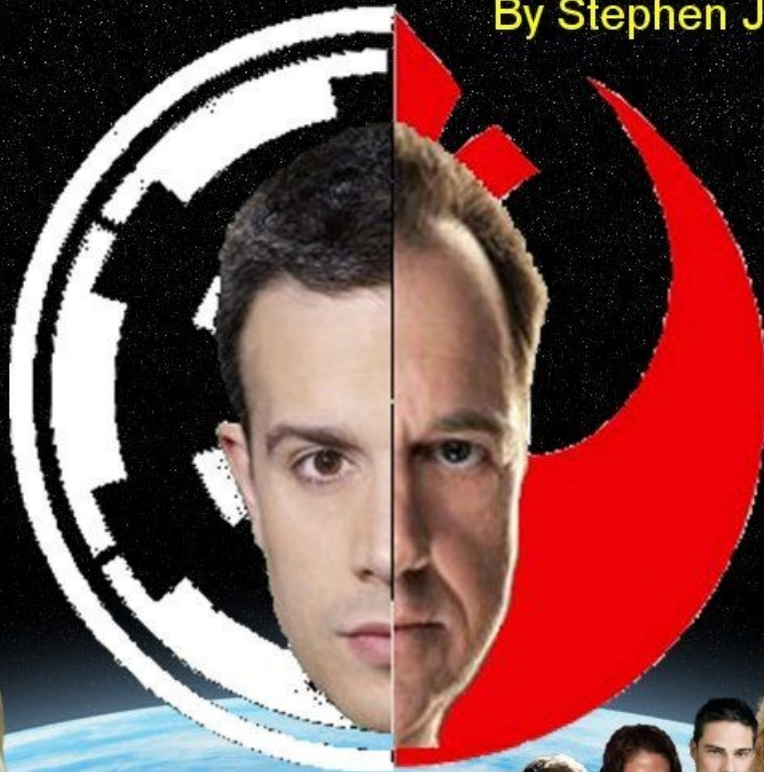


# STAR WARS

## 9-06: Spare Parts

By Stephen J Dutton



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Civil war turns father against son

IT IS A TIME OF CRISIS. REBEL FORCES FIGHTING AGAINST THE EVIL GALACTIC EMPIRE ARE OUTNUMBERED AND OUTGUNNED BY THEIR FOES. THEY MUST INSTEAD RELY ON GUERILLA WARFARE AND HIT AND FADE STRIKES BY SMALL GROUPS AGAINST STRONGER FORCES.

ONE SUCH GROUP IS LEAD BY THE EXILED NOBLEMAN VORN LARCUS III WHO, WITH THE HELP OF THE SMUGGLER MACE GRAYLE, CAPTAIN OF THE FREIGHTER THE *SILVER HAWK* TAKE THE FIGHT TO THE EMPIRE.

FACING THEM ARE A MULTITUDE OF ENEMIES, BOTH SEEN AND UNSEEN AS THE EMPIRE PLOTS TO BRING DOWN THE REBEL ALLIANCE AND FOREVER EXTINGUISH HOPE AND FREEDOM IN THE GALAXY...

## TITLE

LOOKING TO ADD A FUNCTIONING GRAVITY WELL PROJECTOR TO THEIR FLEET, THE ALLIANCE ORDERS THE OCCUPANTS OF THE SILVER HAWK TO PROCURE THE COMPONENTS THEY ARE MISSING TO GET THE GC-7700 CLASS FRIGATE THEY HAVE OBTAINED WORKING. THE DIFFICULTY IS THAT THE EASIEST PLACE TO GET THESE PARTS IS FROM AN OPERATIONAL IMPERIAL INTERDICTOR-CLASS CRUISER...

Original characters created and story written by Stephen J. Dutton.  
<http://thehazugfiles.uk/Index.htm>

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# 1.

Floating right outside the window in Rear Admiral Aphanar's office, the CC-7700 frigate *Refractor* could be seen clearly by the mon calamari as she looked towards the ship. From her location she could see the points of light where engineering crews were working to make the ship fully operational. Stolen from a shipyard several months earlier, the *Refractor* had been used as a source of spare parts for the larger and more modern interdictor-class heavy cruisers operated by the Empire. In its day the CC-7700 class frigate had been a useful vessel, preventing hostile ships from escaping into hyperspace using its single artificial gravity well generator. However, the technology of gravity well generation had improved and ship design had tended towards much larger warships. This had meant that the CC-7700 class had been retired from active service and the surviving vessels either broken up or placed in storage as the *Refractor* had been.

Admiral Aphanar turned around when she heard the door to her office open and a dark skinned human male entered, accompanied by a lighter skinned female.

"General Kain. Shyla." the admiral said in greeting to them.

"You asked to see us both admiral." General Kain replied.

"Yes general. Please take a seat." Admiral Aphanar said and all three of them sat down around the admiral's desk, "I asked you here about the *Refractor*." she added.

"That's that ship isn't it?" Shyla Nerin, the leader of Alliance support services in the sector asked, peering past the admiral and looking through the window as well.

"Correct." Admiral Aphanar replied.

"How soon will she be ready for deployment?" General Kain said.

"That I what I wanted to speak to you about." the admiral answered, "The frigate was flyable when it was delivered to us and the engineering teams who have been working on her since her arrival have almost restored her shields and conventional weaponry to full readiness. The *Refractor* will be ready to take her place as a ship of the line in under a day according to the latest estimates."

"I sense a 'but' coming." Shyla commented.

"Quite. The vessel was being used as a source of spare parts for other vessels when it was captured and there are several key components missing."

"What sort of key components?" Shyla asked.

"The gravitational focusing lenses." Admiral Aphanar said, "Without those the *Refractor* cannot operate its gravity well generator and it is nothing but an underpowered and poorly armed frigate."

"That's not the sort of thing we have in stock." Shyla said without needing to check her datapad.

"Yes, I am aware of that." Admiral Aphanar said, "Sending out my ships to engage an interdictor cruiser is risky in the extreme. However, I was hoping that you two might be able to come up with an alternate means of obtaining one."

General Kain smiled.

"I think, no I'm certain that I know someone who will be able to help us in this regard." he said.

The YT-1300 class freighter *Silver Hawk* was docked in the main hangar of the space station that functioned as the Alliance's headquarters in the sector undergoing maintenance. Technically this was just the responsibility of ship's owner Mace Grayle and its engineer Tobis Dorfus, but the members of the rebel field team stationed aboard the vessel were assisting in the process.

Lieutenant Colonel Vorn Larcus III was sat in the cockpit with his subordinate and much younger wife Kara checking the flight console when Kara looked up and out into the hangar bay where she saw a pair of people standing beside another small transport.

"Boss I think you should see this." she said and Vorn looked up as well.

"What's wrong? Oh. Oh dear." he said when he recognised one of the two people.

Cass Grayle was Mace's adopted daughter and since he had adopted her she had accompanied the team on their missions despite Vorn's initial objections. Now she was standing beside the other freighter speaking with a man who was a relatively new recruit to the Alliance and as Vorn and Kara watched he reached out to stroke her hair.

"Think we should do something about this?" Kara asked.

"Yes and quickly too. Look, here comes Mace now." Vorn answered and he pointed to where the *Silver Hawk's* captain was walking towards the ship in front of a loading droid carrying a pallet of spare parts.

The two rebels leapt from their seats and rushed from the cockpit. As they ran through the lounge they came across Tobis and the other two members of Vorn's team, the former mercenary Tharun Verser and their security and demolitions expert Jaysica Horbid. The trio of rebels were working on the *Silver Hawk's* turret and assisted by the team's three droids, the gold coloured protocol droid Jeeves, R5 astromech Harvey and

mouse droid Penny.

"What's wrong?" Tharun asked as Vorn and Kara rushed towards the *Silver Hawk's* access ramp.

"Mace is about to kill someone if we don't stop him." Kara responded without slowing down.

"Oh my," Jeeves said, "that sounds most inadvisable."

"Err, think we should go and help?" Tobis asked and Tharun nodded.

"I think so lad, I think so. Coming little lady?" he said and he looked at Jaysica.

"If Tobis is going then I am as well." she replied and all three of them hurried after Vorn and Kara.

"Well really." Jeeves exclaimed, "I will never understand why humans are so easily distracted." and then the

astromech droid let out an abrupt sound, "My programming is second to none Harvey." Jeeves responded before Harvey began to follow after the rebels, "Harvey, where are you going? Come back here this instant. I can't service the laser cannon on my own. I'm an interpreter, not an armoury droid."

In the hangar outside Mace came to a sudden halt when he noticed Cass talking to the rebel that he had only begun seeing around recently.

"What's going on here?" he said when he saw the man's hand on Cass's shoulder.

"Hey look," the man replied, "me and the young lady were just talking. Okay?"

"I think I should go." Cass said as Mace scowled and she quickly stepped back and then hurried towards the *Silver Hawk*.

"Oh nice work." the man said to Mace angrily, "Me and the guys have been trying to see who could get lucky with that girl since we got here and now-"

"Mace!" Vorn yelled out across the hangar just as Mace's hands were tightening into fists.

"Oh great. Now there's even more of you." the man said, "Who are you people?"

"I'm that girl's father." Mace said sternly and the man's face fell.

"Mace perhaps you should get these parts to the ship." Vorn said but Mace just glared at the man, "Captain." Vorn added.

"Sure." Mace said but then he leant closer to the man and added, "Just keep your hands off Cass." before turning around and leading the loading droid the rest of the way towards the *Silver Hawk*.

"That's good advice. I suggest you heed it." Vorn added.

"I wasn't breaking any rules old man." the younger man commented.

"You're not been here long have you? You got any kids?" Tharun responded.

"About a month and no. I'm not the fatherhood type." the man said, snarling.

"Well we both have daughters so we'll be right there with Captain Grayle if he finds it necessary to make sure that you don't last another month. Understood?" Tharun said.

"Colonel Larcus." the voice of General Kain then called out across the hangar and as Vorn turned around the younger man's eyes widened.

"Colonel? Larcus? As in Vorn Larcus?" he said, realising that he was arguing with one of the Alliance's most senior agents in the sector.

"The very same." Tharun told him.

"Yes general." Vorn said, "How may I help you?"

"Is there a problem here?" General Kain asked, seeing how Vorn's team had surrounded the newer rebel recruit.

"No sir. We were just setting the record straight on issues of etiquette between field teams." Vorn said.

"Of course. But that will have to wait for now, I have an important mission for you and I wanted to brief you myself."

"Certainly general. I'm sure Captain Grayle would gladly offer you the hospitality of the *Silver Hawk*." Vorn said, extending a hand back towards the ship. General Kain nodded and the pair began to walk away, leaving the rest of Vorn's team with the other rebel.

"You've been warned." Tharun told him.

"Yeah, right." the man said. Then he noticed Tobis looking at the ship they were gathered around, "What's he looking at?" he asked.

"What are you looking at lad?" Tharun added.

"Oh, err, well I was just thinking that that looks like an externally mounted pressure release valve for the ship's coolant system." Tobis replied and the other rebels looked up at a covered valve located on the vessel's hull just above the other rebel.

"It is . So what?" he said.

"Err, well, it's just that it means I can do this." Tobis said and all of a sudden he pulled a hydrosprayer from his belt and struck it against the hull not far from the valve. The effect of this was to cause the valve cover to suddenly fly off and hit the other rebel in his face and he staggered back with his hands clutched over his nose as blood ran from it.

"Nice work lad." Tharun commented, smiling."

"But next time tell me when you're going to do something like that so I can record it." Kara added then she sighed, "I suppose we better go and see what the general wants any way." she said before looking at the

bleeding rebel and finishing with, "I'd get some ice on that if I were you."

"And be careful about standing underneath faulty valve covers." Tharun said as the group started to walk away.

As they walked towards the *Silver Hawk* Jaysica frowned.

"That's disgusting him coming onto Cass like that." she said, "He's in his thirties and she's only nineteen."

"You know I can hear you, right?" Kara responded.

"So?" Jaysica said.

"So she married a man more than thirty years older than her." Tharun pointed out.

"Yes, but they're married. That's different." Jaysica said.

"But we weren't when I got knocked up." Kara pointed out, "Or when the boss and I were stuck in that escape pod aboard the frigate with those assassin droids on board."

"Wait, you mean that while Tobis and I were risking our lives you and the colonel were-" Jaysica began.

"Well it's not like there was much else to do in there." Kara interrupted as they reached the bottom of the *Silver Hawk's* access ramp and then went inside the ship.

Inside they found Vorn and Mace standing beside General Kain while Harvey projected an image of a CC-7700 frigate into the centre of the room.

"Hey, isn't that the interdicator we stole?" Kara said when she saw the hologram.

"Yes as a matter of fact it is." Vorn replied, "Unfortunately it appears to be missing a few important parts."

"The gravitational focusing lenses." Mace added.

"Tobis what does that mean?" Jaysica asked quietly.

"Oh, err, it, err-"

"It means the frigate's useless as an interdicator." Kara said. Then she looked at General Kain, "Let me guess general, you want us to steal some more."

"Correct lieutenant." the general replied and Kara smiled.

"Then you've come to the right place." she said as she walked up to Vorn and put her arm around his shoulders, "The boss and I could do that blindfolded."

"Well I suppose you did capture a cruiser while wearing a straitjacket." Tharun said and Kara frowned.

"No it was Tobis' plan." Jaysica said, "She just watched and complained. Then she didn't even have to stay tied up for a month like she bet she would if it worked."

"I think I ought to be leaving." General Kain said, "You obviously have details you wish to discuss."

"Of course general. Do please tell Admiral Aphanar that we'll have a plan ready within a day." Vorn said before General Kain nodded and then disembarked from the ship.

In the hangar outside he could hear Jaysica and Kara arguing and he shook his head.

"I've got a bad feeling about this." he said to himself.

Meanwhile inside the *Silver Hawk* Vorn decided to restore order.

"Stop arguing." he said sternly, "We have work to be done. The ship needs preparing for launch as soon as possible."

"So what's your plan then boss?" Kara asked and Vorn shrugged.

"What plan? I don't have a plan yet." he replied.

"Oh I've got a very bad feeling about this." Jaysica said.

## 2.

With the *Silver Hawk* made ready for launch Mace and Cass were sat in the cockpit making the final preflight checks on the ship.

"I'm not a little girl dad." she said, "I can take care of myself. You've taken me into combat."

"This is different." Mace replied and Cass laughed.

"What? A guy?"

"A guy who's only interested one thing." Mace said, "You know he and his team had a bet about you?"

"Yeah, Kara told me. I'm thinking of seeing which of them will cut me in for most." Cass said and when Mace scowled she smiled and quickly added, "Hey I'm joking. Besides do you think this is the first time some creepy guy has come on to me? I was a waitress remember? That meant I had to learn how to accidentally spill steaming hot caf into a guy's lap when he grabbed me. Though sometimes when he was too busy squeezing my butt it gave me the chance to steal his datapad and clone its drive."

"Okay, I trust you to know what guys like that are after." Mace said before Cass leaned over and hugged him.

"Thanks for caring though dad." she said and then as she released her grasp on him and looked forwards again she added, "Of course if you really cared then you and mom would give me a baby brother or sister. I don't want to be an only child."

It was then that Vorn entered the cockpit with a mem-stick in his hand.

"Here we go." he said, "Fresh from Lieutenant Pay. It's everything intelligence has on the location of the interdictor-class cruisers in the sector."

"Any promising leads?" Mace asked and Vorn smiled.

"As a matter of fact, yes there is. We need to set a course for the Luscus system." Vorn said.

"Luscus? Isn't that where the *Primarch* was destroyed?" Cass asked. The *Primarch* had been an Imperial-class star destroyer commanded by an admiral who intended to defect. The admiral himself had died and his ship destroyed during the attempt but most of the crew had been rescued by the Alliance and joined its ranks."

"That's right." Mace said, "I'd heard stories going around that there were a lot of black market salvage crews heading out there to see if there was anything interesting left to salvage."

"Well the Empire has taken that seriously enough to station an interdictor in the system to make sure no-one gets away with anything they shouldn't." Vorn said.

"But the *Primarch* was destroyed two years ago." Cass said, "Why hasn't the Empire salvaged what's left of it themselves?"

"Too expensive." Vorn said, "On the other hand they have ready made bait for illegal salvage operators."

"They're probably hoping some of them will be working for us." Mace said, "Every one of our ships they can take out makes having a cruiser all the way out there in the Spire Worlds worth it."

"Then I say let's give them what they want." Vorn said, "Captain Grayle, kindly take us to Luscus."

"Yes colonel." Mace replied.

The Luscus system was remote and uninhabited and this made arriving there without being noticed difficult. Without settlements to visit it was not possible to claim to be heading for one of them and the system was not considered a useful place to drop out of hyperspace to make a course correction. This meant that the crew of the interdictor cruiser patrolling the system would respond to any ship entering the system as soon as they detected its exit from hyperspace.

To limit the risk of discovery the *Silver Hawk* exited hyperspace on the edge of the system, far from the debris field that was all that remained of the *Primarch* after its reactor had been set to overload to prevent it being retaken by the Empire following the failed attempt to defect by the majority of its crew. As soon as the *Silver Hawk* returned to realspace Mace fired the ship's ion drive in one powerful burst that would take it deeper into the system before shutting down all of the none-essential systems aboard to run silent. His hope was that wherever the interdictor cruiser was located it would detect the release of cronau radiation that heralded the *Silver Hawk's* arrival from hyperspace but would then be unable to track the tiny ship. On the other hand the rebels could use passive sensors to observe the cruiser and its two squadrons of fighters from a safe distance.

When the rebels aboard the *Silver Hawk* felt the shudder of the ship exiting hyperspace Vorn made his way directly to the cockpit to see what the situation was in the system and when he entered Cass got out of the co-pilot's seat so that he could sit beside Mace.

"Anything interesting?" he asked but Mace shook his head.

"So far nothing." he answered, "There's no sign of that cruiser at all."

"Could it have been withdrawn?" Cass asked, "It's not like the Empire has the same resources it used to

have now.”

“Geran Pay vouched for the information he gave me.” Vorn told her, “I trust his judgement. You should too.”

“There's what's left of the *Primarch* though.” Mace added, pointing to the sensor readout and Vorn looked for himself.

Even after two years there was still a recognisable outer edge to the debris field rather than the individual pieces of the star destroyer having drifted so far apart that they could no longer be considered part of a field at all. The reactor meltdown had blown away a large portion of the underside of the star destroyer but left most of the upper hull, including the control tower intact and it was this large mass that was keeping the smaller pieces of debris close by rather than letting them escape.

“Isn't the interdicator supposed to be protecting that?” Cass asked.

“Yes it is.” Vorn said, “But our sensors aren't picking up anything that could be a cruiser anywhere near it.”

“What about the wreck itself? Could there be something hidden in there?” Cass suggested.

“A probe droid.” Mace said, smiling as he looked at Vorn and in turn Vorn smiled as well.

“A probe droid could loiter inside the wreck until it detected an approaching ship then alert the interdicator.” he said, “Then it could jump in and engage its gravity well projectors before a salvage crew could escape. It's a trap.”

“Which means that the cruiser could be almost anywhere in the system.” Mace added.

“We need to get close to that star destroyer without that probe droid calling in the cruiser before we're ready.”

Vorn said, “Then we deploy so we can board the cruiser and get the droid to summon it.”

“How do we do that?” Cass asked.

“If I was setting this trap then I'd have the probe droid continuously reporting its status.” Mace said, “That way if anyone took out the droid I'd know about it right away.”

“Then that's how we bring in the cruiser.” Vorn said, “Find and take out the droid.”

“We'll need more suits.” Mace pointed out, “Kara and I have them but that's it.”

“There ought to be more aboard the *Primarch*. I'm sure some will have survived.” Vorn replied and Mace nodded, “Okay, so Kara and I go aboard and bring back enough suits for everyone. Magnetic boots and rocket packs as well if we can find them. But what about the cruiser itself? How do we deal with that?”

Vorn sighed.

“You and Kara plan on how to get us those suits. Jeeves can monitor our communications for any signs of the probe droid's signals and I'll speak to Tobis about the cruiser.” Vorn said. Then he looked at Cass, “In the mean time young lady you'll need to show off your piloting skills. Take us in closer to the *Primarch*. But run silently, I don't want that probe droid picking us up.”

Cass turned the *Silver Hawk* towards the wreck of the *Primarch* and then fired its main engines. But rather than using a high powered thrust that would risk creating a strong heat corona that a probe droid would be able to detect with relative ease she fired the ion drive at the lowest possible level to overcome the freighter's inertia. Then she maintained this thrust for a prolonged period, slowly building up a significant amount of speed before allowing the ship drift the rest of the way towards the wrecked star destroyer.

As the *Silver Hawk* drifted towards its target Vorn sat down in the lounge with Tobis, passing him a datapad that had been loaded with the specifications of an interdicator cruiser.

“We need a way to get the gravitational focusing lenses off the cruiser and then make sure that it can't stop us from escaping.” Vorn told the engineer.

“Oh, err.” Tobis commented as he began to look at the datapad.

“I don't need an answer right away but-”

“Err, we take one lens from each projector.” Tobis interrupted.

“What will that do?” Vorn asked.

“Well, err, it gives us the four lenses we need for our frigate. Plus, err, well it ought to stop any of the cruiser's projectors from working.” Tobis explained and Vorn smiled.

“Really? That simple?” he said and Tobis nodded.

“Yes, err, sort of. We, err, we'll need to access the lenses from outside the ship.”

“Don't worry. Mace and Kara will get us the suits we need.” Vorn replied.

“Oh, err, I'm not worried about that colonel.”

“Then what's wrong?”

“Well, err, it's just that the cruiser will still be able to shoot at us with its laser cannons. Plus, err, plus it carries TIE fighters. Those can still come after us.”

Vorn nodded slowly.

“Okay, so we need to either be able to get away without them even knowing we're there or we need to sabotage the cruiser.”

“Err, what about the *Primarch*?” Tobis asked.

“What about it?” Vorn responded.

“Well, err, maybe some of its turbolasers survived. We, err, perhaps we could charge one up using our

engines and use it against the interdicator.”

“Now that’s some lateral thinking sergeant.” Vorn said, “How long will that take?”

“Err, about twenty minutes.” Tobis answered then he frowned and added, “I think. Our engines, well, err, they aren’t really designed for powering a – a capital ship’s turbolaser turret.”

“That’s a long time.” Vorn said.

“Err, we’ll also need to find some cable to make the connection between our power core and the turbolaser’s capacitors.” Tobis pointed out, “And, err, well, even after that we’ll still only get one shot.”

“One shot isn’t going to destroy a cruiser. Not even if its shields are down.” Vorn said, “We’ll need to hit something vital to cripple it instead. The bridge most likely.”

“I, err, I’m sorry I can’t be more help colonel.” Tobis said, “But, err, I didn’t think that-”

“Never mind that Tobis.” Vorn said, “What you have given me is excellent. Now if the Force is with us we should be able to pull this off.”

“So are we nearly there yet boss?” Kara asked as she emerged from her cabin wearing her form fitting vacuum suit. Maintaining her body pressure by compressing it uniformly all over, the vacuum suit did not require any of the lengthy pre-breathing of pure oxygen to prevent gas bubbles forming in the wearer’s blood stream that was a consequence of bulkier space suits having to be pressurised at a low pressure to prevent them inflating like balloons and preventing the wearer from moving.

“Ah Kara,” Vorn said as his young wife sat down beside him and leant up against him, “Tobis has come up with a plan for us to be able to escape with the lenses.”

“Great.” Kara said, smiling, “But you haven’t answered my question boss. Are we nearly there yet?”

“That would be a question for Cass.” Vorn replied, “I haven’t heard from her. Perhaps we should go and check on her. She’s been alone in the cockpit with Jeeves for a long time now.”

“Yeah, she’s probably been bored to death.” Kara added and she took Vorn’s hand as they got up and headed for the cockpit.

Inside they found Cass sat in the pilot’s seat with a communication headset held up against her ear.

“You’re right Jeeves, I can hear it.” she said.

“Hear what?” Vorn asked.

“Colonel Larcus sir,” Jeeves responded, “I believe that I have located the transmissions being sent by the Imperial probe droid.”

“Listen.” Cass added and she flicked a switch on the console in front of her that passed the sounds she was listening to from the headset to the main cockpit speakers and a sound like a rapid electronic chirping was heard.

“I am fluent in over six million forms of communication and this signal is not used by the Alliance.” Jeeves said.

“Excellent. Where is it coming from?” Vorn said.

“Why from the wreck of the *Primarch* of course sir.” Jeeves answered.

“We know that.” Kara said, “What the boss means is where about in the wreck. We need to steer clear of that part until we’re ready to draw in the interdicator.”

“The signals are coming from the ventral section of the ship Mistress Kara.” Jeeves said, “It is most likely that the probe droid has entered the vessel through the breach created by the reactor meltdown.”

“Hiding like a spider at the centre of a web.” Vorn said as he looked through the cockpit canopy to where the wreck of the *Primarch* could be seen drifting in space. Only the largest piece of wreckage was visible and it looked like a simple triangle from this distance but Vorn knew that the dense cloud of tiny dots of light surrounding it were not stars but smaller pieces of wreckage.

“I suppose a probe droid does look a lot like a spider.” Cass commented.

“Just as long as we’re not the fly that gets eaten by the spider.” Kara added and Vorn smiled.

“No. We’re the bird that eats the spider.” he said.

“So are we nearly there yet Cass?” Mace asked as he entered the bridge as well, also wearing a vacuum suit.

“Nearly dad.” Cass replied.

“The probe droid is hiding out where the reactor was.” Vorn told Mace as Cass swapped seats to the co-pilot’s position while Mace sat down in her vacated seat.

“That gives us the perfect chance to position ourselves close to the hull without being detected.” Mace said.

“What are you planning?” Kara asked.

“I’m going to put us in a lateral orbit.” Mace replied.”

“A what?” Cass said, confused.

“A lateral orbit.” Kara told her, “We’ll orbit around the hull in a horizontal plane.” and as if to demonstrate she moved her finger around in a flat circle in front of her.

“We just need to stay on this course until we start feel the pull of the star destroyer’s hull.” Mace explained, “Then I’ll fire a brief burst from our manoeuvring thrusters to push us sideways and hopefully that’ll fling us around the hull.”



“What about all that junk out there?” Cass said, looking towards the wreck.  
“We won't be moving that fast. Our shields will hold.” Mace replied, “I hope.”  
“I've got a very bad feeling about this.” Cass said.

### 3.

"Anything to report lieutenant?" the captain of the immobiliser 418-class interdictor cruiser *Obstruction* asked as he marched onto the bridge.

"Nothing more sir." the junior officer replied from one of the crew pits, "The probe droid reported a burst of cronau radiation that can only have come from a ship entering or leaving hyperspace about an hour ago but since then there's been nothing. I'd have said that it could have been a damaged ship forced out of hyperspace but there hasn't been any distress signal sent either."

"Someone's trying to creep up on the wreck of the *Primarch* then." the captain said, "It's possible that they're watching to see if we appear before moving in. Tell the probe droid to conduct a patrol of the inside of the wreck. If whoever's out there does manage to get all the way to the wreck, I don't want them to escape detection."

"Is this really going to work?" Jaysica asked as she strapped herself into a seat in the lounge. The *Silver Hawk's* occupants had been warned to expect a sudden lurch that the ship's artificial gravity field would not be able to entirely suppress.

"Oh, err, yes." Tobis replied, strapping himself in beside her and then he gripped her hand in his, "It, err, it used to be a standard breaking manoeuvre."

"Yeah, about thirty thousand years ago." Kara added as she double checked her harness.

"The captain knows what he's doing." Tharun said, "I hope."

"Stand by." Vorn's voice announced over the intercom and then all of a sudden the *Silver Hawk's* thrusters were fired and the ship lurched violently to port, pushing all of the rebels against their harnesses. Jaysica squealed, closing her tightly and squeezing Tobis' hand hard enough to make him wince. The change in direction ended almost as soon as it had begun and the rebels in the lounge fell back against their seats."

"Wow!" Kara exclaimed, "That was a rush. Glad I'm not pregnant right now."

"That was awful." Jaysica said.

"How's the hand lad?" Tharun asked, looking at Tobis who was busy flexing the fingers on the hand Jaysica had been holding.

"Tobis what happened?" Jaysica said.

"You broke his fingers while screaming like a baby." Kara told her, smiling.

"I did not." Jaysica protested, "Did I Tobis?"

"Err." Tobis replied, looking at the other rebels just as Mace appeared in the lounge.

"Okay we're in orbit around the star destroyer." he announced, "Kara, we're up."

"Right with you captain." Kara replied as she released her harness and followed Mace into the nearby storage room that doubled as an air lock that led to the *Silver Hawk's* top hatch. From here they were able to exit the ship and stand on its upper hull between its primary sensor antenna and laser turret.

"You know I thought setting the reactor to overload wouldn't have left anything behind of the ship. Even a star destroyer." Kara said as she and Mace looked at the massive triangular piece of debris floating just a few hundred metres away from them.

"I don't think the chief engineer had much time to prepare the system to overload." Mace replied, "Still, what he did made a right mess of this thing." then he pointed towards the command tower, "There's the bridge. Let's do this."

Pushing themselves off the *Silver Hawk's* upper hull the rebels drifted towards what remained of the *Primarch*, unable to slow themselves down until they crashed into the hull and grabbed hold of whatever was within reach to prevent themselves from being thrown back off into space.

"I hate doing that." Kara said. Let's hope we find some spare rocket packs and magnetic boots in this floating scrapheap."

"There's a tear in the hull up there." Mace said, pointing and Kara nodded.

"After you captain." she said.

"Oh no. ladies first lieutenant." he replied.

"Oh very chivalrous." Kara said, "I can see why Malia fell for you." then as she began to move across the hull of the star destroyer towards the hole in its hull she added, "So how is she? I haven't seen her in a couple of weeks."

"She's fine. The *Renegade's* been assigned to a light battlegroup in the mining belt. She's due back in a couple of days though." Mace replied.

"Maybe we can have dinner then." Kara said and then she came to a halt beside the hole in the hull, "Well here we are. Let's see what the inside looks like."

The two rebels then climbed through the hole in the hull, taking care not to snag their suits on the rough

edges of the hole. The suits were designed to be highly resistant to damage but they had their limits and the rebels did not want to put them to the test. Inside the star destroyer was almost pitch black and the two rebels activated glow rods to illuminate their surroundings. What they saw was a scene of near total devastation. Though the upper superstructure of the star destroyer had survived intact, many of the more fragile contents had not and pieces of damaged furniture, equipment and even the occasional corpse, now frozen solid after being in space for so many months floated around inside the corridors and compartments that Mace and Kara passed through as they made their way towards one of the *Primarch's* airlocks.

"Funny." Mace commented as they pulled their way through another open doorway and Mace pushed a deactivated mouse droid that was floating in the zero gravity out of his way.

"What is?" Kara asked in reply.

"If things had worked out just a little bit different then this ship could have been our new home." Mace reminded her.

"Yeah, that's right. The boss was going to be given command of her wasn't he? And you were all set to be his first officer." Kara said, "Still I call not having the ship blown to pieces more than just a bit different."

"Maybe. Look, here's the airlock. Now let's try and find what we came for."

It was not the airlock itself that the two rebels were interested in. Instead they prised open the door to an adjacent storage room where they found it lined with tall lockers. Some of these had been open when the ship was destroyed and the loss of gravity had permitted the contents to drift out and start to float around the room and this revealed the purpose of the room to be for storing spacesuits and other associated equipment.

"There are spacesuits in this one." Kara said as she checked the closest locker to her position.

"Nice, but too bulky to carry." Mace replied, "We need vacc suits instead." and Kara nodded.

"No way I'm taking back stuff for everyone else that's better than my own either." she commented as she moved on to the next locker.

"A-ha!" Mace exclaimed when he opened his first locker and Kara turned to see what he had found. There she saw him removing a set of magnetic boots from the locker. These were designed to fit over the ordinary boots built into his vacuum suit and mace clipped a pair of them into place before activating them and clamping his feet to the floor, "Well these seem like they work." he said and Kara smiled.

"Toss me a set." she said and Mace removed another pair of the clip on accessories and tossed them at Kara. Kara then copied Mace in fitting them to her own suit and clamping her feet to the deck, "Stang it feels better to walk than float." she said.

While Mace took another five sets of the magnetic boots from the locker Kara continued to search through the lockers until she came to one that held lightweight vacuum suits similar to those that she and Mace were wearing."

Got them." she said as she began to remove suits from the locker and check their sizes.

Across the room Mace was just finishing packing the magnetic boots in a holdall that he had brought with him. However, just as he was sealing the bag up he happened to glance through the open doorway of the storage room and he saw a beam of light shining along the corridor.

"Kara!" he hissed, "Turn off your light."

"What?" Kara replied as Mace shut off his glow rod and then she copied him. Rather than being plunged into complete darkness however, the storage room remained dimly lit and the light outside could be seen moving as its source came closer.

"The probe droid." Mace said, "It must be patrolling the ship looking for intruders."

"Yeah, intruders like us. Mace we can't take that thing out, not yet. The boss said we have to wait to be ready for the interdictor first."

"Toss me a space suit, a big one. Shut down your boots, then let yourself float off the floor and use the space suit as a shield." Mace said and both rebels did just that, spreading out a pair of space suits and then hiding themselves behind them.

Less than a minute later a beam of light shone right through the doorway as the probe droid appeared there to inspect the storage room. The rebels could see the light shining on the wall opposite and their own shadows floating half way up the wall. The probe droid saw the two floating rebels but did not notice them to be anything more than a pair of empty space suits that had come loose from their storage lockers. True space suits were better insulated than vacuum suits for prolonged protection from the extreme temperatures of outer space while vacuum suits could only manage this for a shorter amount of time. It was this thermal insulation that Mace had in mind when he suggested that they use the space suits as shields, blocking the probe droid from sensing their body heat against the cold background.

All of a sudden the light was gone as the probe droid moved off to search another part of the star destroyer and after waiting for several seconds Mace peered out from behind the spacesuit he was hiding behind.

"Clear." he said as he reactivated his glow rod and Kara also emerged from behind her space suit shield.

"I'll grab the vacc suits." she said, "We should get out of here as quickly as possible." then as she reactivated her magnetic boots and made her way back to the lockers containing vacuum suits Mace began to search the other lockers, focusing on the larger ones.

“Over here.” he said suddenly, “Give me a hand with these things.” and when Kara turned around she saw Mace taking a rocket pack from a locker.

## 4.

"Err, that one looks intact." Tobis said, pointing through the cockpit canopy at one of the rows of turbolaser turrets located on the upper hull of the *Primarch* and Vorn nodded.

"What about the probe droid?" he asked, glancing at Jeeves. The protocol droid was stood beside the communications panel towards the rear of the cockpit, monitoring the channel being used by the probe droid lurking inside the wrecked star destroyer.

"I believe that the probe droid is changing its position at regular intervals Colonel Larcus sir." Jeeves said.

"Is that bad?" Cass asked from the pilot's seat and Vorn nodded.

"It means that it your father and Kara can't just avoid the lower sections we thought the droid was using as a permanent hiding place to keep out of its way. They'll need to watch for it no matter where they are." he said.

"Shouldn't we warn them?" Cass said.

"Oh, err, no." Tobis replied, "The transmissions may get picked up by the probe droid."

"I don't think it's going to matter any more anyway." Vorn added, "Look, here they come now." and he pointed to a pair of bright spot of light where Mace and Kara were flying towards the *Silver Hawk*, obviously powered by more than a simple jump."

"Looks like they found some rocket packs then." Cass commented as she saw the flames from exhausts of the jet packs.

"Tobis, go and help them get the equipment aboard." Vorn said and Tobis nodded before leaving the cockpit. Passing through the lounge he found Tharun with the parts of his heavy blaster rifle laid out on the table.

"What's going on lad?" he asked.

"Oh, err, Captain Grayle and Lieutenant Larcus are back. They have rocket packs." Tobis replied and Tharun abandoned his cleaning process and joined Tobis by the door to the airlock. Seconds later they heard the sound of pumps working as the room on the other side of the door was pressurised and as soon as a light on the control panel beside the door indicated equal pressure Tobis pressed it to open the door.

"We got everything." Mace said as he removed her helmet.

"But we almost ran right into that droid." Kara added, "It was prowling about near the bridge."

Tobis nodded.

"Oh, err, we know." he said.

"You know? What do you mean you know?" Kara exclaimed.

"Err, ah, well, it was Jeeves. He noticed that the droid's signals were – err - were coming from closer to you than when he first detected it close to the underside of the ship."

"Let me give you a hand with that lot." Tharun then commented as he entered the storeroom and Mace handed him a spare rocket pack.

"There are enough suits, magnetic boots and rocket packs for everyone." Mace said, "Can you use one?"

"Kind of." Tharun replied, "I tried one a few years before joining the Alliance. My old outfit was expanding with a unit of jump infantry and I had the opportunity to have a quick go while they were practising."

"I know the boss can use one. He learned in the Clone Wars." Kara added.

"Err, I was taught when I served on that bulk freighter." Tobis said.

"Okay that just leaves Jaysica and Cass." Mace said.

"What leaves me?" Jaysica asked as she appeared out of her cabin.

"Oh, err, we have rocket packs." Tobis told her.

"Really? I've always wanted to try one of those." Jaysica responded, smiling.

"I've got a very bad feeling about this." Kara said.

"The probe droid hasn't found any signs of a presence aboard the *Primarch* or of any ships close by captain." the bridge lieutenant reported as the captain stood looking out of the viewports at the front of the bridge. The captain said nothing, considering his next move and when he received no response the lieutenant spoke up again, "Captain did you-"

"Yes I heard what you said lieutenant." the captain interrupted, "Order the droid to return to its regular station. We'll prepare a replacement if there are any further spurious readings but for now we'll just chalk this one up to random signal noise."

"Yes captain. I'll send the instruction immediately."

Cass tugged awkwardly at her vacuum suit as the rebels all stood together in the *Silver Hawk's* lounge.

"Quit fidgeting kid." Tharun told her, "You don't want to break any of the seals or you'll end up being ripped wide open."

"Really?" Cass replied.

"No, not really." Vorn reassured her, "If your suit does tear and the self sealing doesn't work then you'll have a couple of minutes to get an emergency patch onto it before you're in any real danger."

"It'll hurt like hell though." Tharun added, "Especially if you cut yourself open as well."

"Well I can't help fidgeting anyway." Cass said as she squirmed again, "This suit is gripping in so many places I'm surprised dad hasn't threatened to kill it yet." and Mace frowned.

"Shall we run through the plan one last time?" he said.

"A good idea." Vorn replied, "Now we need heavy duty cable from the Primarch. Tobis what do we need and how much?"

"Oh, err, we need ninety millimetre double cored cable. At least one hundred metres of it. Err, depending on how close to the turbolaser we can land." Tobis said.

"Land?" Cass commented.

"We'll have to set down beside one of the turrets to be able to charge it." Tobis explained.

"The droids will take care of that after we can be sure we can land without attracting the attention of the probe droid." Mace added.

"Tharun, I want you and Mace to work on tracking down the probe droid." Vorn said, "Tobis will double check the turbolaser turrets to make sure they are functional. Then the rest of us will try and locate the cable we need. Now are there any questions?"

One by one the occupants of the *Silver Hawk* climbed out of the top hatch and stood on the freighter's upper hull looking at the nearby wreck of the star destroyer *Primarch* using their magnetic boots to remain upright and in place without the need to seek out a suitable handhold on the hull.

"Here we are again." Kara said and then she deactivated her boots and triggered her rocket pack, using a brief burst to propel her towards the wreck.

"Cass, connect this to your suit. I'll take you across." Mace said and he handed her a syntherope line that unravelled from his belt. Nodding, Cass took this and hooked it to her own suit before shutting off her boots as well. Then she took Mace's hand and he activated his rocket pack to take the pair of them across the gap between the *Silver Hawk* and the *Primarch*.

"Err, here." Tobis said, handing a similar line to Jaysica and she smiled as she hooked it to her belt and nodded.

"Okay, I'm ready." she said.

"Lad you may want to wait while-" Tharun began as Tobis reached to activate his own rocket pack but the former mercenary was too late and Tobis triggered his rocket pack. However, Jaysica had failed to deactivate her magnetic boots and given that the rebels were using only the minimum amount of thrust necessary to avoid being detected by the probe droid when the end of the tether between Tobis and Jaysica was reached he was suddenly pulled back towards her. Jaysica then squealed as Tobis slammed into her and knocked her backwards while her feet remained clamped to the *Silver Hawk's* hull.

"Tried to warn you." Tharun commented as he shut off his magnetic boots and triggered his rocket pack. Meanwhile Vorn helped Tobis and Jaysica back to their feet and holding Jaysica by her arm he looked directly at her.

"Okay now I'm going to shut off your boots." he told her and she nodded as he reached down and deactivated her magnetic boots, "Okay Tobis, you're set to go."

Vorn then watched as Tobis and Jaysica flew towards the *Primarch* and he sighed, deactivating his own boots as he muttered, "I just hope I remember how to do this now." and then he triggered his own rocket pack.

Once the rebels were all on the hull of the *Primarch* they split up, with Mace and Tharun heading towards the massive hole in the star destroyer's ventral hull while the others began to make their way across the upper hull towards the row of turbolaser turrets. These massive weapons were each larger than the *Silver Hawk* itself, designed to be able to deliver crippling blows to even the largest of capital ships and one of them was capable of vaporising an area of several city blocks from orbit with a single blast.

"So how's it looking Tobis?" Kara asked as the engineer paused in front of the turret and looked up at its massive barrels.

"Err, the lenses look intact." Tobis replied, "But, err, I need to get inside."

"Well there's a hatch over there." Vorn said, pointing across the hull to what had been an escape pod port. The escape pod had been jettisoned when the *Primarch* had been abandoned during the mutiny and now only the hatch that had dropped shut to maintain the ship's internal pressure remained to keep anyone out. Forcing this open was simple, the hatch was not designed to act as a blast door, only allow the star destroyer to maintain its internal pressure until an evacuation could be completed and the rebels were soon inside the star destroyer making their way towards the turret. Tobis took a brief look inside the turret itself where three seats were packed close together for the crew but what really interested him lay directly beneath it where the capacitors that stored all of the energy used for each shot were kept. During the Clone Wars some models of turbolaser had used capacitors that took so long to charge up that the only way of maintaining a high rate of

fire was to eject and replace them after each shot but the modern Imperial models could be recharged to full capacity in under a second and lasted several years before needing to be replaced so they were firmly anchored into the structure of the turret.

"So will this work?" Cass asked.

"Err, I think so." Tobis replied, "All of the capacitors are intact. Err, they're drained though but I, well, I expected that. Charging them up will take twenty minutes at most once we're hooked up."

"What will that take?" Kara asked.

"Err, we'll have to disconnect that input from the reactor." Tobis said, pointing to a thick cable that led into the capacitor bank, "Then, err, then we need to connect to our own power core instead."

"What about targeting?" Kara said and Tobis looked up at the hatchway leading back to the turret itself and the three gunners seats.

"Err, we'll do that the ordinary way." he said, "Someone will have to sit up there and align and fire the guns."

"Kara you're probably our best bet for that." Vorn said, "Get Tharun to help you."

"Sure boss. You don't need to ask me twice to fire a big gun at an Imperial cruiser." she said, smiling.

"What will the rest of us be doing colonel?" Jaysica asked.

"We'll be on the hull of the interdicator." Vorn answered, "Removing the gravitational focusing lenses we came for."

"I hope Kara shoots straight." Jaysica muttered and Kara scowled as the communication link between the rebels' vacuum suits picked up the comment and broadcast it.

"First things first." Vorn said, "Let's get that power feed unhooked and then we'll go and find the cable we need."

## 5.

Using hand signals to communicate, Mace and Tharun walked around the hull of the *Primarch* as they made their way towards the hole blown in the star destroyer by its overloading reactor. Knowing that the probe droid was liable to patrol the wreck, it was still decided that the location where it had first been detected was still the best place for them to start and so they made their way cautiously towards the hole. Had this been a mission on the surface of a planet then the two rebels would have crawled the final few metres in order to minimise their profiles as much as they possibly could, but the need to keep at least one foot clamped against the *Primarch's* hull to prevent themselves from drifting off forced them to remain upright as they walked. Only once they reached the edge of the hole did they both crouch down and begin to search with their macrobinoculars.

The reactor overload had left more than twenty decks exposed to space and anyone of these could be used as a hiding place by the probe droid. Knowing that keeping the amount of hull between it and the open space beyond the wreckage to a minimum would give the probe droid the best possible angle of detection, the two rebels began their search at what to them looked like the bottom of the hole, in fact this was the highest point in the interior of the star destroyer's hull. From this point they moved outwards, scanning each deck in turn for any signs of the droid. However, every deck appeared devoid of life and the only movement came from debris drifting with the hole.

Tharun was about to suggest that the pair try making their way through the star destroyer to the bridge close to where Mace and Kara had seen the machine when all of a sudden he noticed movement that was more deliberate than the random drifting of debris in zero gravity. Focusing his macrobinoculars on that particular deck he saw the probe droid making its way around the perimeter of the hole about a third of the way from the deepest point. From his point of view the machine was upside down, but even so its shape was unmistakable and Tharun reached out and tapped Mace on his shoulder. When the former smuggler turned around Tharun pointed towards the droid and Mace nodded as he lined up his macrobinoculars for a better look.

When he saw the probe droid circling around the hole he lowered his macrobinoculars and took a step back from the hole, beckoning for Tharun to follow him. As Tharun also backed away from the hole Mace connected a communication line to a port on his suit and then connected the other end to Tharun's. This gave the two men direct voice communication without the need for wireless transmissions that the probe droid might detect if it was monitoring the channel.

"Stay here and keep an eye on that thing." Mace told Tharun, "I'm going to head back and let the others know that we've found it."

"What do I do if it starts moving captain?" Tharun asked.

"Your rifle should have no difficulty in taking out the droid when the time comes so I'm going to suggest to the colonel that we just signal you when we need you to do it. What do you think?" Mace replied and Tharun grinned.

"I think it sounds like a plan." he said as he unslung his heavy blaster rifle.

Swapping what had been the feed from the star destroyer's main reactor for the cable that the rebels had found in an aft cargo hold, Vorn and his team began to roll it out ready to connect to the *Silver Hawk* when Mace came walking into view.

"Mace." Vorn said, "I take it that you found the probe droid."

"Right where we thought it would be." Mace replied, "I left Tharun watching it. I figured we could signal him when we were ready to take it out."

"Good idea." Vorn said, "Now I want you to get back over to the *Silver Hawk* and bring it down here. Tobis has us all set up to charge the turbolaser and Kara's familiarising herself with the controls as much as she can without power."

"Sure thing colonel." Mace said, his hand reaching for his rocket pack controls and after shutting off his magnetic boots he blasted off from the *Primarch's* hull again and steered himself back towards his ship.

"Captain Grayle sir." Jeeves said as soon as Mace stepped from the airlock, "Are we ready to leave yet? I may not be programmed for fear but my circuits tell me that this is not a good place to remain longer than necessary. Unfortunately I have been unable to convince Harvey that-"

"Enough Jeeves." Mace interrupted, "Colonel Larcus sent me back to carry out the landing. We know that the probe droid is on the opposite side of the ship so I ought to be able to do this without any real effort."

Mace made his way to the cockpit where Harvey was plugged into the *Silver Hawk's* flight controls, enabling the astromech droid to control the ship fully.

"Okay Harvey I'm going to take over now." Mace said as he sat down and the astromech chirped, a



translation of what it as saying appearing on a screen, "No, we're not leaving. We're landing on the star destroyer." Mace replied as he took hold of the control column.

The mass of the star destroyer was insufficient to enable the *Silver Hawk's* repulsorlifts to operate and so Mace had to use the freighter's manoeuvring thrusters to position it over the upper hull of the *Primarch* before gently lowering it down until the two ships made contact.

"Okay Harvey," Mace said as he got up out of the pilot's seat, "You need to go and prepare the power core to charge up that turbolaser.

"So is it working Tobis?" Vorn asked as Tobis used his datapad to monitor the state of the turbolaser's capacitors.

"Err, yes, I think so. We, err, we're at thirty percent power now." Tobis answered.

"I've got power up here as well boss." Kara added, having overheard Vorn's question on their communication net.

"Are we on schedule for getting to full power?" Vorn asked.

"Err, yes. Yes I think so." Tobis replied.

"Good. In that case I'll leave you to it." Vorn said.

With Kara and Tobis monitoring the charging of the turbolaser and Tharun monitoring the actions of the probe droid, Vorn gathered the rest of the team in the *Silver Hawk* to prepare the equipment they needed to remove the gravitational focusing lenses.

"Shouldn't we get Tobis to help us with this?" Jaysica asked as the four available rebels gathered in the *Silver Hawk's* workshop to go through the tools they had available.

"Tobis is needed to monitor the turbolaser." Vorn replied, scrolling down the list of equipment Tobis had prepared for him earlier, "Besides, if we need help we can always asked Harvey." and he looked towards the doorway where Harvey and Jeeves stood.

"Does it matter that I don't know how to use most of these tools?" Cass asked.

"No," Mace replied, "you won't be using any of them anyway."

"Tobis, Jaysica and Harvey will open up the gravity well projectors." Vorn said, "Then Mace and Tharun will remove the lenses. You and I will just transport them back here."

"But I don't know anything about gravity well projectors." Jaysica pointed out.

"No, but you know security systems." Vorn replied, "It's inevitable that there'll be some sort of security feature built into the gravity well projectors so I want you to flag and deactivate them."

Just then Jaysica's mouse droid Penny rolled into the workshop and let out a high pitched chirping.

"It seems that Penny has a message from Sergeant Dorfus." Jeeves said.

"Tobis? What did he say?" Jaysica asked with a smile.

"He reports that the turbolaser is charged and ready to fire." Jeeves replied.

"Then this is it." Vorn said, "We've got the tools here, let's get back outside and tell Tharun to deal with that droid."

"Understood colonel." Tharun said when Vorn told him to fire on the probe droid and he lined up his blaster rifle on the machine. It looked to the former mercenary as if the transmission had triggered something in the droid and it had suddenly halted while scanning for further evidence of wireless communications. This made Tharun's job of targeting the droid easier as the droid remained stationary while Tharun prepared to fire. Squeezing his rifle's trigger gently, Tharun fired a single shot. The Blastech a-280 was widely known as one of the most powerful blaster rifles in the galaxy and Tharun's aim placed his shot right where the droid's bulbous head connected to its circular body and there was a bright flash as the energy blast cut the Imperial droid in half in one go.

"Colonel, this is Tharun." Tharun signalled, "Mission accomplished. Enemy is probably inbound right now."

"Captain we've just lost contact with the probe droid." the bridge lieutenant said, looking up from the console he had been watching.

"What was it's last report?" the interdicator's captain responded.

"It had just picked up an unidentified transmission." the lieutenant told him.

"Helm stand by to jump to hyperspace." the captain announced, "The mysterious burst of radiation that the droid picked up earlier must have been a ship after all. It's at the wreck now. Take us there and sound action stations."

A klaxon sounded and the bridge crew began to work frantically, checking that the vessel was ready to enter hyperspace while the jump co-ordinates were programmed into the navigation computer and the crew rushed to take up their battle stations. Then the stars outside the viewports blurred into the lights of hyperspace for a few seconds as the *Obstruction* accelerated to faster than light speed. Already positioned close to the system where the wreck of the *Primarch* drifted, the *Obstruction* emerged from hyperspace close to the debris field and immediately began to scan for signs of activity.

"Nothing obvious captain." the lieutenant announced, "No drive trails, no wireless communications and no thermal signatures from salvage equipment operating anywhere in the debris field."

"Keep looking lieutenant. That probe droid wasn't destroyed by accident. There's someone out there somewhere." the captain replied.

At six hundred metres long, the interdicator was not much more than a third as long as the *Primarch* but to the rebels hiding in one of the holes torn in the star destroyer's hull the heavy cruiser still appeared massive. The four gravity well projectors that the warship was equipped with stood out prominently against the hull, massive globes set forwards of the squat command tower that protruded from both the dorsal and ventral surfaces of the triangular shaped hull.

"Is everyone ready?" Vorn asked as he looked around and the rebels gathered around him, the entire team except for Kara who remained at the controls to the fully charged turbolaser turret and they nodded back at him, "Then let's go." he added and the rebels jumped from their hiding place. On this occasion they kept their rocket packs shut down as they drifted across space towards the interdicator until they were close enough to its hull that the telltale flash and burst of thermal energy would be harder to detect while in the shadow of the ship's own hull.

Using their magnetic boots to clamp onto the ventral hull of the interdicator the rebels hurried across it until they reached the nearest of the four gravity well projectors and Tobis and Jaysica got to work opening up an access hatch at the point where the globe emerged from the hull.

"It, err it's magnetically sealed." Tobis said, "Harvey, err, I need you to interrupt the -"

"I'll do it." Jaysica said before Tobis could finish and she reached out with a power pry bar to get it between the two contacts of the magnetic seal. However, the seal was designed to hold a large section of armoured hull in place and thus was very strong. The strength of this field promptly discharged itself through the pry bar and the sudden pulse destabilised the much weaker magnetic field of her boots and Jaysica squealed as she suddenly began to float away from the hull. Letting go of the pry bar she reached out towards Tobis and he extended his arm back towards her, grabbing hold of her by the wrist before she could drift out of reach. However, as he did this the pry bar that Jaysica had been holding was now drawn towards the magnetic contacts of the seal and as it clamped to one of them its mechanism triggered, suddenly extending the tip of the bar from its shaft in such a way that it cracked open a cylindrical component nearby.

"Captain we have a red light on gravity well projector besh." a crewman announced on the interdicator's bridge.

"Elaborate specialist." the captain responded.

"Coolant pressure just dropped. Looks like a rupture in the system."

"We weren't hit by anything." the captain said and then his eyes widened, "Those pirates aren't here to salvage parts from the *Primarch*." he said, "They're here to salvage parts from us. They're on our hull!"

## 6.

Rather than a polished transparent disc, the gravitational focusing lens was a complex array of individual crystals mounted around a central repulsor unit that would create the artificial gravity field to be channelled by the crystals. The whole component was just over a metre across and while Tobis and Jaysica moved on to the second gravity well projector, Mace and Tharun released the exposed lens from its mounting and began to extract it, taking care not to damage any of the crystals. Meanwhile Vorn and Cass were standing back and waited to be given the lens when Cass saw a flash of light reflected in one of the crystals and looked around to see what had caused it.

"Stormtroopers!" she exclaimed.

The rebels turned to see a squad of white armoured figures flying around the interdicator's hull using rocket packs. Though they had not intended to enter combat the rebels had still brought along their blasters, both pistols and rifles or carbines and they unslung their weapons.

"No." Vorn said, waving at Tobis and Jaysica, "You carry on getting the lenses. Cass go and help them. Mace, Tharun and I will deal with the stormtroopers." and then he fired a burst from his rifle, targeting the exhaust flare of one of the stormtroopers' rocket packs. The stormtrooper was still moving in an arc and most of the energy blasts from Vorn's weapon missed but one of them struck the rocket pack itself and detonated the fuel it contained, consuming the stormtrooper in a brief ball of fire.

Not wanting to all fall victim to just one or two lucky shots, the rest of the stormtroopers spread themselves out as they descended onto the hull, their magnetic boots clamping them in place as they raised their own weapons to return fire.

Instinctively Vorn dived aside but in the zero gravity and with the soles of his not in direct contact with the ship's hull he continued to bounce across it.

"Stang!" he hissed as he desperately tried to grab hold of anything that would bring him to a halt.

At the same time Mace and Tharun opened fire with their own rifles. Now that the stormtroopers were on the hull themselves the rebels used single aimed shots with more confidence of hitting their targets and Tharun's first shot punched a hole right through a stormtrooper. Ordinarily this would result in the dead trooper collapsing in a heap where he stood but with no gravity to pull him down the stormtrooper instead remained upright, rocking back and forth limply while his weapon floated away into space.

Vorn was finally able to grab hold of part of the interdicator's hull and stabilised himself enough to be able to clamp his feet back against it in a crouching position.

"Fall back." he signalled to the other rebels as he fired at the stormtroopers again, "Get behind the gravity well projectors and use them as cover."

While Vorn and Tharun laid down covering fire, Mace used his rocket pack to propel himself away from the hull and then looped back down to land just beyond the curve of the nearest gravity well projector before he fired several rapid bursts towards the stormtroopers so that the other two rebels could then fall back.

"Err, we have the second lens." Tobis reported, "We, err, we're moving onto the next projector."

"No." Vorn responded, "Just stick with that one and get two more."

"Should I get back to the ship with these?" Cass asked as she took the second lens from Tobis and stood with one in each hand.

"No, stay put until we have all four." Vorn told her, "You don't have the skill with your rocket pack to go it alone."

"Oh, err, colonel, we have more incoming." Tobis said when he saw the telltale flares of rocket packs as another squad of stormtroopers flew around the other side of the interdicator towards them.

"Colonel we're going to get overrun pretty quick if we can't do something to stop them sending out more stormtroopers." Mace pointed out and Vorn nodded.

"Kara." he broadcast.

"Right here boss."

"Do you have the interdicator's bridge in your sights?"

"Dead centre boss."

"Fire at will." Vorn ordered and Kara smiled.

"Commencing primary ignition." she said as she armed the turbolaser.

"Captain we're being targeted." one of the bridge crew called out.

"The salvagers' vessel? Where is it?" the ship's captain replied.

"Captain we're not being targeted by a salvage vessel. We're being targeted by the *Primarch*."

The captain spun around to look out of the viewports at the front of the bridge at the wreckage of the star destroyer floating close by.

"Oh no." he said a split second before there was a sudden flash of green light and then the entire bridge exploded.

"Boss I'm done here." Kara signalled as she climbed out of the gunnery seat. Its power expended in one single shot, the turbolaser was once again inactive and all of the targeting instruments had shut down. Moving as quickly as she could, Kara made her way out of the turret and to the closest exit from the wreck where she had left her rocket pack, secured with tape that she was able to tear free in moments. Rather than waste vital seconds putting on the rocket pack, Kara instead just held it as she deactivated her magnetic boots and pushed herself off the hull so that she flew towards the nearby *Silver Hawk*. Grabbing hold of the freighter's laser cannon turret Kara brought herself to a halt before clamping herself to its hull and then descending through the top hatch into the air lock below.

"Mistress Kara!" Jeeves exclaimed as Kara emerged from the storage room into the lounge, "Colonel Larcus is under attack. What are we to do?"

"Well I'm going to fly this ship over to the interdicator and pick them up." Kara responded as she pushed past the protocol droid and ran to the cockpit. Having needed the *Silver Hawk's* power core to charge the turbolaser, the freighter's systems were already active and Kara was able to take off from the *Primarch's* hull straight away, retracting the landing gear and raising its shields. Had she done this before destroying the interdicator's bridge then she would have been targeted by the cruiser's weapon systems almost immediately. However, given the damage she had inflicted she knew that the interior of the Imperial warship would be in chaos right now as officers attempted to regain some form of central control and establish what was happening from an alternative location.

Accelerating towards the interdicator, Kara flew beneath the ship and saw the rebels on the hull exchanging fire with the stormtroopers that now had them surrounded.

"Hey boss, need a ride?" she broadcast using the *Silver Hawk's* communications.

"Not just yet." Vorn responded, "We only have three of the lenses we need. Can you give us some cover?"

"On it boss." Kara replied. The *Silver Hawk's* only weapon was its turret mounted laser cannon and although Kara's history as a fighter pilot meant she was well qualified to use the weapon she could not do so while flying the ship at the same time. However, there was another means by which she could attack the stormtroopers.

Flying as close to the hull of the interdicator as she dared, Kara brought the *Silver Hawk* to a halt above one of the squads of stormtroopers and then aligned the freighter to point directly away from it. The stormtroopers below guessed immediately what Kara had in mind for them and they all released their magnetic boots, preparing to ignite their rocket packs to get out of the way as quickly as possible. Kara was quicker, however and when she fired the *Silver Hawk's* ion drive the exhaust blast was enough to incinerate the entire squad even at the relatively low power she used it at.

"Great work." Vorn said as Kara circled back towards the interdicator and she saw the other stormtroopers falling back and spreading themselves out even more to prevent the same trick being used to wipe out another squad of them, "Tobis how close are we to getting that last lens?"

"Oh, err, I have it now colonel." Tobis replied.

"Then it's time to leave." Vorn said, "Everyone back to the *Silver Hawk*."

"What about the other gravity well projector?" Jaysica asked, "It's still operational."

"Hopefully the crew of this ship aren't able to make use of it right now." Mace said.

"Even if they are then I'm pretty sure we can get away from them in their current state and jump from further out." Vorn added.

Kara brought the *Silver Hawk* in close to the interdicator's hull as she could and turned the ship so that its upper hull was pointed towards the warship. This aligned the top hatch towards the rebels outside and they all aimed towards it as they made the short crossing between the two ships.

"Boss you better get a move on. We've got more company." Kara said when she saw a group of TIE fighters suddenly emerge from the interdicator's hangar.

"We're in." Vorn responded over the intercom, "Raise our shields and get us out of here."

Kara grinned as she diverted power to the ion drive again and the *Silver Hawk* accelerated away from the crippled interdicator cruiser. The TIE fighters could accelerate much faster than the freighter though and in just a few seconds there were flashes of green outside the cockpit canopy as they opened fire, their shots impacting on the *Silver Hawk's* upgraded shields.

"Is that interdicator powering up a gravity well?" Mace asked as he and Vorn rushed into the cockpit behind Kara.

"It doesn't look like it." she replied.

"Then jump to hyperspace." Vorn ordered.

"What about the co-ordinates?" Kara asked.

"They aren't important." Vorn answered, "Those TIEs can't follow us through hyperspace anyway. Just get us a light year or two out of here and we'll plot a jump back to headquarters from there."

If you say so boss." Kara said and she looked at the sensor display that showed the TIE fighters as they swarmed around the *Silver Hawk* and performed one strafing run after another. As strong as the freighter's shields were it would only be a matter of time before they failed under the constant bombardment, "Okay boys," Kara said softly, "watch this." and then she engaged the *Silver Hawk's* hyperdrive, leaving the TIE fighters firing at empty space.