**Nighthawk, Dajorra system.**

The sound of low murmuring could be heard throughout the Nighthawk's briefing room, produced by several hushed conversations. All of the ships officers had been gathered here to receive the details of their next mission. Some talked of what they were expecting to hear in the briefing, that this would be the assault to finally end the collective. Some talked of experience with previous battles and shared war stories with their buddies. Cawthren at the moment stood listening to a newly promoted lieutenant talk about what he had planned to propose to his girlfriend upon returning to the Dajorra system.

“Awesome, man. Plan on locking her down before she gets smart huh?” the Knight joked.

“Yea gotta get her before som----,” the lieutenant abruptly cut off his sentence as a blue holoprojection appeared in the center of the room.

Though he had never met the Quaestor in person, Cawthren immediately recognized the Zeltron in the hologram as Qyreia Arronen. The Mercenary took a second to compose herself before starting to speak. “Hey! So I’ve got some great news! Our Intel has given us the coordinates of a Collective convoy that is moving through the area, and you’re going to make sure their trip gets cut short.”

“It’s the same go as usual. Take whatever you can salvage from them, but your main objective will be too capture whatever Collective leadership you can keep alive. We need to ask them some questions about some of their bases.” Qyreia informed her officers. “I know that I can trust all of you to work out the details yourselves to makes sure of your success.”

Cawthren noticed a slight pause as the Quaestor’s contemplated what she was going to say next. “Our loving Consul has arranged a friendly competition between us and house Qel Droma. Aaaaannnnndddd seeing as it was technically those sneaky sneaks at the shadow port who got the lead on this information, you can bet they will also be trying to intercept this convoy…….I trust you all know that is not an option.”

The Arconans shifted nervously at the implications of what failure would mean. “Good. Now go make me proud.” Qyreia ordered as the hologram faded out. Cawthren turned back to the young lieutenant he had been talking too. “So, a friendly competition with a group of mentally deranged spys. I don't know who has more reason to worry, us or the collective……”

**Nighthawk hanger bay,**

“Captain Widowson! All troops are in position and ready to board the the Collective’s ship, Sir!” the company's first Sergeant informed Cawthren. “Thank you, top. I don't want anyone to be caught unprepared once those doors open.” The Grey Jedi responded as he locked the helmet of his armor into place, creating a vacuum seal.

The Nighthawk had found the Collective ships and had engaged in combat. The Galeres’ forces had been taken by surprise when the engagement first started. The Convoy consisted of one Aggressor Assault Fighter and three small light freighters, accompanied by a group of escort fighters. The small cargo ships seemed to have been refitted with heavier shielding and firepower.

To make matters worse, the Voidbreaker appeared out of hyperspace shortly after the battle had started. It was yet to be seen if the confusion from the arrival of the Qel Dromans was helping or just making matters worse. Cawthen had been assigned to take a company of soldiers and wait in the hanger bay. Once the officers on the bridge had managed to pull in one  of the Collective’s ships with the tractor beam, he Galeres ground troops would have the pleasure of boarding and taking over the ship.

Time seemed to pass at a slower pace as the men stood in the hanger, listening to the sounds of the the battle going on outside of the Nighthawk. Cawthren moved his gaze over the soldiers who were under his command. Most were veterans who had seen their share of combat, with a few fresh recruits who seemed edgy and anxious to see their first firefight. It felt as if the tension could be cut with a knife.

Every soldier in the area jumped as an alarm signaled that the tractor beam had managed to lock onto a ship. “Ok boys! I'm covering the whole tab for a night out for the first man who breaches that ship” Cawthren screamed. Several screams from the Arconan forces accepted his challenge. Weapons could be heard charging as a HWK-290 Light Freighter appeared at the entrance to the hanger.

Everyone watched as the ship slowly slid into the hanger, the bay doors closing behind it, effectively locking the ship inside the Nighthawk. “Get that tin can open!” the Captain ordered. One troop stood up and fired a rocket straight at the freighter’s loading ramp. Several troops dropped behind cover as the explosives blasted against the steel, sending a shower of sparks and shrapnel flying through the air. It took Cawthren a second to pick himself up off the ground.

“What the frak is wrong with you, private!” the Knight screamed.

“Sir! You owe me a night out!” the Arconan troop stated as he pointed to the ship.

Cawthren looked dumbfounded at the freighter to see a large hole blown in the door to the loading ramp. He stuttered as he looked for a response. “Uh…what the…...What the hell are you waiting for? get in there!”

The soldiers who were still standing started to rush into the opening. Blaster fire could be heard from inside the ship. The Grey Jedi took off in a sprint, activating his lightsaber as he entered the freighter. Several bodies laid motionless on the floor, having been gunned down as the Arconana forces moved quickly through the ship. They had managed to back the last few Collective soldiers into the ship’s cockpit. Both sides kept taking pop shots at each other from behind cover, never managing to actually accomplish anything.

Cawthren cautiously approached the cockpit, holding his lightsaber out in front of him defensively. “You have no way to escape!” he screamed toward the cockpit. “Make this easy on everyone and lay down your arms!”

A blaster appeared from around the wall and fired two shots at the Knight, which he easily redirected back into the cockpit. “Last chance! Surrender now!” he ordered.

“You can burn, you Force using freak!” a response came from the enemy troops.

“So be it.” Cawthren mumbled under his breath. Using the Force to amplify his speed, the Arconan took off in a sprint toward the cockpit. Several blaster shots were fired toward him, which were deflected back towards the enemy. A scream was heard as one bolt made contact with one of the collective troops. As he moved into the room, he saw two remaining soldiers. One started to aim his blaster at the Knight's chest. Cawthren threw a hard cross punch through the Force, taking the soldier off his feet and slamming him into the control console, knocking him unconscious.

The remaining soldier dropped his blaster to the floor and put his hands up as Cawthren pointed the light blue tip of his lightsaber blade at the man's nose. Arconan troops moved into the room and locked stun cuffs on the man’s wrist. “First Sergeant! Get the survivors the medical help they need and lock them in the brig. I will also need a list of everything you find on board.” the Knight ordered as he clipped his lightsaber to his belt. “Oh, nd make sure to send that private who is a little to trigger happy with a rocket launcher to me.”

**Nighthawk briefing room.**

Several hours had passed since the Collective freighter had been  captured. The crew of the Nighthawk had been taken by suprise by how well armed the enemy convoy had been. If not for the Qel Droman forces’ sudden arrival, the Galareian ship most likely would have taken major damage in the fight. As soon as they had captured the small ship, the officers had given the command to jump into hyperspace, escaping the small skirmish and leaving the rival house to deal with the Collective on their own.

Cawthren currently stood before his commanding officers, giving a report on what his company had gathered from the ship. “We took the ship without receiving any casualties. The freighter was carrying a cargo of food and medical supplies. Enough to be a few months worth of rations. There were nine soldiers who we assume belong to the Liberation Front on board. Three were killed, five wounded and are currently being given medical care. One surrendered and is currently in the brig.”

“And were there any officers aboard the ship?” Cawthrens commander questioned. “Yes, Sir. We believe one of the soldiers wounded was their commanding officer,” the Knight responded.

“Good, Captain Widowson. You will be in charge of interrogating all of the survivors once they are recovered enough to answer questions,” the superior officers ordered.

Cawthren nodded to acknowledge that he understood his orders before performing an about face and leaving the briefing room. A knot started to develop in his stomach as he thought about how much he hated interrogation sessions.