The mission was supposed to be simple, verify the location of listener ship *Psi Termina I*. Ken Iode had performed this type of mission at least three or four dozen times in his long career. They could be boring, exciting, or deadly. Most of the time they were the first and second. The former Imperial TIE Pilot settled into his cockpit performing his pre-flight check. He had volunteered to be the scout who would jump out and get in close to get a detailed sensor scan. In the back of his mind, Ken had an odd feeling about this mission.

The streams of light outside of the open hangar bay of the *Solari* condensed to singular pinpoints of distant light. Iode started flipping switches in his T-70 X-Wing's cockpit, activating the repulsorlifts and warming up the main engines. Odanite Expeditionary Force technicians disconnected the last shorelines. As they did, the former Imperial TIE Pilot gently maneuvered his snubfighter onto the launch path. Once he was lined up, the automated traffic system cleared him for take off. Ken pressed the throttle forward. The partially warm engines struggled slightly before giving in to his command and propelling through the environmental field to the blackness of space.

"Command, Raava 13 is clear of the hangar."

"*Understood Commander.*" The starfighter control officer replied, "*Proceed to 3000km off the ship at point 1-1. Begin the scan for the Termina.*"

The pilot turned the joystick to take his ordered position, "Already scanning."

Activating X-Wing's active scan mode, Ken's HUD and cockpit sensor display glowed with marks.

"Command, I have the *Psi Termina*. However I also have twelve no ten fighters, ten quad-jumpers, and the Collective Ship *Kennison*." Ken relayed with an air of seriousness.

"*We copy, Raava 13. Assist the Termina and engage the Collective. Launching the remainder of Raava Squadron now.*"

An explosion rocked the T-70 as the former Imperial opened his S-Foils and charged the quadlasers. The HUD and sensor display went crazy from energy spikes and tracking debris from the explosion. "The Psi Termina has been destroyed, command. Quad-jumpers are turning to the *Solari*."

The remainder of Raava Squadron emerged from the *Solari*'s hangar catching up to their scout.

"*Raava 13 this is Raava Leader,*" The Squadron Commander's voice came over the radio. He was probably 15 years Ken's younger, but was a damn fine pilot. One of the best in the Odanite Expeditionary Force. "*Turn to point 0-9 and come from the flank. Twelve, eleven, and ten follow him. The rest of you, with me.*"

Quick responses came from the four pilots mentioned in the affirmative. Ken executed the banking turn and pulled back on the control stick hard, bringing the craft back on itself with a minimal gain in "altitude". As he rolled himself back over, Iode could see the first of the quad-jumpers visually, blaster fire from the other members of Raava Squadron pelted the lead quad-jumpers. After only a few moments, the lead two erupted into fireballs. Activating his missile targeting system, the Imperial's HUD displayed the enemy craft now appearing to pass from his port to starboard, were bracketed. He gently brought the fifth ship in line with the crosshairs. A series of beeps emanated from the targeting system and the pilot started a mental count as he banked slightly while pulling back on the throttle and control to keep his pure pursuit.

Almost.

The beeping suddenly stopped and was replaced with a solid tone, he squeezed the trigger.

"Raava 13 missile out." A moment passed from launch to impact. The fireball cascaded taking out the third and fourth ships, damaging the sixth.

"*Nice shooting Ken.*" One of the senior pilot's wingmen called as the four crossed the enemy flight path.

As they broke to the otherside, the Z-95 Headhunters emerged from behind their quad-jumper squadron, engaging the flankers.

"Break any direction!" Ken called as he pushed hard on the stick toward the front console. The aged fighters pelted their newer cousins with dual blaster fire. The former TIE Pilot angled his shields toward the new combatants when his rear warning went off.

"*Raava 13, fighter on your six.*"

The human pulled back on the stick and rolled right.

"Get off me." Ken said coldly.

The indicator showed the headhunter on his tail. He tried once more the opposite directions, no change. Thinking quickly, the Odanite dropped his speed, his body jerked in his seat with the rapid change in velocity. The Headhunter turned sharply to avoid a collision as Ken jammed the throttle forward once more and turned to follow his former pursuer. All the data the HUD was feeding him fell to the side. All Ken could see was his target and the crosshairs. The enemy pilot was good Ken could tell that much. The Headhunter pilot was staying one step ahead of the veteran pilot. Finally the enemy slipped up, the Headhunter stayed in the center. The human squeezed the trigger once more, holding it in. A volley of red lasers streaked across the void

and met with shields, followed by metal. Fires broke out on the craft's win and the enemy pilot careened off. Iode tried to follow, but the T-70 could only turn so fast. His target exploded into a fireball below the X-Wing.

"*Raava Squadron, this is Command. We are calculating the jump to lightspeed. Let's clean up and get going.*"

Raava Leader had an air of excitement in his voice. "*Understood Command. Flank group, I still have two quad-jumpers. Take care of them.*"

Ken eyed up the two suicide ships. "I'm on them."

The Imperial realigned his fighter so he was on the tail of the two jumpers. They were hurtling towards the *Solari* at about the same speed as Ken's T-70. The pilot pushed the throttle a little further, trying to get in weapons range. The *Solari* loomed behind the targets, growing larger. Ken checked his distance.

Kark, still to far.

Activating his missiles the targeting system detected the targets, but they were still too far out for a lock.

Panic crept into Ken's mind, but he forced it out. "R3, push all the power to the engines and weapons. We have to make up 50 meters."

His droid beeped and whistled a reply in binary.

"I know, prepare for ejection if we have to. *Solari,* evacuate forward sections of the port wing."

"*Roger. Activating anti-fighter defenses. Watch yourself Raava 13.*"

No sooner had command's transmission ended than a wave of blaster fire erupted from the *Solari's* wing. The crimson shots sent the two jumpers diving down, with Ken hot on their tail. Bolts exploded around the X-Wing shaking it as the veteran pilot switched his shields to double front.

Watch yourself, Ken mocked in his head.

Luckily for the Odanite, the power transfer and the flak was slowing the quad-jumpers. He targeted the one on the left. The beeping started as the missile locked on the heat signature. One of the other HUD displays indicated the distance to impact.

200km...150km…

Horror stuck the Commander as the single tone emanated from the targeting system. Firing at the first, Iode quickly aimed at the second jumper and let loose with the lasers, shots missing because they were just to far out.

75km...25km…

The first quad-jumper detonated, blown to smithereens by the missile. A burst hit the second, but it was too late.

Ken pulled back on the stick fighting against his momentum towards the wing. "*Solari,* Brace for impact!"

The T-70 pulled up and leveled out fling parallel to the port wing of the *Solari*. The enemy jumper did not. The shockwave knocked Iode off of his flightpath as fire erupted from the impact crater. He brought the X-Wing back under control and circled around to survey the damage.

Alarms blared in the background as the flight controller announced, "*All fighters disengage and jump to the rendezvous. Solari out.*"

Ken maneuvered away as the Mon Calamari cruiser jumped to lightspeed with Raava following shortly after. It may have been a victory, but in the broader sense it was only a draw. The former Imperial knew this and pondered it all the way to the rally point.