A haze of rotten ochre filled the air, obscuring vision out beyond two clicks. Altitude has little impact on visibility below the cloud layer. Venenum was a cruel place. Acid raid and toxic atmosphere were only the first worries. Once on the ground, the entire ecological circle was deadly. From the mosses to the largest vertebrates; all of them full of a lethal cocktail of toxins. Based on those factors, Naval command had determined that ground operations presented too great of a risk to personnel to be considered.

The cell of retreating combatants was marked for aerial execution. For such precise jobs, the 151st Air Combat Squadron was the top pick. Their TIE Strikers had been specially loaded aboard the ISN Subjugator for transit from Ragnath. Each of the twelve vehicles had a special layer of ablative oily wax applied to its durasteel panels to help combat the corrosive atmosphere of the planet below.

The Striker was a particularly unique variant of the TIE Fighter, that was particularly well suited for this mission. While it did possess capability as a starfighter, it really came into its peak performance in atmosphere. The short trip from orbit to atmosphere was one they could make with ease. Equipped with an impressive armament, it was the proton-bomb chutes that would be most effective in ending the last of the anarchist terrorists in the Caperion System.

Thran’s hand swept across the TID, highlighting the map projection of their target. It was the first time he’d flown a Striker, but he found it’s controls to be intuitive. Most of the TIE line had similar controls, but the Striker possessed some extra functionality. The addition of a set of control surface trim levers, updated tactical information display, and multifunction bomb sight were logical extensions of the controls of his beloved TIE Defender. He felt at home behind the yoke.

The sweep they had made of the derelict slave camps had so far proven unfruitful. This was the eleventh location they’d overflown. Their orders were simple, find any energy signals and remove them from existence. They would do so with the indiscriminate authority provided to them by the belly full of proton bombs they’d brought along.

“Contact, bearing 215. Signal is weak.” Came a voice from the comms internal to the pilot’s helmet.

“Roger, Titan Four. Titan Two, confirm you are reading the power spike as well.” Thran said, dialing in the coordinates on his mission map.

“Affirmative, Titan One. Looks like enough to keep a few transports powered up, not much more. That’s them.” Another voice confirmed.

“Roger, Titan two. Titan Squadron, formation Osk-Four-Niner.” The Sith Ordered.

The twelve fighters broke their sweeping line formation, orchestrating themselves in to groups of three. The fighters left enough distance between one another that roughly one third of the proton-bomb’s destructive payloads would overlap when they impacted. This pattern created a bombing pattern that the 151st referred to as a TDZ; Total Death Zone. The roar of the ships’ ion engines could barely be heard over the ferocity of the acid rain storms occurring outside the craft. They wouldn’t see the target zone until it was right on them. Fortunately for Titan squadron, among the various electronics in the TIE variant, the holographic navigation and targeting systems were known to be particularly accurate and did not require direct line of sign to give an accurate drop point.

“Titan Squadron, come to angels twenty cherubs five. Engage buzzers and prep your silver blaster bolts. Signal is buster to drop zone. Over.” Thran squawked over the radio.

“Wilco, Titan One.” Came the voice of each of the twelve pilots.

Each pilot was accompanied by an ordinance officer. They were tasked with supplementary flight functions until it came time to drop the payload over the target. At which point, they would devote all of their attention to the bombsights, ensuring that the highly volatile energetic packages they were delivering would strike home. They were presently preparing the “silver blaster bolts”.

The reticle on the bombsight was a simple set of brackets, with a singular pip in the center. A trailing path of chevrons indicated the vessels speed and heading. The bombardier was responsible for depressing the bomb release when the vibrant green flashed red. They waited eagerly.

The TIE Strikers roared over a ridge of sickly yellow mountains. In the valley between the crescent ridge, the clouds broke sightly. Visibility was increased by several orders of magnitude. Thran looked out over the alpine plain. A makeshift landing pad was full of several vessels. Even from this altitude, he could see the damage they had already sustained.

“Titan Squadron, Firewall. Firewall. Drop parcels and fangs out.” he commanded.

“Wilco.” Each replied.

The waves of TIE Strikers leveled in on the bivouac. The groups of three fighters had maintained formation with sterling precision. The pilots could see their targets scrambling for their fighters. It was too late. The TIEs screamed overhead, each dropping the entirety of their proton bomb payload. After the last bomb left each ship, the vessels pointed skyward. They twisted and circled the target zone. Like firaxian sharks, they swarmed the target area. They were waiting to pick off anything that remained after the proton bombs.

Thran tilted his head down, peering out the low port side window. He watched as the drop zone bloomed with flowers of hyper energized flame. The last of the fighters and freighters had been immolated in the cleansing fire. Smoldering hulks of vehicles and vessels coughed smoke and blazing infernos. The TIE Strikers stood on station for several more minutes, taking turns to make strafing passes and investigatory fly-overs of what remained of the target zone.

After only seven minutes, all remaining signs of life had been deleted. The ground that was the last claim of the enemies of Clan Scholae Palatinae had been scorched. It seemed a fitting end. The words of one of Kamjin’s grand speeches stuck with Thran as he adjusted the course of his vessel. *The most fertile land is that which has been burned.* The Caperion system was now firmly controlled by Scholae Palatinae. They could now sew the seeds of their labor and grow fat off the harvest. Kamjin would take credit for unifying the system, he would constantly remind everyone that it was his grand plans that finally brought the Caperion system to heel. The notion stung Thran’s pride slightly. His will was tempered by the reminder that this was all a part of his plan. The temporary displeasure of conceding praise for the conquest would be easily remedied by the boons of the successful consummation of the first phase of a much larger scheme.

He sighed to himself and rolled the TIE Striker over. His fingers danced over the onboard target scanner. No readings. He admired the vessel. It was a marvelous piece of machinery. He made a mental note that he should inquire about pricing out an instance for his personal collection. The mission was done.

“Well done, Titan squadron. RTB for debrief and cocktails.” He said.