

DEMPSEY'S WRATH

Elegantly yet decisively, Dempsey manoeuvred her personal TIE Defender through the small asteroid belt. No subtleties this time, no sneaking in with an E-wing or X-wing. Not wasting any time, she simply took the faster fighter this time.

As she cleared the asteroid belt, a small green/purple colored planet appeared before her. Karderas. As she approached the planet, she received the comm signal from the orbital defense platform she knew was there. She flicked off the radio, and continued flying. No pleasantries. She reinforced her shields as she closed in on the planet's atmosphere, and watched in amazement as they lit up a bright red when she made contact and they absorbed the heat. Slowly, the light died out, and she could feel she was inside the atmosphere. Flying became a little harder, as TIE fighters were never designed for atmospheric flight.

Then her targeting computer beeped as it picked up several signals converging on her position. She quickly pulled up what information the computer had to offer. A disgusted smile showed around her lips, as she identified six old Pinooks. *Not even a challenge*, she thought to herself. Nevertheless, she reinforced her shields back to full, and hit a few buttons so her four laser cannons and two ion cannons would all fire simultaneously. Thought it gave her a very slow rate of fire, she had learned in previous engagements that only a single shot would be enough to take out a Pinook.

She picked the lead fighter, and oriented herself to flying straight at him. As she watched the numbers on the computer scroll down, and she got within firing range, she still held back. At this range, odds were one or more of her lasers would go wide and miss. Better to wait until point blank range.

The other pilots didn't think alike, and had started firing even while still outside firing range. She watched the lower powered energy beams come towards her and splash out harmlessly on her shields. Then she got a good visual on the lead Pinook, aligned her targeting reticule, which immediately turned red to indicate a lock, and fired a burst. Six streams of energy leapt from her fighter and slashed into the old Pinook. Even though its shields managed to deflect two of them, the other four beams penetrated the old fighter. As one beam burnt through the cockpit's transparisteel canopy, it burnt straight through the pilot, leaving nothing but a smouldering carcass. Two others penetrated even further, and sliced straight through the old fighter. Then it exploded into a fiery ball.

This was bad news for the closest of his wingmen, as the debris expelled from the fighter by the explosion shot out in all directions. The second Pinook, which was flying too close to his leader, caught a piece of debris and the canopy cracked. The pilot crossed his arms in front of his face, trying to ward off the impact, and in doing so, let go of his controls. The Pinook, without any safeties for this sort of thing, immediately veered off course and started dropping like a rock. It took the pilot almost two seconds to realize the debris had not destroyed his canopy, but by the time he got his hands back on the controls, it was too late. He pulled hard on his yoke, and the Pinook started to level out, but the trees were too close already. The fighter crashed into the trees, and branches stabbed through the damaged canopy and impaled the pilot to his seat.

Dempsey didn't know this, she saw the Pinook go down, and suddenly she was up against only four. She cut the throttle, and made a sharp turn to port. The closest fighter had overshot her and tried to turn to get behind her, but the TIE Defender was more manoeuvrable, and before the Pinook had finished its turn, she was already behind him. One shot of lasers and ions vaporized the Pinook's engines, and ignited the fuel. The Pinook went out in a fireball.

Dempsey took the fighter in a climb as she picked her next target. The Pinook seems to be running, so she lined up her TIE behind it. Its superior speed would overtake the Pinook

in seconds. Then her early warning system started beeping, indicating a missile had been fired at her. She quickly selected the missile, and assessed its threat level. The computer identified the warhead as an old model Arakyd ST2. *Nice*, she thought. She ignored the missile, and diverted some power from her forward to her rear deflector shields. She knew they would be more than capable of absorbing the missile's impact energy. As she closed on the Pinook, she fired another burst of energy, and watched the Pinook go up in flames as the laser and ion beams pierced through its shields and shattered its engines. Then the concussion missile caught up with her. The explosion rocked her TIE Defender. The explosion generated a massive sound wave flying out in all directions. As Dempsey had expected, her shields held, but several alarms started blaring in her fighter. She quickly pulled up the diagnostics, which reported a short circuit in some of the hyperdrive's power shunts.

Satisfied that her fighting capabilities were not damaged, she turned back towards the two Pinooks that were left. She picked the closest one, and steered her craft in its direction. The Pinook's pilot, more stupid than brave, turned his fighter towards Dempsey and started his attack run. Dempsey cracked a smile. In a head-on engagement, the Pinook didn't stand a chance. She watched as the lasers bounced harmlessly off her forward shields, nibbling away at them slowly, and sent a burst of fire towards the fighter. The six energy beams penetrated the Pinook's hull, frying systems, pilot, engines and weapons systems, before reaching the fuel tanks, which promptly exploded as the superheated fuel ignited. Dempsey evened out her shields and selected the last Pinook on her computer. This pilot had been a little smarter than his colleagues, and at realizing there was no way he could defeat the TIE fighter, had decided to turn tail and run back home. For a moment Dempsey contemplated giving chase, but she estimated it would take at least a minute to overtake the Pinook. Not worth the effort.

Dempsey veered off, and pulled up a geographical map of the planet below. Nasbeth, the planet's capital city was dead ahead, about four hundred clicks to the north. She drained her laser and shield energy and diverted them to the engines, increasing her fighter's speed to maximum, and shot through the planet's atmosphere headed for her target.

Fifteen minutes later, she popped the access hatch on top of the ball cockpit of her TIE and climbed out the cockpit. She closed the hatch behind her, and jumped to the ground. The Defender was hidden in a group of trees, which should hide it from being spotted both from air and ground unless you were very close. She clipped her lightsaber to her belt, and swung a large black cape around her shoulders. She pulled the hood up over her head, and walked towards the city.

As she walked around the city, she noticed the people were just like people everywhere else. No one took notice of her, everybody minded their own business. That should make this a lot easier.

She quickly moved through the city, until she arrived at what appeared to be the largest building. She looked up, and counted thirty five floors. And on top of that, the home of Jardyn Montes. Anger and hate flared through Dempsey as she the name echoed inside her mind. It had taken her ten years to find her after she had heard she had survived. At the time, she was shocked. She was certain she had slain every last one of the Montes family back then, but apparently Jardyn had survived.

After the slaver Peler had recovered her escape pod, he had sold Dempsey to the Montes family. From that moment on, life had been hell for her. The male children in the family regularly disturbed her sleep, but they had paid dearly for their assaults on her. Jardyn had been one of the seven female children of the family. More often than not, she'd used Dempsey to practise her self defense techniques, and being almost twice Dempsey's size, there was very little Dempsey could do. She remembered the many nights in the bacta tanks after being pummeled by Jardyn again.

Slowly, she walked away from the building, into a small street. There, she sat down, and waited for nightfall, while childhood nightmares fuelled her rage.

After darkness had taken possession of the city, Dempsey got up, and walked towards the large building. She boldly walked up to the front door, and opened it. The security guard who sat behind his desk stood up, and walked over.

"I'm sorry, but no unauthorized entry after dusk," he said. "You will have to come back tomorrow." Unfortunately, he spoke to her in the planet's native language, one Dempsey didn't understand. She didn't have to. In her mind, she simply imagined his neck, pictured the spinal bones, and pulverized them. Gasping for air, the security guard slumped to the ground, but he was dead before he made it that far. Dempsey grabbed the body, and dumped it behind the security desk. Then she walked up to the turbolifts, and headed for the top floor.

The hallway was empty, which made it that much easier to move about. Dempsey crossed the entire hallway twice, to make sure she was alone. She climbed up onto a table she'd put in the middle of the hallway, unclipped her lightsaber, and hit the switch. With a familiar snap-hiss, the blade came to life, and lit the entire hallway up in an eerie green light. With a few quick movements, she cut an opening into the ceiling. She caught the falling piece, and thrust it back through the opening. Then she jumped up onto the building's roof.

Jardyn had certainly used her inheritance well. The large roof was covered with a massive and beautiful garden. Flowers and plants long extinct on some worlds prospered here, and a large pool of water glistened in the light of the two moons. Dempsey crouched, and quickly moved towards the structure in the center. Sitting against the wall, she closed her eyes and reached inside. She could sense six life forms, two of which appeared to be awake. Dempsey touched their minds, making sure they were not Jardyn. After satisfying herself, she envisioned in her mind the brains of the two guards. Deeper and deeper she travelled, until she arrived at the cellular level. She imaged the individual brain cells, and followed the path of the blood vessels that supplied them with oxygen. She followed until the blood vessels all came together into one, that supplied the brain with oxygen fresh from the lungs. In her mind, she crushed the larger vessels, and watched as the flow of blood came to a standstill. It took only moments, until she sensed a feeling of distress in both guards, and moments later, they lost consciousness. Dempsey kept her focus, and kept the guards in her grasp for at least another minute, making sure they would not disturb her.

She got up, and walked over to the large glass window separating the living quarters from the luscious garden. With a swift move of her lightsaber, she cut a hole large enough for her to walk through. She stepped into the house, and looked around. The wealth displayed in this one room made her feel sick, knowing where it all came from. She quickly walked to a hallway, where she could feel the presence of four people. She silently entered the first room, and saw two small beds, with the small forms of young children. For a minute, Dempsey stared at them. Then she switched on her lightsaber, and with two swift moves ended the young lives. She walked out the room, and walked to the next. In the room stood a single bed in which two people were vast asleep. Dempsey switched on the light, and immediately recognized the face of Jardyn. At last, she would have her revenge. She reached out with her hand, and lifted the man sleeping beside her from his bed. Casually, she knocked him with his head against the wall. Not enough to do any serious harm, but more than enough to wake him. As he looked at her, and realized he was floating in the air, he gave a scream and called for the guards. Dempsey just held him there, as Jardyn woke up and stared at her. Then she saw her consort hanging in the air and screamed too.

Dempsey flicked her hand, and the man flew through the room and smacked hard into the wall. He fell to the ground with a cry of pain, and lay there for a moment. Then he raised his head and looked at her.

"Who are you?" he asked, the cracking in his voice betraying his fear.

"Ask her," Dempsey said, pointing at Jardyn. "She will have some very interesting stories to tell you, assuming she lives long enough for it." The man looked at Jardyn.

"I have no idea..." she tried, but Dempsey cut her off.

"How easy you forget. How hard it is for me to forget. All this time I have been looking for you. With you, the last of your family will die. And then you still owe me a childhood."

A puzzled look appeared on the woman's face. The look suddenly changed to one of recognition, and then fear. "It can't be..."

Dempsey smiled. "This time, you're going to be the punching bag," she whispered, as she lifted Jardyn from her bed and threw her clear across the room. She thought she heard the breaking of bones as the other woman hit the walls.

With a bellow, the man lunged at Dempsey, but she already knew he was going to before he did. With a wave, she moved a small table across the floor, and it caught the man right in his legs. He cried out in pain as the table swept him off his feet and landed him on the ground again. Dempsey lifted the guy up, and with the power of the Force started turning his head. A little resistance came as the head turned to fifty degrees, which was as much as his neck would allow, then it snapped, and she rotated the head a full 360 degrees. The flesh tore off his shoulders, and by the time his head had made the full circle, the body dropped to the ground while the head hovered motionless in the air. A cry of pain filled the room as Jardyn watched the death of the man she'd been with for the past eight years. Then Dempsey dropped the head, turned to the woman, and lifted her. With a motion of her hand, Jardyn slammed into the wall separating her room from the children's room, and she broke through it, landing on the bed of her youngest daughter. It took only a moment, but then she saw what had happened here, and she cried out in grief.

Dempsey walked around the hallway and entered the room through the door. Jardyn looked up at her, forgetting her pain, and lunged at Dempsey in blind rage, her fear now forgotten. Dempsey caught the woman, and smacked her fist into her face. Jardyn stumbled back, grabbing her nose where blood started gushing. "This time I'm not half your size, woman," she said. "Let's see how good you are taking on someone your own size instead of little children."

Jardyn stepped forward again, and tried to make a move at Dempsey, but Dempsey knew exactly which move she was going to try. She stepped aside, watched Jardyn's fist swing past her head, and then jammed her knee into the woman's stomach. Jardyn doubled over and dropped to the floor, gasping for air.

"Just as I thought," Dempsey said. "Not even worth my time."

Dempsey grabbed the back of the woman's hair, and dragged her through the hallways into the garden. There she threw Jardyn down and stood before her.

"How does it feel, being someone else's punching bag?" She said. Hurt as Jardyn was, she could hear the hatred resounding in Dempsey's voice.

"What do you want," she said. "I can give you whatever you want. Look around, riches like these can be yours!"

Dempsey laughed and shook her head. Then she grabbed the woman, with the Force, and lifted her above the ground. By now, Jardyn's face was covered in blood, and there wasn't a part of her body that didn't hurt.

"There is only one thing I want," Dempsey said, as she slowly moved Jardyn towards the edge of the roof. "You can try to repent for your sins on your way down." With that, Dempsey relaxed her grip on the woman. For a moment, Jardyn hung still, but then she began her long fall down the ground. Dempsey enjoyed listening to her scream, a scream that lasted until she hit the ground. Dempsey looked over the edge, but it was too dark to see anything. She smiled.