

We jumped into our target system a few hours after we located it, coming in on the far end of a cluster of planets. The sun was between us and the planet the pirates were landed on, meaning there was little chance they had spotted our arrival. Of course, this also meant we couldn't scan them. We did know from records that their chosen planet had a cold climate of ice and snow, but that was pretty much it.

The second we arrived in the system, our fleet made a beeline for the closest planet, using it as moving cover as we crossed the system in case they had access to some sort of high-end sensors. It was unlikely, but caution was cheap and could save our asses in the end.

Over the next twenty hours, we followed the planet as it spun around the sun, catching up to the much more distant, outer orbit planet. We jumped between planetoids twice, slowly encroaching on our target, making sure to stay hidden the entire time.

As we got closer, we finally got a read on where the ship was stationed with a passive scan. Like our first pirate raid, approaching from the opposite side of the planet from where they had landed would give us some extra cover and allow us to take them by surprise. With that in mind, we waited for the planet to spin away, before finally crossing the last bit of empty space between us. As we settled into orbit, we began the next phase of our plan.

The ground team quickly got armored up, in full combat gear, before hopping into the *Brick*. We left the *Chariot* behind and linked up to the *Loyal Hound*, where we picked up all nine of Lieutenant Rider's ground team, as well as Vaz.

With everyone inside, the *Brick* was just short of completely full, making a tight squeeze, especially with everyone in [full armor](#). Still, we had just enough room to make it work.

Once everyone was inside and ready, we disconnected from the *Loyal Hound* and descended to the planet's surface. It was a quick ride with Nal in the pilot's chair, guiding us down and across the nearly completely barren surface of the frozen planet. It really reminded me of Hoth, even if it was just a bit less desolate.

When we finally landed, we quickly left the ship, which Nal locked up and turned off. Once we were ready to move, I gathered everyone together.

"Alright, you guys know the plan, but let's go over it again," I said, addressing everyone, doing my best to ignore the fact that the group had more than doubled. "Our main concern is the L-2783. We don't know what sort of state it will be in when we arrive, but it can have up to two hundred people on board, so be prepared for a long fight."

My eyes settled on Ahsoka for a moment, getting a subtle nod from the Togruta. She was the only one not in heavy armor. Instead, she was wearing our uniform, with a few extra insulating layers on top, as well as a thick hat that covered her montrals and a scarf to cover her face. I nodded back before continuing.

"Our primary goal is to recover the L-2783, everything else is just a bonus. The worst-case scenario is that the pirate's gunship is in good enough condition to destroy the other ship out of spite. That is why, as we begin our assault, the fleet will come in and attempt to force the smaller ship to surrender by way of overwhelming firepower. If they refuse, our fleet will attempt to disable it by wrecking the weapons and the engines."

I paused again, turning to look at the setting sun in the distance. According to Calima and the sensor droid on board the *Chariot*, we had five hours before it got very dark and very cold. While the far below-freezing temperatures wouldn't bother us for a long time, it would make sneaking around the ships much easier, since not many species could hang around it and keep watch, not without gear like ours. We had been lucky to have the proper equipment for Ahsoka.

"While our fleet strong arms the gunship, we will be taking the L-2783, clearing it room by room until the ship is ours," I explained. "Team one will be clearing the hangar bay, moving to keep any ships inside from taking off, while Team two sweeps through the crew areas, including the quarters and, most importantly, the bridge. Now, since we will be flexing our fleet a bit overhead, we might get a few surrenders. If that is the case, stun them immediately and bind their arms behind their back. Everyone else, double tap. These are pirates, each with a list of victims to their names. There is no reason to hold back."

When everyone nodded in understanding, I gave everyone a thumbs up before turning around and leading the way, starting our trek through the frozen wastes to our target. It was not a short one, unfortunately, as we were forced to land behind a large mountain, and we were hiking around it. The only silver lining in sight was that since the place was so cold, the snow was solid enough to walk across easily, even in our heavy armor.

About two hours into our hike, we paused for a break. I used the Flames spell to heat up a rock and melt the snow into a pit, letting us climb down both to get out of the wind and for Ahsoka to warm up.

"How are you doing?" I asked as Ahsoka stepped closer to the rock, holding her hands out and pulling down her face mask.

"I'm fine. There are some effective techniques to mitigate the cold using the Force," She explained. "It might get dicey if we get stuck out here overnight, but other than that, I'll be fine."

"Good. By the way, this is another reason I want you in a suit of some kind," I pointed out, raising a hand in defense before she could fire back. "Being able to assume that all of my people can survive the same circumstances means I don't have to worry about individual people. You can handle this, but what about a geologically active planet with rivers of magma? Or someplace with no breathable air, or a pure vacuum?"

She seemed to seriously consider what I was saying, but something about her pride in her Jedi heritage made her want to rebut the need for armor.

"It also puts your team at risk," I said, getting her attention. "Imagine we are on a ship and need to cross a hall that is exposed to vacuum? If you were wearing a sealed suit, we could cross that no problem. But without it, the team would be forced to seek other, less optimal routes. And no, they would not leave you behind. Putting on a full suit like ours, even if it's just a light version, is one less thing to worry about for me."

"... I understand," She eventually admitted with a frown. "It is a valid point, and I am impressed by what Pola has created for all of you. It may feel a bit... wrong to put on so much armor, but I will get used to it."

"Thank you, I appreciate it. I'm sure Pola will take all of your needs into account while making your armor."

She nodded, and after a few more minutes of letting her warm and everyone else rest their muscles, we started moving again. I cast *Respite* on everyone as we left, removing what little fatigue remained as we pushed forward.

It was another three hours before we finally reached our destination, a massive ice field where the pirates had landed. The field was bracketed by an extensive mountain range along the side opposite to us, with the gunship only three or four hundred feet away from us and the much larger L-2783 on the side opposite that. I could see two small freighters alongside the gunship, as well as their pirate crews, walking back and forth between them.

As we lay down on the cold, solid ground, about thirty or forty feet above the level that the ships were at, we passed around a pair of binocs, doing some light reconnaissance as we waited for the sun to go down. We noted a dozen or so pirates walking along the hull of the gunship, which was clearly being worked on. The L-2783 appeared to be in decent working order, though there was some carbonized damage on one of its fins. The front entrance of the larger ship was sealed tight, probably to save power and keep everything warm since they wouldn't have to run the mag field. There were a few people on the forward landing deck, clearly on watch.

As the sun got lower and lower, the number of people outside dropped. Eventually, only a single pair of pirates, wrapped up in thick winter survival clothes, were standing guard by the lowered boarding ramp. Eventually, when they even went inside, it was time to attack. I pulled out my comms and gave a triple click, my device connecting back to the *Brick*, which would relay its message to the rest of the fleet. Simple, tried and true, and effective.

"Alright, the fleet should be on its way," I said, getting everyone's attention. "Let's move everyone."

The second I gave the command, we surged out of our cover and down the hill. Knowing that our armor, painted white for just this occasion, made it almost impossible to see us in the darkness. Against the white ice and snow, we were nearly invisible as we made a beeline for the

L-2783. We completely ignored the gunship, knowing the fleet would handle them, reaching our target a few minutes after we started our run. The small side landing ramp was still big enough for us to rush into the ship two by two, all of us stepping inside the ship in record time.

Immediately, we split up. Four clones came with Nal, Vaz, and me, while the remaining five clones, including Lieutenant Rider, followed after Tatnia, Julius, and Ahsoka. My team headed directly for the hangar bay, stepping into the massive interior space.

Immediately, I could spot another freighter, which looked to be in pretty rough condition. Since the intelligence we had on the pirates said they should only have two, and there were already two outside, the third ship was potentially a recent score. We could also see several starfighters, a pair of new-ish looking [Z-95 headhunters](#), and a trio of other [starfighters](#) that I didn't recognize.

Before we could even step into the hangar, a shout echoed through the open space. It was impossible to tell where it came from, but it got *everyone's* attention. Dozens of people turned to see what was going on, and most of them almost immediately pulled out blasters of various sizes and shapes.

"Push forward to the freighter," I said calmly, waiting for the shoe to drop. "Vaz, you're with me to the starfighters."

The calm was broken when the sound of turbolaser fire echoed in from outside the ship. For a moment, I considered raising my voice and explaining that they were surrounded by our fleet, but unsurprisingly, they opened fire immediately.

We rushed to cover, Vaz following behind me, spraying the hangar down with her rotary cannon. The clones followed after Nal as he followed a line of crates. Hundreds of bolts of red, angry energy crisscrossed the hangar, trying their best to take us down as we slowly made progress to our targets. Some of them must have realized what we were doing and attempted to stop us, only to get cut down by Vaz's impressive firepower.

After a few seconds of cover hopping, we slid behind a pair of the strange-looking starfighters, taking cover and preventing anyone from accessing them. With our position secure, we started to really focus our fire back at them, tanking shots left and right and dropping dozens of them in return. Finally, across the hangar I saw Nal step down from the freighter, gesturing to me that it was clear.

With our targets secure and most of the hangar clear, we began pushing in, closing in on the remaining pirates and either flanking or driving them from their cover. In all honesty, it was a slaughter, with none of them packing the proper firepower to take us down. We had each taken dozens of blaster bolts, but they had been spread all over our armor, meaning it wasn't even

close to losing its integrity. The most the pirates could claim was that they had ruined their new paint jobs.

As we pushed forward, a Rodian seemed to notice this, as he threw down his blaster and raised his hands in surrender. His cowardice in the face of an admittedly intimidating foe started an avalanche, and within just a handful of seconds, the remaining pirates surrendered as well. As we stood out of cover and began stunning the pirates and kicking weapons away from their previous owners, I ordered Nal and his clone escort to start searching the hallway around the hangar for anyone who managed to slink off.

I was about to pick up my comms and contact the other teams, when a massive barrage of turbolaser fire reverberated through the ship, sending vibrations through the hull and floor. I raised an eyebrow and looked over at Vaz.

"Think that was the gunship being flattened or a final display of force?" I asked rhetorically.

"Perhaps, but I believe the lack of a large explosion means it was one of the freighters," She countered. "Perhaps they were trying to escape."

"It's possible, let's find out."

I pulled out my comms and first radioed Tatnia, who picked up immediately.

"We have the hangar bay locked down for the most part," I explained. "Vaz and I are watching the pirates who surrender while Nal and the troopers search the halls. How's it going for you?"

"Slow," She responded. "We have the bridge, now we are just checking room to room. Also... we found some survivors of their last raid."

"How many?" I asked, pausing before adding. "I think we have their ship down here."

"Five. Some of them are a bit rough if you feel like healing them up," She responded. "I'm sure they will be happy to still have a ship."

"Alright, I'll be up when we are sure everything here is locked down. Let me call Calima and see how things are going out there."

A quick call explained exactly what the barrage had been. Apparently, the very first shot we heard was a warning shot, while the barrage was our fleet taking down one of the freighters as it tried to escape. Unsurprisingly, after such a display of firepower, the remaining ships surrendered.