

## Expectation.

Still on the Soul of Darkness' bridge corridor, Admiral Haakan gazes at the datapad on his hand. The 3rd Fleet was in formation, fully loaded with supplies, troops, vehicles and the 501st was hosted on the additional barracks. General Withey reported his troops at full readiness as well. The ships had their hangars filled with TIE Fighters and Bombers. They'd have jumped to their designated theater of operations weren't for the late new arrivals, who'd catch up with the rest of the fleet.

Turning to stare at the viewport with a tight, wolfish smile, his thoughts were focused on the plan he devised. He was actually looking a few steps ahead. Haakan's plan called for a handful of TIE Scouts and TIE Phantoms. Despite having a large fleet he wanted to use as little resources as possible. The extra special TIE Squadrons weren't on the 3rd Fleet's original inventory but he was aware they were into full production as part of the imperial conventional arsenal. He didn't mind requesting those as Imperial Center was quite clear about throwing its full support to his campaign. And if he could score a victory for the Empire with just a tiny percentage of his forces it'd be even better.

Haakan's own ambition was to see the New Order's victory over chaos, to see the Empire controlling the galaxy for good. Law, order and progress would bring prosperity and happiness and no one would suffer what he had to suffer on his distant past. Nobody deserved to go through all the pain and grief he went. He ended up so wounded, so vulnerable and void, the only way to move on was to let his own humanity go, to let it die.

But the Empire was there.

The Empire provided him with something bigger to hold onto on those gloomy days. He somehow managed to cut part of his humanity, his feelings and hide much of the rest deep into a personal fortress around his shattered heart. A fortress with an Imperial crest welded on it. At times, he hid so well his feelings people often took him for a non-human. He managed to use a few of his remaining feelings to fuel his own efficiency in duty; anger often provided a powerful boost to his fighting abilities – although it had to be quickly controlled before he'd lose himself into his own animal being.

Focusing on a distant point in the coldness of space, Haakan dug even deeper into his own mind. He had to remember the dreams – and nightmares – of his past to properly ponder the moment. He went beyond supporting the Empire as a soldier, he gave his very soul to his cause and committed to it with the best of his ability since the very moment he started as a lowly crewman up to this moment where he was given command of the Eclipse – ah, yes, the Eclipse, possibly the largest and mightiest ship ever built. Truly a most welcome addition in the eyes of any fleet commander although not his favorite choice for a command ship. Haakan still kept in mind his days as a TIE pilot where precise hits, dodging and evading meant survival. He appreciated the supporting firepower such a vessel could offer yet he'd appreciate as well some maneuvering ability in order to dodge, evade or trick the enemy into some trap or plain outmaneuver it on a possibly ship-to-ship combat. The Eclipse had little of it although it had its sublight engines. "I'll have to adapt" he whispered.

Turning back his attention to his datapad, Haakan reviews the logistic details. The fleet is only waiting for the arrival of the special TIE squadrons, the Eclipse and the new commander for the Soul of Darkness. Captain Vincenzo was picked for the task. Haakan verified his profile on the database and he was right: Imperial Starfleet sent a capable officer. A young, mildly lacking in experience tho quite capable, loyal, dedicated and enthusiastic officer indeed. The Captain will get it with time, and he'll acquire a lot of experience with the upcoming campaign Haakan thought.

Glancing at his watch he switched his attention to his watch. Three-Twentyone. The TIEs should be ready to be transferred to the hangar of the Riaza. He addressed the comm officer "Communications, inform the Maw installation I want a status update on the TIE Scouts and TIE Phantoms" "Yes sir," the officer replied and after a few moments he confirmed they were ready to be transferred. "Signal the Riaza, they may begin receiving the fighters. They are also to expect my shuttle shortly". His shuttle he thought. Being on space on the backseat of a slow and relatively weak vehicle wasn't his idea of transferring. He flew many missions in the past to help protect those. Some were successful, some weren't that successful. Regardless of the trust he had on the Navy's pilots he was the kind of man who would prefer to do things himself. Specially if its about his own security, about defending himself, never wanted to be the weak spot but a stronghold. Haakan made a mental note about bypassing the protocol and having himself a customized fighter for such cases. As a naval engineer he thought on the design himself but such concepts were put aside when the sensors officer called him "Admiral? Sensors are detecting an incoming vessel. It is the Eclipse sir, 20 degrees on high starboard...it's huge..." "Indeed, lieutenant, indeed. Communications, hail the Eclipse and inform the fleet they're to assume escorting positions around it. Navigation: take us above the Eclipse. We'll departure soon so I want hyperspace courses plotted and ready." "Right away sir" the other replied.