

Chapter 11

Out of the Sunset

Voldemort climbed into one of the TIE fighters and looked around. The symbols and buttons were difficult to figure out, but he had learned the rudimentary controls for the X-Wing pretty quickly. Voldemort pulled out his wand and began to discern how to fly the thing.

“Sir! Fighters are headed this way,” another pilot said into his radio. All other personnel were running out of the launch bay as the airlocks began to close.

“I know,” Voldemort answered. “Let’s move!”

The huge bay doors opened, revealing the bright blue planet beneath them and the black sky surrounding it. The TIE fighters rose and blasted out of the launch bay. They headed for the planet’s surface, where six X-Wing fighters rose to meet them. Voldemort saw the tiny dots glinting in the bright sun.

“I sense you,” a voice said in his head.

“Stay off the conn!” Voldemort ordered the pilots.

“No, it’s not your men. Whatever you are, wherever you are from, I am going to send you back.” It was Vader, speaking to him using the Force.

Two could play at this game, Voldemort figured. “I have come to destroy you, Vader,” he thought. “Through Palpatine, I will rule this galaxy.”

Vader laughed. “You underestimate the power of the dark side. If I do not defeat you, the Emperor will.”

“Vader,” Voldemort said with a chuckle.

“What?”

“Shut up and fight!”

Instantly, laser fire from Voldemort’s ship flashed past, and Vader realized they were in range. “Fire!” Vader yelled.

The TIE fighters spread out to surround the X-Wings, firing their lasers rapidly. Darth Vader zeroed in on Voldemort and fired. The dark wizard immediately evaded his attack.

“Not bad!” Vader yelled.

Voldemort spun his ship around and fired again, hitting one of Vader’s laser cannons. “You were saying?” he taunted.

Vader tilted the X-Wing to one side and dropped out of sight. Voldemort looked through the cockpit windows but could not see Vader’s ship. Nearby, he saw the other X-Wing pilots obliterating several of the other TIE fighters.

“Idiots,” thought Voldemort.

“Imperial clones are useless,” he heard Vader say. “In a dogfight, you need real pilots.”

Suddenly, Voldemort felt the ship shudder as laser fire nailed his right foil. He saw the foil disintegrate and the ship began to rotate out of control.

“My yard!” Vader laughed.

Voldemort’s ship started to spin wildly, and he pulled out his wand. “Ex post factimus!” he yelled. The ship instantly righted itself. He saw Vader’s ship coming right toward him.

“Expelliarmus!” Voldemort yelled. Vader’s controls slipped out of his hands and the X-Wing lurched to one side,

dropping into a barrel roll. Voldemort took aim and fired his lasers, hitting one of the engines. Vader grabbed the controls and headed for the planet's surface with Voldemort in pursuit.

The other X-Wing pilots gave chase, followed by the remaining TIE fighters. Only half of them were left.

As the ships entered Naboo's atmosphere, Voldemort started to feel his ship shudder. His spell could sustain the ship for a few minutes, but could not restore the craft's missing foil. It suddenly fell into a tumble again.

Vader brought the black X-Wing around and chased Voldemort's out-of-control fighter. "You failed to understand your craft's capabilities," he said to Voldemort.

Voldemort saw the planet's cloud cover grow ever closer, and then the ground. Vader chased him and fired his lasers the whole way, but was unable to hit the spinning ship.

"Now I will watch you die," Vader said as the ground approached. It was only a few thousand feet below them.

Voldemort looked around the cockpit for the button he needed, and finally found it. He pulled the stick to slow the fighter and the X-Wings and the other TIE fighters blew past him. He pressed the button and his ship blew apart, leaving Voldemort flying through the sky without it.

As Voldemort drifted over Naboo's surface, he saw the ruins of the blackened palace below. Beyond it, he saw Naboo's sun setting above the distant mountains, painting the clouds red and purple. Except for the destroyed palace, it was a typical Naboo scene, full of radiant color and beauty. Far off,

he saw the X-Wings finishing a wide arc, and he rose higher into the sky as their silhouettes came directly at him.

The X-Wings fired their laser cannons. Voldemort raised his wand and deflected the beams away with ease. He laughed as the ships blew past, followed by the TIE fighters.

The X-Wings circled and began another run at the wizard. They fired, and Voldemort again deflected the beams. This time, he noticed one of the ships coming directly at him.

Voldemort raised his wand. "Sectumsempra!" he yelled, and two of the ship's wings sheared off, causing the X-Wing to spin wildly toward the dark wizard. Voldemort flew higher, just missing the sheared wings spinning past him. The ship's engines suddenly exploded, sending the ship tumbling toward the ground in a cloud of fiery debris.

"Too cowardly to try it yourself, Vader?" he demanded.

"One strike and you'll vaporize," Darth Vader replied. "It's only a matter of time."

"Very well, I've got all day for this, Vader."

The X-Wings turned on the TIE fighters and attacked, blasting three of them into shards of metal and fire. Two more of the rebel fighters came after Voldemort, this time from different angles. Voldemort was frustrated that he could not cast his spells until they got too close. He needed to plan.

As the fighters flew closer, they fired. Voldemort apparated to a point just above them. "Imperio!" he yelled as the ships flew underneath. He could now control one of the pilots with his mind.

Vader's black ship had just finished blasting the rest of the TIE fighters, and turned toward Voldemort. He suddenly found himself on a collision course with one of his own pilots.

"Descend! Now!" Vader yelled into the radio, but the ship headed straight at him. Vader rolled his ship to avoid it.

Voldemort laughed and kept his wand trained on his X-Wing pilot. His ship wheeled around and started to chase one of the other X-Wings, firing all four lasers repeatedly.

Vader looked out his window and saw the rogue ship destroy one of the other fighters. "Kill him!" he yelled to his other pilots through the radio.

The other two X-Wings chased Voldemort's ship. The dark wizard aimed his wand and brought his pilot around to chase Vader again. He trained on Vader and fired the lasers rapidly, hitting one of Vader's engines. Then the cannons on Voldemort's controlled X-Wing shut down.

"You burned out your cannons, fool!" yelled Vader.

The three ships rose overhead, chasing the rogue pilot. Voldemort brought the burned-out fighter around to collide with the others, and they took aim and fired.

Voldemort's X-Wing exploded in a fireball and plummeted past him as the three fighters regrouped and dove. Voldemort cast his wand upward. "Reducto!" he yelled. He nailed one of the ships, and it suddenly crumpled like tissue paper. Its pilot screamed as the cockpit collapsed and crushed him. The ball of metal plummeted toward Voldemort, and he

disappeared just as the ship exploded, taking out the other X-Wing. Vader pulled out of the dive to avoid the fireball.

Voldemort re-appeared well below the scene and watched Vader's black ship careen through the sky above him.

"Where are you?" Vader demanded.

"Getting ready for your end," Voldemort replied.

"Ah, I have you," Vader said, and his ship turned toward Voldemort. Vader tightened the crosshairs on his aiming system and flattened out his approach.

Voldemort watched the X-Wing coming closer and stretched out his arm, wand held ready. Then he smiled.

Voldemort put his wand back into his cloak, and rubbed his bare hands together. He had always wanted to try this, and he was fairly certain it would work.

Vader watched the wizard floating in midair without his wand, and laughed. "It is a pity you would surrender, but that is fine with me." He took aim and began to press the trigger.

Voldemort held out both of his hands and gathered his power, shutting his eyes tightly. Suddenly, bolts of electricity streamed from his fingertips at Vader's X-Wing. The electricity enveloped the ship, shutting down the engines.

"No!" Vader screamed, as the ship glided into a slow-motion spin. Voldemort kept the energy bolts trained on the ship as it hurled past him. He began to feel incredible pain, like he had felt on Tatooine at the hands of the Emperor. He let go, and Vader's ship spun toward the palace ruins below.

Darth Vader struggled to bring the coasting X-Wing under control. He got the ship to stop spinning, and used the foils to glide the ship toward the obliterated palace. Vader readied his hands over the cockpit release button.

Voldemort watched the fighter drift toward the ground. He disappeared, intending to be in position for a quick kill.

Vader's ship flattened out just above the surface. He ejected the cockpit window and jumped out, his light saber ready to strike. As the X-Wing crashed into the plaza, Vader felt the urge to ram his own light saber through his chest.

The Sith Lord turned around just before landing, and saw Voldemort flying from above with his wand held toward him. Vader realized what was going on. The white wizard was trying to use the control curse on him.

Both of them noticed that it was much darker here on the ground, where the sun had already set.

"That trick may work with the Emperor in his weakened state, but not with me," Vader said, swiping at the white wizard with his light saber.

Voldemort spun backwards and aimed his wand at Vader. "Expelliarmus!" he yelled as he landed on the ground.

Vader felt the light saber leave his glove, and he spun to grab it with his other hand. He tightened his grip and ran at the wizard, reaching out with his free hand.

Voldemort smiled. He had reached the pinnacle of dark wizardry, facing Darth Vader in the shadow of a devastated palace. He raised his wand, ready for the Sith Lord's attack.