



Head of the snake

BY VA HAWKINS

“Since there must be chimeras, why is not perfection the chimera of all men?”

Sophie Swetchine

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Admiral Pellaeon looked up at Captain Ken Eode of the Hammer's Fist. The Captian was doing his best to not laugh at what had just transpired between Pellaeon and Staff Sergeant Redren. The admiral somewhat resented the familiarity, but such matters could wait for a more opportune moment.

“Redren will do.” He told Eode. “You were right to raise your concerns, Captain, but I trust the judgement of the Order, and I do not expect he will forget this lesson.”

“No, I doubt he will,” the Captian replied, “I would hate to see a trooper of his calibre go to waste.”

“You fear he will be lost?” Pellaeon asked.

“No, not at all. If he dies it is in service to the Empire and that is never a loss. I meant that I would hate to see him languishing away as an ineffectual officer in the Fist. It would be a waste of his potential.” Eode explained.

“Of course,” Pellaeon agreed. Redren may have lost his way, but the Order had commended him following his efforts deep within the mining facility the Eldridge has been embedded within. Despite a total lack of ability with the force, he had saved the life of one of the Order's most experience and powerful operatives. A wasted career was a poor reward, and those who followed the darker path knew the power of ambition and reward. Redren needed to be reminded of that, and had been so at the blade of Pellaeon's

lightsabre.

“You understand the mission he is tasked with?” Pellaeon asked.

“I do, your instructions were most clear.”

“Good. General Kargath must not be allowed to escape. I expect the men of the Fist to ensure that sub-operation 'Extraction' is a complete success.”

“Don't worry, Admiral” Eode answered, confidently. “My troops will prove themselves to the entire Emperor's Hammer.”

“Ensure they do, Captain. I expect nothing less than perfection. You may go,”

And with that, the meeting had ended. Pellaeon sat in his chair, and swivelled it to look out into the endless space that showed beyond the thick, armoured glass. He mused on the idea of perfection. What perfect revenge it will be. Deep within the hold of the Challenge, the chamber he had prepared for his guest was ready and waiting. There he would meet General Kargath, there he would enjoy illuminating him of his crimes against the Empire, against the admiral himself. His revenge would be total, utter perfection. He allowed the hate for the rebel general to swell within him. It flowed through his being, and Pellaeon felt the power it brought. He allowed it to seep from him, filling the chamber. The bulkheads around him seemed to twist and groan, struggling to contain the power surging within the chamber. After savouring the sensation for a moment, Pellaeon let it pass. The room lightened, and the bulkheads ceased their protests. He had other matters to attend to.

Clicking a button on the desk before him, a quiet click signalled the door to his office was now sealed. Another quiet hum signalled the engagement of dampening and jamming equipment that would ensure no surveillance systems could penetrate his chamber. No one, and nothing, could now enter or leave without his express permission. He deftly typed a number of commands into his control panel, and the lights dimmed. Holoprojectors in the walls glowed as they came alive, and a blue light dimly lit the chamber. Before him, rotating slowly, an image began to form, coming together as if lines on a blueprint had left their page and drifted into the air. A three dimensional image began to appear, an image of two immense vessels. The first was the ISDII Challenge, the ship he sat within, and the command vessel of the TIE Corps. The other was similar in aspect, but significantly larger. The second ship lacked the sleek, spear-tip like shape of a Super Star Destroyer, but made up for it in sheer bulk and raw brutality. Even as a holographic image, the ship was imposing. Rendered in intricate detail, Pellaeon could see bank upon bank of turbolaser turrets and warhead launchers, enough to tear multiple capital ships apart, or scour the face of entire planets. A pronounced ventral dome spoke of a powerful gravity well, capable of pulling entire fleets out of hyperspace or disrupting faster than light travel across entire systems. A review of internal systems showed housing for whole legions of stormtroopers, and launch facilities for multiple squadrons of the most advanced starfighters.

Pellaeon returned to the exterior view of this colossal ship. He gestured to stop the rotation at a specific point. On the side of the ship, clearly defined by the holoprojectors, was the name of this new vessel.