**Bridge**

**Immobilizer 418-class Heavy Cruiser *Orthanc***

**Kr’Tal system**

**34 ABY**

What had begun as a normal day for the crew of the *Orthanc* had literally exploded into chaos when the *Suffering*, the flagship of the Iron Navy, arrived in the Kr’Tal system, flanked by two of the new Resurgent class Star Destroyers, and numerous support ships.

Jac Cotelin was aboard the *Suffering*, and in spite of his long history with Clan Taldryan, it quickly became very clear that he was not making a friendly visit. The Iron Navy started to attack not just Taldryan’s fleet, but the planets of the Kr’Tal system.

*This is going to be a massacre!* Captain Ammar Kordoo thought as he watched the destruction unfurl.

“Sir. The enemy are jamming us. I can’t get into contact with anyone,” a junior officer stated as he frantically operated his console.

“Prepare to jump to hyperspace. Set coordinates for the Rybanloth system. We can only hope that the rest of the fleet manages to escape this catastrophe,” Kordoo ordered.

Kordoo’s first officer, Herktor Breznak, marched over.

“I don’t know if that’s a good idea, sir. Look at the enemy out there. We’re going to be slaughtered. We need to stay for as long as we can, and hope some of the Clan can get off Karufr,” he objected.

“The longer we stay, the more chance we take that we too will be killed. You know how powerful some of the Clan are, Herktor. They’ll survive. They *HAVE* to,” the Captain answered, crossly.

Breznak sighed. “Ammar, we don’t even know if the Rybanloth system will be safe! For all we know they might have gone there first. At least let us try and help retrieve the Clan leadership. Lord Howlader will know what to do,”

“This ship has survived several Brotherhood wide conflicts. And we’ll survive this one, but only if we leave, now. We’ll secure the Kalus base. And help the rebuild from there. Once the Elders catch up with us,” Kordoo snapped.

“Sirs. There is a Resurgent-class baring down on us!” a female yelled from her station.

*Forgive me for this, my Lords….*

“Hit the hyperdrive NOW!” the Captain demanded.

As the *Orthanc* began its hyperjump, the crew felt the entire ship shake. They were under heavy attack.

Moments later, the ship lurched forwards slightly. The stars became streaks of light.

They had entered hyperspace.

**Taldryan HQ**

**Chyron**

**Present day**

“The information you brought back from your mission to Kalus is clear, Andrelious. The *Orthanc* survived,” Rian announced.

“I’ve seen checked what few recordings we have of the attack on Karufr. The *Orthanc* managed to get away just as the Iron Fleet turned their attention to it. I’m not at all a technician, but I’ve spoken to someone who knows a little more about ships..” Andrelious explained, turning to the door.

Saskia Ortega-Inahj walked in, still in coveralls, her hair tied in a messy bun. She certainly didn’t look like she’d been expecting to meet with Taldryan’s leadership.

“Do you have kids for EVERY situation, Andrel?” Justinios quipped.

“Is this going to take long? I’m actually quite busy,” Saskia snapped.

“Just explain your theory about the *Orthanc* and then you can go,” her father responded.

The female remained expressionless. “Hyperdrives are very sensitive things. If a ship gets hit in the wrong place right as it begins its jump to hyperspace, there’s dozens of things that can happen. Judging by the fact that the Kalus base can still pick up the *Orthanc*’s signal, I can rule out a good half of those things. But for all we know, the ship might be virtually useless once you locate it.”

“That’s a good point. Perhaps you should come with me to retrieve the ship,” Andrelious announced with a smile.

“Really, Dad? I’m not even properly part of the Clan anymore,” Saskia complained.

“Ah, but I suspect there’s going to be plenty of technician work. Maybe even some slicing. I will bring a team for the fighting. You’ll just need to fix things. And open doors,” the Archanis Quaestor said with a smirk.

“We don’t have much to go on. Even the coordinates we have are only an approximation,” Justinios interjected.

“There’s also the chance that the Collective, or even one of the other Clans got to it first. This could be a trap,” Rian added.

“We’ll just have to see. I’m sure my team and I will be able to handle it if things *DO* turn nasty,” Andrelious said, patting the hilt of one of his lightsabers.

**Delta-class JV-7 Escort Shuttle *Tseb’si’tsaerb III***

**Deep Space**

Andrelious wasn’t too surprised to find that the *Orthanc*’s location was not precise. The status system at the Kalus base hadn’t been used for long enough that its readings were no longer totally accurate.

“So what now? We don’t have long range sensors on this thing,” Saskia questioned.

“But we have got Imperial military grade commsystems,” the Seeker responded.

Swil Phift took the Quaestor’s cue. He was operating the shuttle’s communications, and pushed a button to scan the immediate area for anything that even resembled a message. At first his console found little more than chatter from some spacers who happened to be in range, but, as the scan neared completion, it found something more substantial.

A holographic figure appeared in the centre of the cockpit. Andrelious recognised it immediately as Ammar Kordoo.

“That’s the *Orthanc’s* captain,” the Warlord explained.

“This is Captain Ammar Kordoo of the cruiser *Orthanc*. If you are receiving this message, our ship is severely damaged and in need of immediate help,” the hologram stated.

“Automated distress beacon. Taldryan military protocol requires all ships to have one. Swil, track it,” Andrelious ordered as Kordoo’s form repeated its message.

“Surely that’s asking for trouble? We’re lightyears away from anything out here. Sending a beacon out like that is basically an open window for pirates,” Saskia observed.

“Ah, but the message is encrypted,” Andrelious replied matter of factly.

“But what’s the point of a distress beacon if hardly anyone can hear it?” the female asked.

“You forget. Taldryan is a Brotherhood within a Brotherhood. The whole ethos of the Clan is that everyone has each other’s backs. The *Orthanc*, along with the other ships from that era, were never meant to operate far away from each other. That’s also why all our old bases had the fleet status monitors. We knew where everyone was. All the time,” the Quaestor said, his voice wavering a little.

“If I may interrupt, sir, back when we were still with Arcona, the DIA were finally figuring out exactly how the Taldryan fleet was always able to remain so co-ordinated. Right up until the attack on Karufr,” Swil stated.

“It’s more than just these systems. Taldryan owed its strength to the Elders. Keirdagh Cantor, in particular. He had this way of arranging everyone almost perfectly. Howlader and the others, to an extent, but mostly Keirdagh. Never underestimate what that can do. It was like fighting droids. Droids that learned from every move you made…” Andrelious stated.

“So with the Elders gone?” Saskia queried.

“The Elders were mostly lost to us after the attack on Karufr. For the crew of the *Orthanc*, it would be like they’d just graduated from the academy. Some of the stronger willed officers would probably have been alright, but there’d certainly have been a lot of panic,” Mimosa-Inahj explained.

“We’ve got a fix on the signal, sir,” Swil announced.

Andrelious started to turn the ship towards the given trajectory.

It was time to find what had been lost.

**Sickbay**

**Immobilizer 418-class Heavy Cruiser *Orthanc***

As far as he knew, Mees Rogg was the only Togorian aboard the *Orthanc* even before the attack. Now he was also the only remaining doctor. He and a small team of nurses and medical droid were badly overworked, and supplies of everything were dwindling fast.

“We can’t keep this up. I lost another patient today. I’m even having to ration bacta,” Mees sighed.

“Commander Breznak said he’d see what he can do. He’s been talking to some traders. He reckons that they’ll be able to help us,” one of the nurses replied, gently patting the doctor’s back.

The Togorian shook his head. “I know. I told him the best he could hope for is that some of the crew get off this damn ship. At least it’ll reduce our workload,”

“If I may, sir, that situation is not going to be sustainable. Our supplies will last the current crew numbers for another six standard months. Even if half the numbers are evacuated, I estimate we’ll have enough for a standard year, at most. That’s not even taking into account the supply issues that other sections of the ship are reporting,” a medical droid announced.

Not for the first time, Mees Rogg turned away from his staff, whispering something under his breath.

Why had Taldryan forsaken them?

**-x-**

“There it is. The *Orthanc*. Saskia, check the sensor data. Tell me what condition it’s in,” Andrelious ordered, though he could see that the cruiser’s outer hull was not in good shape.

“Plenty of problems throughout the ship. They’ve lost life support on at least two decks, and they’re also experiencing power fluctuations. The actual structure of the hull is stable, but damaged. Looks like their hyperdrive is functional, but I can’t get any kind of connection to their navigational systems. If I can get aboard, I might be able to get the ship online, but they’re going to need to visit a shipyard,” Saskia said, reeling the data off the screen as fast at appeared.

Andrelious nodded. “How about the hangar bay? Is it in good enough condition to land?”

“It’s not appearing on the damage reports, but we’ll not be able to see if there’s any internal structure damage until we’ve landed,” the technician continued in her usual monotone.

“Swil, activate comms,” Andrelious ordered.

“This is Andrelious J. Mimosa-Inahj of Clan Taldryan. We just received your distress beacon. Please update as to your present status, *Orthanc*,”

The Quaestor glanced at his daughter, then at Swil, as he waited for the *Orthanc*’s crew to respond.

**Bridge**

Herktor Breznak had completely given up on whatever was left of Taldryan ever finding them. His ship was relatively intact, but the hyperdrive was no longer functional, and what was left of the crew had long run out of ideas for getting it running again.

“Someone check that name against our database,” Breznak ordered. “I’m not taking any chances after that smuggler who tried to swindle us last month!”

“Database is running the check already. The ship checks out, though. Its IFF transponder is broadcasting a valid code. Ship is registered as *Tseb’si’tsaerb III*,” a member of the crew announced.

“Can we get a message to them?” Herktor asked.

The crew member nodded. “Of course. The commsystem’s fully functional. I’m suspecting they found us via the distress beacon,”

*That means they’ll be expecting to hear from Ammar. Let’s hope this Mimosa-Inahj is the understanding kind!* Breznak thought as he prepared to begin his communique.

“This is Commander Herktor Breznak, acting Captain. You’re welcome to land, but it may be a little difficult for you to reach the bridge,”

“And why is that, Commander?” a voice demanded.

“We had a bulkhead collapse on the flight deck. We’ve not had access to our hangar since we became separated from the rest of the fleet. Did anyone else survive? Captain Kordoo was expecting to have heard from the Clan’s Elders,”

**-x-**

“We will sort your bulkhead out, Commander. Just try and keep the ship running. Mimosa-Inahj out,”

Andrelious was already beginning the landing sequence as Swil deactivated the commsystem. The former Imperial carefully guided the shuttle into the *Orthanc*’s hangar.

With the *Orthanc* having lost its fighters during the attack on Karufr, there was plenty of room for the Archanis Quaestor to set the ship down. The hangar itself looked to be in fairly good condition, but its emptiness gave it a rather eerie atmosphere.

“Saskia, Swil, you’re both with me. The rest of you, get your weapons ready and follow,” Mimosa-Inahj ordered, leading the way out of the shuttle.

“I can see debris in the corridor ahead. Must be that bulkhead collapse the Commander told us about,” Swil announced, pointing in the direction of the corridor leading into the rest of the ship.

“Shouldn’t be a problem,” Andrelious stated.

The Seeker focused on the heap of debris, easily pushing it away with the Force. The damaged bulkhead groaned as it moved, but the corridor was quickly cleared.

“Well, you’ve got us into the ship, but it’s going to take a lot more than doing that to get it back to the summit. May I head to the engineering section? I want to see just how much work’s going to be needed,” Saskia said.

“For now, stay with me. We need to find Captain Kordoo. He’ll have a good idea of what’s happened, and that way we can make sure any surviving technicians know you’re here to help them,” Andrelious explained.

“Just use the consoles on the bridge to find out exactly what needs doing, Ma’am,” Swil suggested, but Saskia wasn’t happy.

The Quaestor turned to the rest of the team. They were mostly standard troopers from Archanis’ army forces, and even contained a few newer recruits that had joined from the Caelus system.

“Three of you, stay here, just in case something happens. The rest of you, with me,”

­-x-

The turbolift ride to the bridge hadn’t been as smooth as Andrelious was used to aboard a capital ship. The turbolift car struggled on its way up, and the lights on the inside of the car flickered in and out. Saskia was quick to point out that it was likely a result of the *Orthanc*’s damage, concerning Andrelious as to if they were going to be able to salvage anything from the mission.

The turbolift finally arrived at the bridge, its doors sliding open slowly with an almost tired sounding wheeze.

The bridge was staffed by a handful of crew, far less than the number that would usually be present for a ship the size of the *Orthanc*.

Andrelious scanned around, but couldn’t spot Captain Kordoo.

“Where is the Captain?” he asked.

“Welcome to the *Orthanc*, sir. As for Captain Kordoo, I’m afraid he won’t be joining us….” Breznak began.

**Deep Space**

**34 ABY**

The *Orthanc* had dropped out of hyperspace, but it quickly became clear that they were nowhere near the Rybanloth system. Worse still, it transpired that the navigational computers had overloaded. The crew had no obvious way of finding where they were.

“Get me a report, Commander!” Kordoo ordered.

“We were hit at the exact moment we jumped to lightspeed. That fried the navigation computers, and we’ve also sustained hull damage. Two whole decks have been de-pressurised. Reports of casualties throughout the ship,” Breznak stated, trying his best to keep calm as his subordinates started to panic.

“We’ve got a potential overload in gravity well generator Aurek!” another officer cried.

“Shut it down, Lieutenant!” the Captain demanded.

“I can’t, sir! The power levels are too high. We’ll have to do it manually,”

Kordoo stared at the Lieutenant for a moment.

“I’ll do it, Lieutenant,” he said, starting for the turbolift.

“Ammar, don’t!” Breznak pleaded.

“This is what we all signed up for, Herktor! I will make sure this ship keeps running. You have a family. This ship *IS* my family…” the alien declared.

For the first time in the many years that the pair had served together, Ammar Kordoo and Herktor Breznak shared a hug.

**Present Day**

“That was the last we saw of the Captain. He disabled generator Aurek, but there was already so much power built up,” Breznak explained.

“He would have died immediately. No known species would be able to survive those kind of power levels,” Saskia added coldly.

“That explains what happened to Captain Kordoo. But this ship seems deserted,” Andrelious replied. “What happened to the rest of the crew?”

Breznak didn’t look comfortable with the question. “We weren’t on high alert when the attack came in. About a quarter of our crew were on the surface of Karufr. We lost two decks worth of personnel even before we got away. And since then, we’ve lost about two thirds of what was left. The sickbay is down to one doctor, and we’re even running out of food,” he said.

“So you’ve been out here for the last three years? Amazing that you’ve managed to survive for so long,” Swil observed.

“Well, we used our shuttle to evacuate our most vulnerable personnel. We thought they’d have got back to you, actually. Did you not receive them?” the Commander queried.

“They probably followed military article 50. They’ll be safe somewhere in the mid rim,” Andrelious explained.

“Ok, dad. They’ve not been able to jump anywhere because their navigational systems are completely dead. The hyperdrive itself is intact, but they had no way to activate it. The structure of the ship seems largely intact, but there’s not much I can do, even with full access to everything,” Saskia declared as she studied several status monitors.

“Can you do anything to get this ship back home?” Andrelious questioned.

“That’s easier than Kooki says you are,” the female responded. “We can slave the hyperdrive through the *Tseb’si’tsaerb III*’s systems. Won’t take me long,”

Andrelious smiled. He rarely knew what his eldest child was talking about, but he understood just enough to have to got the gist of it. “Sort it. Commander Breznak, it looks like we’re going to get you home. Just not quite the home you’re used to,”

Saskia disappeared into the turbolift, her mind fully engaged on the task her father had asked of her.

The *Orthanc* was back.

*FIN*