

Training Day  
By Torrance Darkcrest

2300 Hours

The shadows glided along the length of the Super Star Destroyer, conforming to its every crevice like warm liquid. Admiral TK-2107 watched as the flight of TIE Defenders continued their patrol through the area surrounding his flagship.

"I just don't trust it Colonel. Why would we receive an anonymous warning of a Rebel threat and then have it cancelled moments later by the same contact."

"But sir, we've been patrolling the area for three days—forty-eight hours in excess of the timeline for this supposed attack. If there were going to be an aggressive move by New Republic forces, it would have happened by now." Colonel Kane Reese was growing impatient. "Admiral, with all due respect, the fleet is planning an attack on a major New Republic weapons development laboratory; I just don't see valid reason to linger here any longer!"

"I know you don't Colonel; I do."

The Admiral was never one to act on impulse; it was *not* about impulse or intuition. When he felt something...he didn't suspect it...he knew it: there would be a New Republic attack on Platform Daedalus.

Daedalus—the life stream of the Emperor's Hammer. A massive Imperial platform dwarfed only by the unusually large planet that filled its view. It had been over a decade since construction had completed and the first recruits stepped through its massive halls. Countless times the New Republic has sought to discover its hidden location to no avail. Even now they are trying.

The Admiral expressed his decision to retire to his quarters, giving strict instructions to contact him if anything unusual should occur. As he was exiting the bridge, his peripheral view caught glimpses of the various crew pawning over their duties and attempting to not go unnoticed by their Battlegroup Commander. One Communications officer in particular caught TK-2107's eye.

"Is there a problem Lieutenant?" he asked.

"No sir;" the man began. "...well I mean; I'm seeing something strange in these readings that were sent to us from the platform. It looks as if there had been some unusual events before we arrived."

"Let me see those." The Admiral stretched out his hands in an inviting manner which ended abruptly as he grabbed the readouts from the lieutenant's nervous hands.

TK-2107's eyes scanned the document quickly; intent on discovering what the lieutenant referred to as quickly as possible. Almost instantly, his gaze fixed on one of many similar entries. "Zee-ninety-five class; ship ID: one-seven-six-three-four," he muttered almost inaudibly.

"Exactly sir," said the Lieutenant. "The same ship entered into the platform's sensors on four separate occasions...acting in the exact same manner. It..."

The Admiral cut him off, "...followed an identical waypoint path and then hypered out of the area." Admiral TK-2107 had been under a great deal of pressure and stress since they arrived. He had gone out on a limb in stating his belief that, despite all intelligence, a New Republic task force would assault Platform Daedalus,

and this stress was manifesting itself in the Admiral by causing him to seem unusually harsh.

"Exactly sir...and furthermore, I'm sure you noticed that they ended as soon as we arrived. In fact, the last time occurred within one hour of our exiting hyperspace," said the Lieutenant.

"Have you spoken with Daedalus about this?"

"Yes sir—just before you approached. They hadn't noticed it and don't have any explanation."

"I wonder..." The Admiral immediately marched off the bridge while activating his comlink with his left hand. He spoke three words: "Meeting; one hour; central board room." With that he continued to his quarters to prepare.

## 2

The *Sovereign-class* Super Star Destroyer *Sovereign* had just exiting hyperspace when Vice Admiral Stele Pellaeon received word that the Avenger Task Force had come under attack.

"Where are they captain?" he demanded.

"Sir; they are...at platform Daedalus." Those on the bridge immediately ceased what they were doing and glared at the captain with treasonous accusation.

"Then I suggest you get us there immediately," said Pallaeon, in his distinct way of speaking that hinted delicately at what you should expect if he is not pleased by your actions.

Almost instantly the bridge erupted into a plethora of gray hues as countless Emperor's Hammer Navy officers moved about to prepare the massive Star Destroyer for its hyperspace jump—which was not an extremely simple thing to do. The preparations were not elementary for any ship in the fleet, and an SSSD was by far the most difficult of all. They would not be at the Avenger Task Force's location many hours...which fit well into Admiral TK-2107's plan—precisely the reason he gave the premature alert.

Admiral Jon Strikter was standing on the bridge of his New Republic Cruiser when he was handed the report. His eyes clumsily glanced over the document as he attempted to understand its purpose. He had already been given a major disappointment today, when he heard that a Super Star Destroyer and an *Imperial-class* Star Destroyer were now guarding his intended prey...and he wasn't looking forward to any additional bad news.

Something caught his eye. He re-read it to make sure he understood its implications. "The Super Star Destroyer is leaving?" he asked his surroundings, containing the immense joy that he now felt. If there was anything that Jon Strikter understood well, it was that you should act quickly if given the opportunity, and he knew that if a fleet had investigated the area around Platform Daedalus and had been satisfied enough to leave, then his opportunity to strike was now.

## 0530 Hours

The Avenger and the Subjugator had now been idle on the far side of the planet for over 6 hours, cloaking devices running at maximum capability to ensure that they

would not be detected. It had occurred to the Admiral that the suspicious Z-95 Headhunter had perhaps been dispatched as a decoy, and after studying the station logs given to him by the nervous communications officer, he realized that each time the Z-95 had entered the area there had at least been 1 Imperial Star Destroyer present; engaged in its business with the platform. He realized that if his ships had been spotted by the New Republic, it would discourage any attack...unless, his ships were to leave.

"They aren't coming sir," said an outspoken, and brave, bridge officer. Admiral TK-2107 was just about to shoot something back at the man when an anxious voice boomed over the ships entire audio transmitters.

"New Republic forces entering the area!"

The Admiral cast a wry smile at his doubting officer, and watched as his ship immediately began to prepare for the coming battle. The New Republic forces would soon realize their presence, but it wouldn't matter... the SSSD Sovereign was due any minute. The Admiral could barely contain his glee.

Almost the exact moment that New Republic Admiral Jon Strikter realized his error, his Executive Officer was reporting it to him.

Disheartened...the admiral responded: "I don't know if we're going to get out of this one, but let's give it all we have."

The bridge gave a resounding "Yes sir!" as the MC-90 class Calamari Cruiser came to life and started to move towards their aggressors. Squadrons of X-Wing pilots began to scramble to their ships and launch from the doomed vessel; a conscious reciprocation for the multiple TIE Phantom and TIE Avenger squadrons that were now bearing down on them.

"All squadrons, report in." Colonel D.T. Hammer came in through the comm. units located on each of the fighters he had been given mission control over.

Every squadron responded in turn; Butcher, Wraith, Trapper, Fury, Slayer, Kraken, and Nemesis all gave their brief reports.

"Let's get this scum. *No one* attempts to attack an Emperor's Hammer training platform and lives," said the Colonel as his squadrons began to break formation and engage the X-wings.

### 3

"Scratch one," exclaimed Lieutenant Torrance Darkcrest.

Although the ATF was slightly outnumbered, the battle had been going well; however, the "Rebel scum" were putting up more of a fight than TK-2107 had anticipated. He had now moved his star destroyers closer to the New Republic capital ships—which helped—but he knew that if the Sovereign didn't arrive soon, with its near hundred capable fighter pilots, then he might start losing some of his.

Colonel Hammer and the rest of the TIEs continued to battle the X-Wings—visibly growing weary of the battle.

"Where do they keep coming from," asked Lieutenant Colonel Mouse Droid. "There aren't *that* many capital ships unless..." he paused, quickly reviewing the flight log that showed the hyperspace activity of the area. "Hunter one, it looks like

fighters are hypering in. Which means that..." Mouse Droid stopped dead in his sentence as he watched his multidirectional sensors light up with new information. "Three more cruisers and support craft entering the area!"

"It's okay, we'll get 'em," said a voice.

"Is that...Alpha Squadron?" Colonel Hammer couldn't believe it. If there was ever a time that the Avenger Task Force needed to see the SSSD Sovereign, it was now.

The voice that Hammer heard was Commander Arlins Scabo. Apparently Alpha Squadron had hypered in—along with their SSSD and the rest of its squadrons—directly behind the Rebel ships...which is why no one had initially noticed them.

"Let's finish off this scum and go home!" Commander Conjre, of Kraken, broke in, energized by the sight of almost a hundred new fighters entering the area.

The battle waged on. The Avenger and the Subjugator had taken out 3 of the original attacking vessels, but 3 remained; making a total of 7 capital ships still attacking. TK-2107 was grateful to see his premature warning to the Sovereign playing out perfectly. He was also grateful to see that the Emperor's Hammer fighters had almost finished off the X-Wings and were now about to complete the destruction of one of the capital ships.

"At this rate, we'll be out of here before Daedalus wakes up," said The Admiral; referring to the fact that they were nearing the time that the Daedalus cafeteria begins to serve breakfast. He was picturing the cadets watching this oddly constructed battle take place above them. After all...it wasn't every day a person got to see a *Sovereign-class* Super Star Destroyer in battle, let alone fighting alongside a Super Star Destroyer. He was pleased to give them the treat.

"That's the last of the fighters; only two more cruisers to take care of." Colonel Hammer glanced up. "Scratch that; only one more cruiser to take care of." He chuckled to himself.

The Admiral's voice came in clear. "Good work pilots, hold off finishing that last cruiser for about twenty minutes. I want the Daedalus recruits to see the power of the Emperor's Hammer firsthand.

"Yes sir," the pilots unanimously agreed, and continued strafing the length of the cruiser looking for semi-significant things to take out...like laser turrets.

The fighters performed a delicate operation on the cruiser, surgically removing each one of its turbolasers one by one. They had just finished with the last of them when Admiral TK-2107 broke in again over their comm. units. "Okay, Daedalus is alive and watching. Let's give them something to look forward to."

In total there were 100 Emperor's Hammer starfighters still left; a decisive victory. And the vision of seeing them simultaneously descend on the last of their aggressors—the ship exploding into thousands of particles of metal and gas—would stay with the cadets on Daedalus for the rest of their lives.

Hours later, in their quarters, a room full of trainees spoke excitedly with one another about the battle. They argued over which squadrons performed or looked the best...which capital ships seemed to have a better grasp on the command. But there was one thing that these future pilots didn't argue on...the fact that joining any Battlegroup in the Emperor's Hammer other than the SSSD Sovereign or the Avenger Task Force would be unthinkable.

"Those ships...are the best I've seen..." said one cadet. The rest of the room concurred.