

Old Dogs with New Tricks

Submission for the fiction competition: "Re(Mob)"

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The silence of space was rend asunder by the explosion of a Mon Calamari cruiser. As the explosion blossomed briefly into a small sun the specs of hundreds of ships locked in a mortal dance could be seen. "Sir, the other cruisers are attempting to reform their line."

Grand Admiral Rapier stood at attention watching the battle unfold out the viewports of the Super-Star Destroyer Avenger. The Avenger has chosen to stay in reserve of the main strike force allowing the Hammer, Warrior, and Challenge to harass the rapidly joined New Republic Forces. Somewhere towards the center of the system sat the prize, a supertanker fuel depot that had been repurposed by the New Republic following the fall of the Empire and stationed near the edge of Unknown Space. The curse of moving a fleet the size of the Emperor's Hammer meant that far too many systems were being alerted in advance of their approach and it was a massive drain on resources.

From the rear of the bridge Fleet Admiral Plif stood with his command staff over a holoprojector of the battle. "Phoenix, move down plane twenty degrees and have Alpha Squadron break off to form up on you. When that frigate completes its arc it'll be in position to hit your hanger," Plif said to a holographic representation of the Hammer's Commodore. The figure nodded in response and could be seen issuing orders to his bridge crew beyond the holographic projection.

Sector Admiral Kamjin strolled over from watching the skirmish of X-wings that had micro-jumped towards the Avenger being erraciated by its laser cannons to Rapier. Given the action of the day he was wearing his Sovereign Protector armor; a slightly modified form of the old Royal Guard armor. The polished crimson red armor was covered by his black cloak. Kamjin appreciated that the helmet had been redesigned for easier movement. He had hated the old Royal Guard helmets which had forced him to move his whole upper body to look side to side. While it was unlikely that anyone would be attacking the Fleet Commander on the bridge of the Avenger it was better to be prepared than not.

"Dempsey is being overly aggressive again," Kamjin said. The helmet slightly modified his voice, giving it an edge of Imperial authority. He pointed out the viewport drawing Rapier's attention. The ISD Challenge was racing after one of the retreating Mon Calamari light cruisers. Its engines glowed bright blue against the darkness of space as it slowly gained on its prey. The emerald shots of its turbolasers were dispersed harmlessly against its shields. Kamjin knew, given time, she'd close on the Mon Calamari and those shots would penetrate the shields. However, by then she'd be out of position and exposed for a counter attack by the other ships that were attempting to reform their line.

Rapier looked briefly at where Kamjin had pointed and understood immediately the situation. Turning his head to call over his shoulder, "Plif, inform Dempsey to form up with the Warrior. Let's clear out their supporting frigates before they decide it's time to jump closer to the station."

“Acknowledged,” came the crisp reply from Plif as he pulled up Dempsey on the holo-comm.

Kamjin’s wrist communicator chirped. He activated the message and listened to it silently play in his helmet earpiece. “Rapier, Sin squadron is reporting that the garrison two systems over is preparing to jump. They’re projecting two hours before they’re fully fueled and armed and ready to jump.” Kamjin deactivated the comm and turned to look at the holoprojector Plif and the TIE Corp Command Staff was watching. He ran the numbers in his head and a scowl formed on his face. He saw the battle playing out in his mind as he embraced the Force. The withdrawal towards the station would occur soon. By the time their force regrouped to pursue they’d have lost an hour. A precious hour that the New Republic forces would use to fortify their line and hold out until their reinforcements arrived. As he probed further into the future he saw the Star Destroyers taking up position and ultimately decimating the New Republic fleet. The reinforcements would arrive and the Avenger would sweep through them like a knife through softened cheese. But it would take time. Precious time and then things became blurry. Would the supertanker jump, would it be damaged and explode, would the New Republic scuttle it to prevent the Emperor’s Hammer from capturing it? Kamjin needed another option.

“Rapier, we need to take that supertanker now.” Kamjin said.

Rapier turned towards Kamjin, his face reflecting in Kamjin’s helmet, “I’m open to suggestions.”

At this, Kamjin smiled and cocked his head, “I’ve got one.”

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Fleet Admiral Turtle called out to one of the cyborg techs in the data center, “I need the latest fuel consumption projections on a MC-75 in battle conditions.”

The nearest cyborg tech twitched as his cybernetics blinked and clicked. Within moments new data began streaming across the display console. “Finally,” Turtle exclaimed. “Transmit this data to Dempsey and tell her that she can slow down. They’re going to have to jump in the next nineteen minutes or they’ll be out of fuel.”

Kamjin strolled into the room, his cloak billowing behind him. One of the things he loved about the data center was no one noticed when he entered. Either the cyborgs were too engrossed with their cybernetic calculations or the officers were glued to their screens to take notice. It was one of the few places he could go without feeling like everyone was watching him and wondering what has brought the Imperial Sovereign Protector’s attention upon them.

“Turtle,” Kamjin called out. As soon as Turtle turned his attention on Kamjin he continued, “How’d you like to get away from all these computer screens and stretch your legs.”

Turtle’s eyebrow raised in curiosity, “I’d say tell me more.”

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“You’re sure this is going to work?” Turtle asked.

Kamjin, pulling on the gloves of his pressurized TIE pilot suit, smirked, “Of course it’ll work.”

Turtle checked the nozzle attachments to his helmet as he fit it onto his head and clasped the pressure seal shut. Kamjin grabbed a helmet off the rack and knocked it playfully into Turtle's head. "Come on, this'll be just like old times."

Turtle watched as Kamjin connected the helmet to the life support and donned it. Thinking to himself, *this guy is either going to pull this off or get us both killed*. Following after him, Turtle took in the sight of the active hanger deck. Despite the Avenger being in reserve for the fight her flight crews had all the ships prepped and ready for launch. Pilots stood ready by their TIEs going over last minute details with the hanger crews. Some were requisitioning new armaments while others tweaked performance levels. Kamjin led the way, winding through the maze of containers, munitions, spare parts, and fuel lines. Turtle was intrigued as to where they were going since they had passed several empty and prepped fighters. As they rounded another corner Turtle smiled behind his helmet. Sitting on support columns two TIE Praetors were finalizing being prepped.

"I hope you don't mind. I had them pulled out of storage and prepped," Kamjin said.

"I don't mind at all," Turtle said as he ran his hand across the solar panel. "Kamjin, what are you planning to do that you need our Praetors?"

"Oh, that's simple. You and I are going to sneak past the New Republic ships, blow a hole into that supertanker and disable its hyperdrive."

Turtle turned back to face Kamjin. *He's crazy, but this'll be fun*. "Alright, if the Rebels can fly into our stations we can return the favor." He raced up the steps and climbed into the cockpit. He settled in looking out at the hanger through the ruby cockpit screen.

Kamjin's voice came through his helmet headset, "Feels nice to be back in the cockpit, doesn't it."

"I've been here more recently than you," Turtle shot back. Despite their rank and time in command the usual banter of two Praetorian pilots came back naturally. Muscle memory came back quickly as Turtle moved through the various switches and buttons to bring the beast of a ship to life. As the cockpit came to life he saw that Kamjin was already lifting his Praetor off the supports. Not to be outdone, Turtle raised his ship and queued behind Kamjin to exit the hangar.

The intercom buzzed with the voice from flight control, "Avenger Squadron, cleared to launch." *Avenger Squadron*, Turtle racked his brain and couldn't recall an Avenger Squadron in the fleet. Moments later Kamjin's ship rocketed out of the hangar. *Heh, Kamjin thinks he's pretty funny again*. Turtle punched it and followed after him into the pitch blackness of space. As he rotated his ship and pitched up he formed up on Kamjin's starboard side as they skimmed the surface of the Super-Star Destroyer. Weaving between the turbolasers and protrusions their original intent of staying unseen quickly became an excuse to show off. They both opened the throttle and added flair as they bobbed and weaved through along the surface.

As they neared the bow of the ship Kamjin's voice came over the comm, "Activating stealth systems, now." Turtle reached up and flipped the switch taking the already pitch black ship into active sensor suppression mode. Their minimal cross-section on radar was now gone as they shot forth into the void between the Avenger and the battle up ahead.

"Turtle, I'm feeding you a series of coordinations now." Kamjin said. A short-range data pulse fed the information into Turtle's Nav computer. He let out a low whistle. *This is gonna be close*, he thought as he spun up his hyperdrive. Checking the coordinates again he pulled the hyperdrive lever back; following Kamjin into hyperspace.

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Kamjin felt the course through hyperspace. It was an awe inspiring experience. If you were quiet in your mind you could feel the life force of the galaxy blend together into a single, controllable, mass. Reaching out he grasped the hyperspace lever and pulled it slowly back to real-space. The retreating New Republic craft, still bleeding atmosphere and hull fires, were forming up in a defensive position. Untested frigates and corvettes huddled close to the supertanker while dozens of squadrons either were in stationary positions near the capital ships or buzzing through the formations on patrol.

Kamjin flipped on the short-burst comm, "Turtle, try to keep up." Cutting the burst, he opened the throttle and dove down the z-axis plane. As the capital ships shrunk overhead he pulled up on the stick and skimmed beneath their line. *Heh, typical New Republic Captains. Always thinking in two-dimensions*, he thought. Most of the New Republic leadership were either promoted localized rebels or survivors of the numerous engagements with the Empire. As such, most were still green and inexperienced. Most of their engagements were against defensive Imperial forces that could be weakened by straight on assaults. The reality of space was that any direction becomes an attack point.

It shouldn't be this easy but it will be. He checked their position on the radar and slowly pulled the stick back until he went vertical. At their speed they quickly caught up with the bottom of the enemies formation. Kam checked his radar and noticed a few microcenter blips appear before disappearing. He smirked to himself. *Turtle just can't help himself can he.*

Pulling back on throttle, he slammed the stick forward bringing himself perpendicular to the supertank hull. Turtle had followed through with the same maneuver and hung to Kamjin's wing. Running a quick scan, he adjusted his position slightly to starboard while flipping over to missiles. At this range he didn't wait for the solid tone before firing. Twin missiles launched from both TIE Praetors screeching through space towards the hull. As they impacted the hull was first punctured inward moments before the explosion ripped a massive hole into the ship. The TIEs were rocked backwards, their shields rapidly depleted by the backwash but holding.

Before the New Republic ships could react they pushed through the fireball into the superstructure of the ship. Kamjin was right on the credits as they found themselves hovering inside the massive hyperdrive section of the supertanker. Switching over to lasers, they began to rake the core. The room was awash in the eerie green glow of their weapons as they destroyed the support structure. Within moments the support structure gave way from the hyperdrive core and it began to tear itself loose. The two pilots spun their TIEs around and punched it, rocketing back out into space moments before a secondary explosion followed them.

Kamjin punched over to an encrypted long-range channel, "Avenger, the hyperdrive has been disabled. You may begin your assault." As he closed the comm the Strike Fleet appeared out of hyperspace. Their turbolasers began to sing immediately against the defensive shields of the New Republic ships.

As they spun their way through the line, Turtle triggered his little surprise. Dozens of mines detonated throwing the New Republic defense line into a panic fearing they were not

trapped in a pincer move. Their line began to falter as they started to make for an escape route believing they had been out maneuvered.

As they broke apart you could almost hear the two pilots laughing in their cockpits at how easily the defenders had failed to defend their fuel.