

Bridge

Imperial-II Star Destroyer *Warrior*

The bridge was as much of a hive of activity as it ever was, even taking into account the fact that their latest mission was little more than a wargame. As an active part of the Emperor's Hammer Strike Fleet, the Star Destroyer frequently saw action, keeping it and the second Wing of the TIE Fighter Corps incredibly busy.

"We should be dealing with enemy incursions. Not messing around firing paint pots at each other!" a bridge officer snorted.

Admiral Plif chuckled. "We do this, Lieutenant, to keep ourselves sharp. Besides, don't you want to prove we've still got the best run ship in the fleet? The crew of the *Hammer* has been getting awfully big for their boots again,"

Theta Squadron Ready Room

"You'll be flying the Bus this year, Mark. Your job is to fly around appearing to be clueless whilst the rest of Wing II mop up. Of course if anyone gets too close to you, you and your crew know what to do," La'an began.

General La'an had swapped positions with Theta Squadron's executive officer, Colonel Mark Schueler some months previously. The change had happened overnight, and Theta, a squadron made up entirely of veterans, had adapted in no time. Schueler himself was a long time veteran of both the TIE Corps and Theta, and despite his advancing years was still considered one of the top pilots in the entire Corps.

"Nobody can fly cluelessly quite as well as you managed. Just remember you're in a proper fighter now," Schueler instructed.

"So what's the plan? I've heard rumours that the *Hammer* have been working on new tactics just for this wargame," Madon questioned.

"That is, as always, why we will win. The *Hammer* pilots spend so much time getting used to Dempsey's latest tactical brainwaves that they end up tying themselves up in knots. Don't forget the last wargame," Mark replied with a wry smile.

The Theta pilots murmured in agreement.

24 hours later...

Mark Schueler sat in the pilot's seat of the Imperial Landing Craft that he and the rest of Theta's first flight regularly flew into battle. The Landing Craft, known by its affectional nickname of the 'Bus', largely acted as a distraction, though in the hands of competent pilots such as La'an and Schueler had actually proven to be fairly effective in combat.

"All systems on-line. Feel free to punch it," Den Darkhill announced.

Schueler nodded and pushed the lever to activate the Landing Craft's Repulsor lifts.

The battle would soon begin...

