Into the Pit

Part II

As the stars warped back into focus around the stolen shuttle from the First Order, the Emperor's Hammer Strike Fleet could be seen from the main view port. Hovering over the gas giant were two Star Destroyers and their escort cruisers of Arquitens and a Modified Interdictor. Alarms began sounding in the cabin of the shuttle indicating someone was locking onto it with their warhead system.

"First Order shuttle, this is Captain Newt, XO of Sin Squadron" came a voice over the comms, "Prepare to die."

Argentine quickly tapped on the comms system to transmit, almost missing the button entirely in her haste and hands shaking from the thought of being killed by effectively friendly fire. "HOLD YOUR FIRE!!! PLEASE DO NOT SHOOT!!" she shouted.

"Oh? You got ten seconds to beg then." replied Captain Newt, with his thumb rubbing the missile fire button on his flight stick.

"I'm with the Secret Order! Neophyte Argentine, I have Mack's droid with me!! Please do not shoot!" Argentine yelled. A cool and calm familiar voice came over the comms, "Stand down Captain. She's one of ours."

"But General Honsou sir, with all due respect, how would *you* know that?" Captain Newt argued, with irritation in his voice. Hearing the name Honsou, Argentine thought to herself *'Is that really the Grand Master?'* Knowing that the Secret Order works with the Emperor's Hammer TIE Corps, but from the shadows, she didn't know how much they actually knew and dared not to indulge any further information. Especially if the Grand Master is in fact also a pilot *and* a General in the TIE Corps.

"I may *not* be the Squadron Commander anymore, but I still outrank you son. Stand down, that is an order." General Honsou replied.

You could feel the disappointment in Newt's voice as he replied back, "Yes sir."

"Miss Argentine, if you would be so kind as to follow us back to the Star Destroyer *Warrior* and you can debrief us on what is going on." said Honsou.

"Yes General" Argentine replied, with a sigh of relief and sat back in the seat and relaxed her shoulders and unclenched her jaw. R6-N9 rolled up beside her and gave a couple of soothing beeps. Arrick came and joined them, sitting down in the copilot seat. "Are we going to be ok?" he asked hesitantly.

Argentine rolled her head to face him and said, “Yes, we’re going to be ok, but I am more worried about Mack.” Arrick cocked his head to the side with a bewildered look on his face. Argentine noticing the young man’s confusion, rolled her eyes and sighed. “You can’t possibly be that dense. Jaxxon is Mack. My real name is Argentine. The droid is Nebula” she explained, pointing at the astromech. Arrick looked like a light had finally turned on in his head. Argentine continued, “Yeah, *now* you get it. We obviously weren’t going to tell you our real names back there.”

The TIE Sinisters of Sin Squadron turned and began escorting the stolen First Order shuttle back towards the *Warrior* and the *Relentless* star destroyers. “Warrior to Sin Squadron, we have another contact exiting hyperspace near your position, be advised.” came a voice over the comms of the TIEs. “What now?” Newt said irritatingly.

A shuttle exited hyperspace, black with a red insignia on its wings. “This is Lieutenant Commander Et’sen Kryze of Spear Squadron!! Authorization Code:
Aurek-Aurek-Wesk-One-Nine!! This is an emergency!” Et’sen yelled into the comms.

“Copy that, Lieutenant Commander, what is the situation?” Newt replied.

“I have critical information regarding the First Order and a high priority threat to the Emperor’s Hammer!” Et’sen said excitedly. “I’ve got to speak with General Honsou and Admiral Alexandre Morgan at once!”

“Welcome back Mr. Kryze, we were just escorting Ms. Argentine to the *Warrior* for a similar debrief. However, it looks like things have become quite complicated.” Honsou said over the comms. “Captain Newt, change of plans, I’m taking them both to the *Relentless.* You return to the *Warrior* and await further orders.”

“Yes General”, Newt responded. The two TIE Sinisters took different approach vectors towards the two star destroyers, with the two shuttles following Honsou’s TIE towards the *Relentless*. The three craft docked inside of the hangar of the Star Destroyer and were greeted by the remaining members of Spear Squadron. Everyone was curious why General Honsou’s TIE was there but even more curious about the First Order shuttle and the mysterious black shuttle with the unknown red insignia. Et’sen clamored out of the black shuttle, visibly wounded with dried blood on his chest and abdomen and covered with bruises. His squadronmates rushed over to him to aid him and everyone was talking all at once with questions of ‘what happened’ and ‘who did this to you’. “I’m fine guys, I’m fine. But I have to talk to the BGCOM and Gra- um, General Honsou” Et’sen reassured his fellow pilots.

Argentine and Arrick exited their shuttle and the pilots all turned and drew their sidearms. Argentine and Arrick put their hands up and she immediately yelled, “DON’T SHOOT! WE’RE ON YOUR SIDE YOU IDIOTS!”. Argentine clearly agitated with her first interactions with the TIE Corps being treated like a traitor or hostile target. “Stand down Spear!” Honsou said with a calm,

yet authoritative voice, “Those two are with me, as well as Mr. Kryze.” Nebula rolls down the ramp of the First Order shuttle beeping and booping loudly as though she was reprimanding the pilots. The pilots of Spear quickly lowered their weapons, recognizing Nebula and her quirky attitude, then they looked back and forth amongst one another with the same thought.

“Where’s the Commander?” Lieutenant Colonel Death asked out loud.

“We’re going to get to that LC, but first the BGCOM and us are going to be having a meeting. In the meantime, you should all start readying your fighters.” Honsou replied. The pilots of Spear could sense something was wrong, but they all stood at attention, saluted the General and dispersed to their fighters to begin preparing them for whatever danger may be coming their way.

As the trio marched down towards the ready room with haste and with Arrick and Nebula in tow, AD Alexandre Morgan came from the opposite direction with equal urgency in his steps. As they all converged at the doorway to the ready room, the Admiral bowed in respect to the Grand Master. “You may rise Warden. Come, we have a great many things to discuss with Neophytes Argentine and Et’sen.” said Grand Master Honsou, who pauses and looks at Arrick and Nebula. Argentine taps Honsou on the shoulder, “We will need them as well Grand Master. The droid and this engineer have details pertinent to the TIE Corps.”

Honsou looks at Argentine, takes a deep breath and exhales, turning his attention back to Nebula and Arrick. “You two come in as well” he said.

The pilots of Spear stood outside of the ready room, all eagerly awaiting to hear what is going on, what their mission is and most importantly, where their Squadron Commander is. Lieutenant Commander Oz Tiaz sighs, “They’ve been in there for over an hour!”. Lieutenant Commander Cyan Vytuia, the XO of Spear, looks over at Oz in agreement, “It has to be something big.” he says. Lieutenant Colonel Death almost instinctively put a finger to his lips to signal to the other pilots to quiet down, and stood at attention as the door slid open. The BGCOM came out and looked at the pilots and motioned them in.

Into the Void

Mack awakened on the bridge of one of the First Order's Star Destroyers, traveling through hyperspace. He was trying to remember what happened aboard the Sith Eternal dreadnaught, but everything was blank. As if it was wiped from his memory, and there was a humming or buzzing noise in his head, breaking his concentration. One of the First Order officers approached Mack and said something that sounded completely muffled. Mack tried shaking the weird fog in his mind to make out what the officer was saying.

“Oi mate! Are you even there?” said the First Order officer, tapping Mack on the shoulder. Mack responded with a low growling voice, “What do you want, you insufferable dog?”

The officer taken back by the response, was about to retaliate when two of the Twelve's members that were apparently near Mack, stepped forward and hissed at the officer. Speaking in their broken hive mind language, “You will respect this One, he is our new Champion. The Emperor commands it.”

The First Order officer took a step back and bowed graciously before the members of the Sith Eternal. “Forgive me my Lords, I spoke out of turn.” Said the officer.

“See that it doesn't happen again” Mack snarled, “Where are we heading?”. The officer readjusted his tunic and said, “To the Gasriese system my Lord, to take back what is rightfully ours from the *Emperor’s Hammer*.”

Hearing the name of the Emperor’s Hammer sent a sharp pain through Mack's mind. The First Order officer had continued speaking but Mack couldn't make out a word he was saying from the splintering sound that was shrieking through his mind. *‘What the hell is going on? Why am I so angry’* Mack thought to himself. Images started appearing in his mind, like memories or flashbacks. The events happening in these memories all seem to add up, but somehow they felt off. When Mack tried pushing into them deeper, everything became fuzzy. Mack ignored it for the time being. He felt compelled to achieve an objective however, but could not remember what it was. The two Sith Eternal members could sense Mack becoming flustered, turned to him and said, “Do not fret Champion of Palpatine. Your Destiny will reveal itself soon.”

“Thank you, brothers. For the glory of Emperor Palpatine.” Mack replied. The three turned and began staring out of the viewport watching the stars, space and time blur while traveling through hyperspace. Suddenly alarms began blaring across the bridge of the RSD as it dropped out of hyperspace.

Mack looked about and asked, “Are we there? Where is the planet?” The bridge erupted into chaos as First Order members were talking over one another trying to figure out what had happened. One of the engineers spoke up over the sea of chattering voices and alarms, “WE WERE BROUGHT OUT OF HYPERSPACE!! THERE IS AN INTERDICTOR NEARBY!”

The captain of the RSD began giving out his orders to the crew, “Do a full sensor sweep, find out where the gravity well is!”

Another officer chimed in, “Sir! We're being hailed! Voice only!”

“Put it through,” commanded the captain.

“This is Admiral Alexandre Morgan of the ISDII *Relentless, the* ISDII *Warrior* and the Emperor’s Hammer. You have something of ours. Stand down. This is your **ONLY** warning.” Admiral Morgan demanded.

The captain scoffed and replied, “That's really rich, *Admiral*. However, it is you that shall stand down. I am Commodore Madden and your puny *Star Destroyers* are no match for the might of the First Order!”

“I was hoping you'd say that.” Admiral Morgan replied and disconnected the communications. He turned to the comms officer, “Alert Spear, Rho, Sin and Kappa squadrons that the mission is Green Light.”

“AYE SIR!” replied the officer.

Several Ion Pulse torpedoes slammed into the shields of the First Order RSD from Spear Squadron's Missile Boats. “Give them hell boys!!” Shouted Lieutenant Commander Cyan Vytuia.

“Sir! They're dumbfiring Ion Torpedoes at us!” Yelled a tactical officer.

“Yes, I can see that Lieutenant *obvious*. Launch the TIEs, if it's a fight they want, then it's a fight they'll get and lose.” said Commodore Madden.

As the swarm of First Order TIEs began to exit the hangars of the RSD, a flurry of green laser bolts shredded through them destroying several TIEs. “Compliments of Rho Squadron you filthy kowakian monkey lizards!!” whooped Lieutenant Colonel OL” Davy Jonez as he and his wingmen, Major's Vanguard88, Miguel and Isabis cut through the wave of First Order TIEs with their TIE Rhodiums.

“We've lost fighter groups 1, 3 and 7 sir!” yelled the First Order tac officer.

“Where the hell did they come from?! LAUNCH ALL THE FIGHTERS!!” cried out the Commodore. More First Order TIEs began leaving the hangar. The battle had begun!

“Admiral Morgan to all Squadron Commanders, remember we're not going to be able to win this battle and are on a limited schedule. Buy enough time for the extraction team and bug out.” said Admiral Alexandre Morgan.

Exiting hyperspace behind the massive First Order RSD, the *Demon of Spear* appeared. Carrying aboard it Neophyte Argentine, Grand Master Honsou, Lt. Arrick, Nebula and a team of Hammer's Fist commandos.

“Right there is the service hangar.” Lt. Arrick said as he pointed.

“Then that's where we'll make our entrance. Ready up and remember your roles” said Honsou. The commando team saluted him and headed towards the exit of the ship. “This is indeed a fine ship, I might have to steal it from Mack.” teased Honsou. Nebula buzzed in disapproval. Argentine gave the Grand Master a side smile and said, “Even I don't think you'd be able to do that to Mack.”

Honsou chuckled, “I'm only kidding, Ms. Argentine. But… if I really wanted to…” as he shrugged with a mischievous grin. The ship touched down in the hangar bay and the group disembarked. “Mr. Arrick and Nebula, stay here with the ship and keep the engines warm. I have a feeling we're going to need to leave quickly and not as stealthily.” Honsou commanded.

“Yes sir!” Lt. Arrick said as he saluted the Grand Master, “and please do be careful.”

“Mr. Arrick, you worry too much. We'll make you a man yet.” Honsou winked and led the team into the bowels of the ship.

“Welp, it's just us girl. I bet you have a million stories to tell.” Arrick said while patting Nebula's dome. Nebula made a chirping sound that sounded like chuckling. Just then, one of the containers on the ship started rocking back and forth on its own. Sharp shrilling noises of whistles and beeps came from it. Startling both Arrick and Nebula, they stared at the container, wondering what could be inside of it making such a ruckus. The edge of a vibroblade pierced through the side of the container and began cutting out a square hole. Arrick and Nebula watched with anticipation and horror as the blade was cutting and watched as it slid back inside of the container. Neither of them were brave enough to approach the container and the strange noises. There was a low growl and *THUMP! THUMP! THUMP!!!* and the cut out fell over onto the deck. A mouse bot shot out of the hole it had made! With a vibroblade strapped to its side, it turned its attention to Arrick, growling and turning on its vibroblade once again, rolling towards him like a rabid Raxshir. Arrick immediately screamed in terror and threw his hands up as though he was being mugged. Nebula rolled in front of him and let out her own growl, as one of the compartments on her chassis opened and an electro shocking probe came out, crackling with electricity. She turned her dome back and forth as if telling the droid “no”.

“W-w-what is going on?!” Arrick stuttered out. Nebula let out a series of beeps and boops. “00dles? What’s an 00dle?” Arrick asked. Nebula ignored the question and began talking to 00dles in their binary language. 00dles turned off his vibroblade and shot down the ramp, exiting the ship and into the corridor. Several screams were heard.

“Death! You got 3 on your tail!” cried out Major Fameplane “Turn to 3.14 and I can pick them off of you!”

“Heh, only 3? They’re gonna need a lot more than that!” Lieutenant Colonel cackled as he led the 3 First Order TIEs on a chase and pulled off a maneuver only he could think of. Using the inertia of his TIE Advance, he spun it around and let off a volley of laser blasts, destroying 2 of the 3 attacking TIEs, forcing the last one to break its pursuit. “Oh no you don’t!” Death howled

as he locked onto the fleeing TIE and fired another barrage of laser fire, shredding the TIE fighter.

“Spear 2-1 to *Relentless*, the shields on that monstrosity are almost depleted.” Called out Cyan.

“Copy that Spear, continue the bombardment.” replied Admiral Morgan, “Sin Squadron, you’re up next!”

“Copy that Admiral!” said Major Hector. The TIE Sinister’s of Sin Squadron formed up and flew towards the First Order RSD.

“Shields are almost depleted sir!” yelled the tac officer.

“Gunnery crews, increase firepower on sectors 4 and 7!” commanded Madden.

“Why is such a punitive force giving you such trouble?” Mack hissed at the Commodore.

Commodore Madden rolled his eyes and chose to ignore the question.

“Sir! There are intruders on deck 17!” yelled one officer.

“Send a security detachment immediately!” commanded Commodore Madden.

“There are other Force users here” Argentine said, “I can sense Mack’s presence as well but something is wrong”.

“I can sense it as well. Don’t worry we will get him back” Honsou said as he used the Force to throw a group of First Order stormtroopers against a wall with such force they were knocked unconscious.

The duo came into contact with a small platoon of stormtroopers who immediately opened fire. Argentine ducked behind cover as Honsou ignited his lightsaber, glowing a deep crimson red and deflected laser bolts away from him and Argentine. Two of their own commandos began returning fire, taking down a couple of the stormtroopers. Honsou used the Force to increase his movement speed so much that he was like a mirage and breached through the stormtroopers' defensive positions. Dropping them one by one, two by two, until none of them were left to cause any more trouble.

“Grand Master, this is Sabo Team, we’ve reached the Nav Computer center. Ready to wipe.” came a voice on the comm link.

“Do it” Honsou said.

“Copy that” replied the commando.

“We’re running out of time and need to wrap this up.” Honsou said as they approached another turbolift, “Captain, if you would be so kind”.

“Aye sir” said the commando and shoved a data spike into the control module of the turbolift and granted them access and locking out any interference to prevent them from reaching their goal. The doors whooshed open, “Your chariot awaits sir.” the commando said, gesturing to the turbolift. Honsou and Argentine stepped inside and the doors slid close behind them.

On the bridge, the two Sith Eternals said in unison, “There is another approaching, your security team failed. We shall handle this.”

“Close the blast doors!” commanded Madden. But it was already too late, Honsou and Argentine barreled onto the bridge.

“Mack!!” Argentine cried out. Mack turned and looked at the young woman shouting at him. Confusion came across his face, he felt like he recognized her and the man standing next to her, but nothing clear was coming through to him.

“This one belongs to the Emperor, You shall die” said the two Sith Eternals.

“Put a sock in it!” yelled out Honsou and ignited his lightsaber, “Argentine, only you can get through to Mack, I’ll handle these two.” Argentine nodded and ran towards Mack. The two Sith Eternals stepped in to intercept her, igniting their own lightsabers. Honsou fired Force Lightning from his fingertips at them and bellowed, “I’m your opponent!”. Argentine slid across the floor in between them as they were being shocked and got back onto her feet continuing her dash towards Mack. Commodore Madden then stepped in front of her, with blaster drawn, “Ah ah ah, not so fas-”. Before he could finish his statement, Argentine jumped up and caught his chin with her knee and used her momentum to follow through, knocking him to the ground and disarming him. The Commodore yelped in pain as blood ran down his face, “You’ll pay for that!”. Argentine kicked him in the face once more and he yelped again. She turned her attention back to Mack, but he grabbed her by the front of her cloak, lifting her off of the ground. Argentine struggled to fight his immense strength, but knew this was not a battle of strength. At least not physically. She used her legs to push off of Mack’s chest, forcing him to release her. She flipped through the air, her long silver hair flowing like a cape, and landing on her feet. Gaining a bit of distance, she readied herself for a counter attack against her Quaestor. “Snap out of it!” she yelled at Mack.

“I’m the hand of the Emperor and I will destroy those that stand against him.” Mack said.

Argentine sighed, “This is going to hurt me a lot more than it is going to hurt you”. All of the hand to hand training they’ve done together, Argentine knew what Mack’s weak points were.

She charged in at him and just as he swung his right arm, she ducked underneath of it while grabbing a hold of it to swing her nimble body upwards and promptly wrapped her legs around his neck and shoulders. Argentine delivered three blows from her elbow to the top of Mack's head and leaned backwards with as much force as she could, causing Mack to lose balance. Catching herself with both hands, she managed to flip Mack facedown onto the deck of the bridge. Mack groaned in pain, but Argentine wasn't done yet. She drove her knee into the middle of Mack's back and pressed both her palms onto his temples. She began using the Force to see into Mack's mind, and even though he tried to wriggle free, she had him pinned. Deep in his consciousness, Argentine found Mack, he was chained down to the ground. Mack looked up and cried out, "Argentine! It's a trap! You gotta get out of here!"

Argentine ran over to Mack, "Not without you, we need you". A dark ominous figure materialized before them and cackled, "He is mine".

"Never!" Argentine shouted. The figure sent out Force Lightning at Argentine who blocked it with ease. "You underestimate my will" she said while sending a massive tidal wave of pure Force Energy at the figure.

"Noooooooo!" the figure cried out and dematerialized. Argentine turned back to Mack and materialized a purple blade and broke the chains that were binding him. Mack awoke with Argentine on his back and he tapped her on the leg. "Thank you" he said and she immediately released him from her pin. Mack looked around at what was happening and he saw the Grand Master with arms folded and chuckling. Two of the Twelve members of the Sith Eternal laid slain on the deck of the bridge.

"Welcome back Mr. Udar, but we need to leave. Now." said Honsou. They all made their way back to the *Demon of Spear*, several of the Hammer's Fist commandos did not make it back unfortunately. A whistle and beep came from the corridor and 00dles flew up the ramp, onto the ship. Honsou cocked his head to the side upon seeing his droid companion and shrugged his shoulders. Everyone embarked onto the *Demon* and promptly left the hangar. "Honsou to Alexandre, package is secure and we wiped our boots" said Honsou into the comms.

"Copy that, All squadrons full retreat!" Morgan commanded. Three more First Order RSDs exited hyperspace, but not in time to change the flow of the battle. Battlegroup II slipped away into hyperspace, all flight plans and hyperspace coordinates the First Order had on their lead ship was wiped by the commando team as well as a little present made by Arrick and Nebula in their computer system.