

A LIFE AT WAR: TWILIGHT

Chapter 13: Battles of Quermia and Makem Te

Watching the Prince's Duty and Buckler move away from the remaining 347th made me feel conflicted. I knew the Prince's Duty would be unusable in any future engagement, but the anti fighter coverage was needed almost as badly as the firepower of a frigate in the upcoming battles. I exhale slowly, had to trust my instinct, according to both Republic Intelligence and Hondo, the Separatists had stripped most of the local fighters and bombers from the area. My gut was telling me it would be better to destroy the stations quickly and trust our fighters against any enemy fighter resistance.

Only a moment later both ships jump into Hyperspace. Maybe the preliminary report I had handed to Faxe would even lighten the paperwork after the Chevauchée, campaign, whatever. A few minutes later the remaining ships of the taskforce move into formation and jump into hyperspace as well. The only mark proving we had occupied that piece of the void being some extra radiation and a bit of fuel floating through the void.

"Entering Quermia system in three, two, exiting."

Realspace embraced us once again as we left hyperspace. Dead ahead barely out of weapons range was the Separatist installation. It was an Inter Galactic Banking Clan Gun platform. A relatively weak space station to be honest, poor shielding and not a lot of weapons installations. Its main advantage would usually be its fighter contingents, but they had been re-deployed to other fronts.

The Little Revenge was in the center of the approaching Republic formation, with the Lucky Kelp on her starboard and the Dagger on her portside. The slightly depleted Bastard squadron was spread throughout the arrowhead formation.

“Shields to front. Bring us alongside it. Lucky Kelp, move to effective torpedo range, All ships, fire at will. Bastard squadron make an attack run on the primary bridge. May the force be with us.” I order.

The Lucky Kelp rushes forward, breaking the original formation. The Little Revenge lumbers behind, slower than usual without one of her engines. The Dagger meanwhile was keeping pace with the limping heavy cruiser. A moment later the Separatist installation begins opening fire with her turbolaser and lasercannons. Almost every shot missing.

“They’re honing in on us.” I muttered to myself as my eyes glued themselves onto the tactical display.

The returning volley of Republic turbolasers impact the station heavily, making the shields shutter with every impact on the long gun platform.

“Weaker than we expected.” I hear Mi-Kus say.

“They were originally designed and produced under Ruusan Reformation regulations and restrictions. The size alone was risky, it shouldn’t surprise us to find their equipment so sub par.” I reply as another exchange of volleys impact the shields of both forces.

“Lucky Kelp in range, report missiles away.” I hear.

“Enemy shields are down, sir.” Comes another report.

“Focus fire on the bridge and any communications. I don’t want another ugly surprise.” I order.

I move away from the tactical display towards the windows to gaze upon the hostile installation. The architecture jerked something from my memories. It’s

almost Neo-classical in design, entirely impractical for warfare, but ... pretty. It is a shame to destroy such a thing. It is almost nostalgic in appearance.

An explosion rocks the pillar like installation, breaking me from my train of thought. I turn around and march back to the holodisplay. The Lucky Kelp is moving away now, exiting the potentially destructive blast radius of the vessel. Not a moment too soon, as the IGBC installation soon suffers a chain reaction and explodes in a kaleidoscope of fire.

“Form up, we have one more installation to destroy. And get me a status report.” I order, as I gaze upon the wreckage of the enemy. Another explosion racks the installation, a flame erupting from the dome topping the vessel off. I turn back to the holodisplay.

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“Sir, the fleet is in formation, we will need about three minutes to enter the next hyperspace point for Makem Te. Bastard Squadron has more than enough fuel to make it there and enter the hangar after an engagement. The Lucky Kelp has to redeploy her shields, the debris hit her harder than we expected. The Dagger is in excellent condition and the Little Revenge could also use a shield redeployment.” I hear Lieutenant Mi-Kus report.

“Redeploy the shields now, by the time we’re in Hyperspace they should be back up.” I say.

I hated redeploying shields. You could hardly travel through Hyperspace without them, unless you were on one of the few highly maintained routes. It left your ship weak and exposed as the shields re-calibrated their frequencies and redeployed. It was almost never done during combat as the shields redeployed one by one, leaving no overlapping protection against any hostile ordnance. A single shield could hold off light laserfire, but even a single turbolaser blast would usually knock it out. That was the point of layering shields and I was now exposed, something I did not like.

I hover over the engineering officer’s panel as the shields slowly return to their normal functioning. I watch as every digit returns to normal operating level. I count every single second until the shields were back to normal. I left the workstation of the nervous officer and let out a sigh of relief. I hated doing that. I hated the very idea of it ever since I started my training in the Fondorian Planetary Defense Force. I hated doing it when in safe space and I found I hated it even more when I was in hostile space.

Another sigh leaves me as my shoulders relax. Safe, well almost safe. I recomposed myself slightly before speaking: “Are we in position?”

I receive an affirmation from the Navigator and Helmsman. I nod and continue: “Good, all vessels, Our final objective is just beyond this jump. Make your final preparations and jump.”

Only a few moments later hyperspace envelopes the task-force.

“... Exiting.”

Hyperspace fades away to reveal another IGBC Gun Platform, alongside a Munificent. The Separatist vessel approaching us on the left flank, opposite to the Dagger. Worst of all they were deploying fighters. Three dozen Vultures and a handfull of Hyenas by the look of it.

One second, then I bark orders: “Shields to front. Deploy remnants of Little squadron. Bastard squadron make an attack run on the Munificent. Dagger focus fire on the Munificent, Lucky Kelp use us for cover to get into effective missile range on the Gun platform. Helmsman all ahead full, bring us in between the two. FIRE AT WILL!”

Action, the orders carried out with a mix of panic and professionalism. The Vultures would need a minute or two to catch up to the Munificent, Bastard

squadron was already on top of the damn thing. The Dagger barely got the first salvo off, her ion cannons and light turbolasers seemingly disabling the frontal shielding of the Separatist vessel. Barely after the salvo impacted the Y-Wings of Bastard Squadron unload a large chunk of their payload of proton torpedoes onto the bridge and along the spine of the Munificent.

“Wasn’t vigilant. That’s the price of complacency.-” I mutter to myself, watching the ship begin to drift to the side and fire sporadically in our general direction- “Dagger, disable it fully, then focus fire on the Vultures.”

One option to take a few more of them before they have the chance to overwhelm us. I close my eyes a moment as I speak: “Bastard Squadron, Little squadron move to intercept the hostile fighters. You’ll have our support, may the Maker preserve you and may the Force be with you.”

It sounds colder than usual, like when I beat up an idiot, who stole his dad’s blaster and pulled it on me, with a metal pipe. That was when I was ... unsure about my future. I don’t think I like that tone or the circumstances around me taking it.

I ignore the surprise in the eyes of some of the crew. War is cruel, and it is better to potentially sacrifice twenty five men to save a frigate with hundreds on board. They should know this, but that didn’t make it any better. The first

turbolaser impacts from the IGBC gun platform smash into the shields of the Little Revenge.

“Our men have engaged in dogfights, sir.” I hear.

“When in range begin supporting fire. Have the Lucky Kelp rush ahead now, we need the damn station down. Focus fire on the bridge.” I order, my tone of voice returning to its usual professional manner.

I turn towards the tactical display again, watching as the red and blue dots for fighters blipped out of existence one by one. As the turbolaser and missile fire impact the Separatist installation again and again, another blue dot vanishes. I look over the display to see the Dagger rapidly approaching the dogfights from the now fully disabled Munificent.

“Sir, enemy fighters are breaking off. They’re heading towards us.” I hear. My gaze returns to the fighter engagement to see multiple red dots disengage and move towards us. Most likely the Hyenas and a handful of Vultures.

“Intensify starboard fire. Brace for impact.” I bark out.

A moment later the enemy fighters and bombers approaching us are down to six, then five, then three, then impact. The proton torpedoes hit us, detonating on the shield. The ship shudders and I watch as the remaining three separatist droids are hit by port fire and detonate.

“Enemy station detonating, sir.” I hear Mi-Kus say.

“Bring us about, has the Lucky Kelp left the detonation area?” I ask.

“Yes, sir.” I receive in reply.

“Alright, call back whatever fighters and bombers we still have. I want the hangar prepared for emergency landings five minutes ago. Bring the formation in close, reverse arrow head. Inform all task-force ships We head for the following coordinates-” I wait a moment for the series of numbers and letters to be rattled off by the Navigations officer- “Bring up any reserve power to our shields and laser weapons, pull it from the turbolasers, it’s unlikely they’ll hit anything that small.”

The Republic ships rush forwards, accelerating towards the jump point. Soon they were joined by a single V-19 and two limping Y-Wings, followed by eight Vultures. The V-19 slowed, letting the Y-Wings pass it, before following them. Finally the first Y-Wing slid into the Hanger, followed shortly by the burning

second. The V-19 began dodging laserfire from the Vultures and was hit, causing a fire on one of the wings. It still managed to fold up and land in the hangar, the pursuing vultures kept away by immediate salvos of heavy laser fire from the Little Revenge.

Finally we reached the jump point and I didn't even need to give the order before we jumped into the embrace of Hyperspace. We were safe, for now.