close and were destroyed or badly damaged themselves, whilst a large portion of the remaining fighters immediately powered down.

“Automated ships. The Collective’s not got the manpower to staff all these squadrons,” Halcyon explained, still amazed at what Andrelious had managed to do.

**3 hours later**

“So. We’ve confirmed that we had no intelligence operatives aboard any enemy ship. There’s been no reports of any other Collective vessels carrying a miniature superlaser, and we’re pretty sure that Halcyon would have realised first if the Force was giving anything away. So how did you know?” Rian asked Andrelious.

“I promised I’d explain, but I’m afraid I can’t. All I know is that I fought in that battle twice. Only, the first time, the superlaser caught me by surprise. The *Paragon* was destroyed. Next thing I knew, I was back in the hangar. Nobody else seems to remember anything about the first battle,” Andrelious replied.

Halcyon stroked his chin thoughtfully. “Even now, the Force is a great mystery to us all. Perhaps, for whatever reason, the Force itself wanted to give you another chance,”

“Probably because he’s created so many people who can touch it,” Justinios quipped.

“I’m sure *you’ll* try to study it,” Andrelious responded, trying his best to hide his relief. “I think, if the Force did aid me, it’s because it knows how dangerous the Collective are,”

As the debate continued, Andrelious J. Mimosa-Inahj allowed himself a smile.

Somehow, he’d been allowed to save the day.