

War

Orbit Above Seraph

Deck of MC80 *Calypso*

The Tie/BA fighter silently slide into the ventral hanger bay of the massive enemy ship. It was not well maintained and was clearly an ancient model. The running lights were out and only the emergency flood lights cast a glow. Proconsul Mauro Wynter popped the cockpit hatch open and climbed down from his craft. Once on the deck he turned his gave behind him to see the rest of the boarding party. His personal cadre of Praetorian guards from the 2nd Praetorian Company – Heirs of Judecca exited their craft in a synchronized and methodical pattern. The Sentinel class shuttle from the 1st Praetorian Support Squadron was painted a conspicuous blood red. Wynter wondered how much blood would be shed fighting the TRF.

The team made their way rapidly down the central spine of the massive MC80. Internal defenses were light, the TRF had spread itself thin. Wynter was still amazed at the level of sophistication and the size of the pirate and mercenary forces brought to bare against the Imperial Scholae Navy. The TRF had no indigenous capital fleet and yet one had emerged from hyperspace and pounded the ISN Krennic to rubble before she could launch her dozen squadrons of fighters. A dozen ancient Dreadnaught Heavy Cruisers, four MC40s, and the *Calypso* took the Imperial Scholae Navy off guard. Luckily for Wynter he was on the bridge of the ISN Palpatine when the battle began. From there he watched with dread as the enemy forces barreled right for Judecca Station hammering home their intent to kill the Empress. The Golan I station held long enough for the Praetorian Guard to evacuate in good order and escort the Empress to the Palpatine.

Wynter's mind pondered the tactical blunder. The TRF was wise to eliminate the ISN's fleet carrier, but failing to cripple the flagship was a mistake. The mistake was compounded by the enemy's gamble to prioritize the Judecca Station and assassinate the Empress. The Golan went down but with minimal loss of life. Wynter's mind was knocked back to the present as blaster bolts whizzed by and he thumbed his crimson saber to life. They were approaching the bridge and resistance was beginning to firm up. Wynter could see out of a nearby display window heavy combat between capital ships. The two ISN Vindicators were hulks awash in flame but so too were several of the enemy Dreadnaughts. Two of the MC40s were also going down under the withering fire of the Palpatine.

The Praetorians breached the bridge defenses as Wynter strode in. Several TRF Jedi stood ready along with the flight crew. Green sabers ignited in unison along with a white blade of a middle aged slightly built foe. Wynter lashed out with force lightning at the two nearest Jedi keeping them at bay, allowing the Praetorians to aim and fire a heavy barrage from their repeating blasters. Several of the bridge crew

went down as did two Jedi. The remaining few cleared a lane to the turbolift and protected the entryway, buying time for the one with a white blade to escape. “Set the charges now – the ship has already diverted controls to the auxiliary engineering and massive reinforcements are coming now to” Wynter was cut off.

From the expansive viewport Wynter could see a task force arriving behind the enemy vector of attack – what appeared to be four light cruisers and four Victory class Star Destroyers. “Scratch that – we need to get clear of this ship now!” Wynter smiled as he radioed in. “Calypso to be fragged on my mark. Give us time to get clear. And please thank the Intergalactic Bankers Guild for the most recent loan. These ships couldn’t have arrived soon enough.”

It was time to take the battle to the enemy. Once back in his fighter the Proconsul radioed into his Empress. “Status report Empress. Calypso clear to be slagged. With our new task force surrounding the enemy they won’t last long. All fighters launched and the VSDs are engaging tractor beams. We lost Judecca, the Krennic, and both our Vindicators but the enemy fleet has been annihilated. We will have the Judecca-II setup as the fallback Clan command center within 12 hours and can begin the ground offensive at that time.”

TRF Territory

Landing Zone

The Sentinel shuttle landed hot within the battle zone. Not one of the vanguard flights, as most of the 1st Imperial Line Regiment had disembarked along the plateau thirty minutes prior. The landing had not initially been contested, as the militia forces of the TRF had likely assumed this landfall was a diversion culling their defenses away from the capital. This was their first mistake.

Several officers disembarked with a contingent of Praetorian Guards from the Empress’ Own Company, 1st Praetorians. Laser fire and artillery barrages rained about the group as they ran with some dignity to an awaiting AT-AT walker that was kneeling to embark passengers as its head mounted cannons fired volley after volley at a nearby bunker.

Wynter made his way to the cockpit of the AT-AT and saluted the vehicle commander. “General Arloni. Good to see you. Assessment?” The Proconsul took a seat at the rear of the cockpit and acknowledged the co-pilot and gunners.

“My lord, the two lead companies of AT-AT walkers have moved forward with support from our assault companies. The entire battalion is forward with our line battalions taking cover behind supporting the spearhead. Our scouts are at the flanks and our close air support Tie Reapers are providing overwatch. We have achieved air superiority with two squadrons of Tie Defenders from the Subjugator. Orbital bombardment was deemed inadvisable due to collateral damage. However several squadrons of Tie Defenders from the Palpatine are on reserve and the Empress has readied ALL of the Praetorians for the breakthrough. She wants her guard bloodied and tested.”

Wynter nodded with approval. “General, this plateau is essential if we can take it we have the landing zone to disembark the other regiments and can form a breakout for the capital. Once we take and hold this landing zone the capital will be vulnerable. The TRF’s best bet is to keep us from taking the landing zone. Yet, they don’t have the forces to repulse us without leaving the capital undefended. Signal the Empress and the Palpatine bridge crew. They must be ready to act now. Bring the AT-AT formation forward we end this now. We overrun these bunkers and the war is within our grasp.”

It was all over within minutes. From the cockpit of the AT-AT Wynter saw the white blade of the Jedi he had seen on the bridge of the enemy flagship. He made his way to an awaiting shuttle in the distance.

“General – let that shuttle go. I have an idea.”

TRF Throne Room

Tokare

Wynter strode confidently into the throne room of the TRF, backed by ten Praetorians of the Empress’ Own Company. Shadow had allowed him command of the mop up operations and to put an end to the imminent threat of the TRF coup. These Jedi would be taught a lesson, now.

It was perfect timing that the Imperial Scholae Navy had updated their forces. All TRF possessions on Seraph and Ragnath were under blockade by the five Victory class Star Destroyers. What the Empress had in mind was unclear – would the Clan takeover or simply cut the head off of the TRF and let them be overrun by the other polities of those worlds.

The Proconsul ignited his crimson blade and appraised his enemy. Six Jedi awaited him. “Go...” stated Wynter as the Praetorians spread out with two per Jedi and Wynter striding proudly against the white bladed Jedi. No words were needed. Their blades sang loudly.

The first salvo of parry and thrusts were well met, as the older Jedi with the white blade was a classically trained duelist. Wynter nodded his respect and took a step back, lashing out with Force lightning as the Jedi tried to block it with all his efforts. Wynter dropped the barrage and continued with his saber. Around him an enemy Jedi went down, but the Praetorians were also down two warriors. The match was going well. Wynter was not sure if he would come out alive, or how many Praetorians.

As long as I hold their leader at bay, the better chance we have – thought Wynter. He smiled as another Jedi went down, but the Praetorians were down to five. It was now six to four. Wynter knew the odds were narrowing. He quickly keyed a button on his wrist as he took cover. Instantly, a Tie Reaper appeared within the window pane of the throne room as blaster fire decimated the room. Wynter used all his abilities to create a barrier as the Praetorians rallied to him. It was all over in a moment. The remaining Jedi fell where they stood. The white bladed Jedi dropped his blade as blood pored forth.