

“Last Line”

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Disclaimer: *Star Wars* is not mine.

I was tired. And that was the last thing I could afford to be.

After all, we were only in the beginning phases of Operation: Skyhook, and there was still a lot more to do. It would have been a whole lot less complicated if the transfer to *Liberty* after Toprawa had gone well, though I had yet to see any mission for the Alliance to Restore the Republic that had been smooth.

This, however, was less smooth than most.

Tantive IV rocked violently under my feet as a blast from the *Devastator* hit, and the lights on the bridge went out briefly before struggling to flicker back on. For a moment the only illumination came through the bridge’s viewport: the reflected light from the brown wasteland of Tatooine below us. The deep, omnipresent thrumming sound of the ship ceased altogether.

The bridge crew around me was probably even more tired than I was; they had been doing a lot more during these past fights and narrow escapes, trying to stay one step ahead of the constant Imperial pursuit. Still, they renewed their frantic scrambling attempts to control the ship and provide status reports to Captain Raymus Antilles. There was a new desperation in their voices and actions now, and even the captain looked rattled as he tried to coordinate and command. A ship without a main reactor is nothing, and we all knew it. Sure enough, it didn’t take long for us to be caught in *Devastator*’s tractor beam.

The Security Net over my helmet’s headset suddenly got a lot more active. I listened as my fellow fleet troopers reported a first response team moving to the hatch where the Imperials would be boarding. More teams were on their way to support.

Even though I stayed put, I readied my own weapon and relayed the information to the captain. I tried to calm my pounding heart.

Soon a hull breach alert sounded at one of the bridge consoles, and it coincided with a huge burst of transmissions on the Security Net. I heard report after report of fleet troopers gunned down by an overwhelming number of stormtroopers. They were forced to fall back almost immediately. The casualties today could be staggering. I swallowed hard and broke into Captain Antilles’s perpetual stream of orders just long enough to let him know what was coming.

My thoughts jumped briefly to my wife and two kids back in Aldera. Something inside told me that this would be the day I forced them to spend the rest of their lives without a husband and father.

A straggled, cut-off piece of information floated over the Security Net: Vader. Vader was aboard. I felt myself break out in a cold sweat, and now I knew beyond a doubt that I’d never see Alderaan again.

But that was the risk I had accepted. As the internal reports of the stormtroopers’ movements warned me of their progress to the bridge, I took my position and readied myself with my blaster rifle.

As bridge guard, I was the last line of defense for the bridge crew and our captain, and I wasn't about to let them down.

The Imperials would only get in over my dead body.

The End

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