



EXCLUSIVE FICTION

BLADE SQUADRON

PART TWO

BY DAVID J. WILLIAMS AND MARK S. WILLIAMS,
WITH ART BY CHRIS TREVAS

THE STORY SO FAR...

Cadet Gina Moonsong, a rookie B-wing pilot, has become involved in the Battle of Endor. As the attack on the second Death Star rages, her group is assigned to guard the rear... Until the fearsome Star Destroyer *Devastator* arrives and the the B-wings are plunged into a fight against impossible odds...

It had all been leading up to this moment.

Gina Moonsong could see that now; could see how all the paths and permutations of her life had led, inexorably, to this place: somewhere in space near Endor, an absolutely insignificant moon, which was now—thanks to the Empire's decision to build its battle station there—the most important place in the galaxy. All her time as a smuggler back on Coruscant, all her resolution to stay one step ahead of the law and never to get involved... well, it hadn't worked. She'd gotten involved and then some.

And now there was no turning back. Moonsong had seen her share of security and police cruisers—had either flown in, or run from, virtually every type of ship out there—but she'd never seen an actual Star Destroyer before. Sure, she'd watched a million holos, participated in endless training runs, studied schematics till her eyes glazed over... but this was different. This was a monstrous slab of metal covered with guns and armor, crewed by enough men to fill a city... the kind of ship other craft never went near if they wanted to live to see another landfall. Every instinct in Moonsong was screaming at her to turn her B-wing around and flee—but somehow she controlled her nerves and held her course, accelerating in toward the *Devastator*. For the first time since she had joined the Rebellion she realized the true magnitude of her situation; the fun and games were over.

All that was left was to die bravely.

She pulled into formation behind Blade Leader, rotated her ship's wing thirty degrees around the gyro-stabilized cockpit in which she sat; Moonsong's wingman Blade Four executed the same maneuver as he brought up the rear. She didn't need to check her scanners to know Lieutenant Braylen Stramm and his wing man were matching her course and speed. All the fumbled training missions and mishaps were forgotten; the real thing was underway, and the squadron was rising to the moment, finally working together as a single seamless unit. The ships resembled some great avian flock as they fell into attack formation. On Moonsong's tactical display the *Devastator* was a huge spinning ball of electronic countermeasures punctuated by an outgoing hail of laser cannon fire. As the ships accelerated towards the behemoth, Moonsong could feel her craft's S-foils buckling as she struggled to keep on course while hits from the *Devastator*'s laser cannons drained her deflector shield power and rocked

the ship. Unfortunately there were few real options for getting close to a Star Destroyer, except to go straight at it. But at the moment, incoming fire was the least of Moonsong's worries; they were approaching far too fast for the ships' gunners to lock onto, and even then it would take several direct hits to knock out one of the

B-wings. She was just starting to think they might make it all the way to the Star Destroyer itself when...

"Stay in formation people! Interceptors incoming!"

Wing Commander Fox's voice echoed through her headset as a squadron of TIE interceptors poured around the Star Destroyer and rushed in toward her. They must have been in a holding pattern immediately aft of the ship, but now they were deploying in earnest against the B-wing menace. On paper, the mismatch was considerable: B-wings were assault fighters that maneuvered like freighters, stuffed as they were with avionics packages usually reserved for the smaller capital ships. Pilots relied on the complex nav systems to enable them to score hits—but in a ship-to-ship dogfight, the

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