

**Secondary Launch Bay,
ISDII Warrior, 31ABY
[REDACTED] System,
Outer Rim Territories**

Captain Jarion Renalds scanned the twelve near-immaculate TIE Interceptors that were placed idly across the breadth of the launch bay, a bottle of *Ne'tra gal*, a notably strong ale of Mandalorian make, clutched tightly in his prosthetic hand. As expected, the grizzled veteran could not see anyone else of note around him besides from a couple of technicians working on a TIE from Flight III, they appeared so engrossed with their work that they hardly noticed the pilot stroll onto the deck.

The Captain walked forward, making his way over to one Interceptor in particular. The Starfighter had the blue wing markings that identified it as a Flight II TIE, the side of the craft also displaying a unique non-regulation artwork design of a scantily clad Mandalorian female. Underneath the piece was the name of the ship, the 'Dha'kalyc', along with the tally markings showing off the ship's numerous enemy kills. Compared to many of the other Interceptors parked in the bay, this one was more aesthetically worse for wear with several dents and scorch marks on the frame left unattended to.

"Each mark is a mistake made and a lesson learned." Was what Jarion would tell the other pilots when asked about his apparant lack of care towards the upkeep of his ship. Yet he would also be quick to point that all the internal systems were working at optimum efficiency, and he was doing something right if he was still alive after all this time.

The Mandalorian shifted several crates toward the front of the TIE, forming a makeshift chair and table. He retrieved a glass that was stuffed into a pocket of his black flight suit and placed the bottle beside it on the metallic surface of the crate before sitting down on the other. His hands fumbled in another pocket producing a cigarra and a lighter, promptly stuffing the former in his mouth and lighting it.

Today was Jarion's thirty-fourth birthday. The Captain had been a Interceptor pilot in Rho Squadron for almost almost two years, and although that was a relatively short amount of time the Mandalorian felt very differently about it. Rho had always been that quirky but very special squadron within the TIE Corps. From its inception as the Corps only Strike Squadron, its sole purpose was to defend the ISDII Warrior from hostile forces, in lightly armoured and unshielded TIE Interceptors. What made Rho stand out also put them under the crosshairs of the other squadrons, but beneath the surface it was a mutual sign of respect. After all, it was common knowledge that Rho was the last line of defense for a Star Destroyer that was home to many.

Jarion poured the Mandalorian ale into a glass and shifted on his seat to make himself more comfortable, taking the drink in his hand and raising it into the air.

"To old friends." The Captain toasted before tilting his head back and downing the drink in one. He let out a relaxed sigh as he took another puff on his cigarra, settling the empty glass back onto the crate. The nature of his toast turned the Mandalorian's thoughts somber, it was a fact that all the men he had originally served in Rho with were either missing, dead or retired. But such was the nature of their dangerous occupation, and Jarion chose to remember the lighter times. Still, it made working with his new comrades pretty difficult at times, so the Captain rarely conversed or spent time with the other Rho pilots when off duty.

The sound of footsteps in his direction broke the Captain out of his trance. He took the depleted stem of the cigarra out of his mouth and unceremoniously stubbed it out on the surface of the crate as the man reached him. Initially he was disappointed, having picked the certain time where all the other pilots were off duty and probably getting wasted in the cantina so he could be alone. Recognising the pattern of the newcomers' walk, Jarion lifted himself off the makeshift seat and turned around to face his superior officer.

"Major." Jarion announced, offering the Rho Commander a crisp salute, which the man promptly returned.

"Captain Renalds." Frozen responded, turning his gaze to the crates beside the Mandalorian. "Having a party on the flight deck I see."

"Well yes, sir. I know it's not regulation but..."

Jarion stopped talking as Frozen reached into his uniform and produced another bottle of aged Corellian whisky. The older man smiled as he picked up a crate and brought it to the makeshift table.

"At ease, Captain." Said Frozen, who watched as Jarion's stance casually relaxed. "I was browsing through our squadron's personnel files earlier and happened to notice it was your birthday today. So I thought you could use some company."

"Thank you, sir." Jarion replied, joining Frozen at the table. After producing another glass, the Major filled them all the way before offering one to the Mandalorian who promptly took it.

"To Rho Squadron and the future." Toasted Frozen, holding his glass out to Mandalorian.

"I can drink to that." Jarion replied as the two clinked glasses and drank the straight whiskey in one go.

