

## Lock Down

Mauro Wynter played the words over and over in his mind as he stood over a makeshift barricade. "Hold until relieved." He trained his blaster in front of him, and lined up his sights. To his flanks was a squad of B1 Battle Droids, with several droids taking up advance positions down the corridors of this wing of the station. "Hold until relieved."

He checked his communications relay, and issued reassurances to his lieutenants. The Silver Cloaks had been deployed as a crucial strike team. The droids made their way to the shield generators and had taken them off-line. It was a stroke of genius and had worked well. However, the mission was not completed. "Hold until relieved."

Mair Sal was in the vanguard, taking point at the entrance to the corridor. It was a natural kill-zone, easy to hold and choke off the potential retreat of the Collective forces. However, caged animals were always the most dangerous. The initial staggering of forces making assaults on the exit route were now giving way to massed formations of warriors. The dead lay stacked like a rampart. The human had already lost many droids, and Wynter was unsure whether to reinforce or to order a withdrawal to the second line of defense. "Hold until relieved."

To his rear, Wynter knew Lyra Narix was itching for a fight, unhappy with being in relative safety. Still, Wynter was uncertain how long they could hold out and when the order would come to retreat or when the relief force would arrive to mop up the assaulting Collective forces. He knew his chances were growing slimmer by the moment. Mair was out of grenades, and her droids had been drawn back to her own barricade. Wynter knew in war one could trade space for time, but by pulling back it would also allow more massed Collective enemies to crowd the battle-space. "Hold until relieved."

His communications went dead as a large blast was heard in the distance. He could not send his own forces forward without leaving Lyra and her team exposed. Wynter cursed to himself. Hopefully help had arrived. "Pull back," Wynter screamed, as the sound of blaster fire died down. He already knew it was too late. This mission always was considered suicide. It would only be moments before his barricade was overrun too. "Hold until relieved."

"Lyra, we are going to be overrun barricade by barricade. Mair is down, counter-charge on me. We might get lucky and push the Collective back towards another escape route." Within moments Lyra and her dozen droids were formed up. "Hold until relieved." And they ran forward.

The initial stunned reaction rang true on the faces of the Collective operatives and soldiers. They had thought their salvation was at hand, but were now faced with a sizable enemy force. The first few rows of soldiers were mowed down as Wynter pushed back and took the first barricade. He saw the scattered droid parts and Mair's body crumpled behind a wall. A grenade had taken her clean in the stomach. Rage engulfed Wynter and Lyra as they continued to charge over the barricade, giving up their

protection in a wild rush. The Collective were pushed back, slowly turning to run. They never got the chance.

Iron Legion soldiers were visible at the other end of the corridor, firing wildly at the now completely routed enemy. The remaining Collective members fought to the last, with the wounded being the only captives taken. "My compliments sir, you are relieved." Wynter took a moment to survey the carnage. Of his strike team he had a handful of droids still functional, Mair was dead, and Lyra had taken several blasts to her right arm and leg. "Was it worth it?" Wynter asked the Legion officer. "The Silver Cloaks held the corridor. The Silver Cloaks are no more."