

The Lone Crusader

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

A large frigate, the "Merimac", a lengthy, sleek ship, glides past. The gigantic rear door slides open.

Two dozen "chargers", one man-vessels built for speed, launch. They scatter behind the larger ship.

INT. MERIMAC BRIDGE - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

More than a dozen CREWMEMBERS man the controls. CAPTAIN WEISMAN (40s) sits in a chair in the center of the bridge, watching the viewscreen, where the chargers are visible. The men wear black uniforms with colored bars on the chest, the number of bars indicating rank.

CAPTAIN WEISMAN
Launch the target probes.

OFFICER #1 works on the panel before him.

OFFICER #1
Probes launching, sir.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

A barrage of probes - round metal balls with flashing lights, jettisons from various ports in the Merimac. They slow to a stop.

The chargers split up to face the probes. The ships open FIRE with fake laser beams, some hitting their targets, others missing by a mile. Once a probe is hit three times, the lights on it go off.

INT. MERIMAC BRIDGE - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Captain Weisman watches the training exercise intently.

OFFICER #2
The cadets achieved a 68% rating on the first round.

CAPTAIN WEISMAN
Let's see what they can do with moving targets. Reactivate the down probes and have the cadets prepare for round two.

OFFICER #2 works at his panel.

OFFICER #2
Cadets, probes are activated for
round two. Fire.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

The deactivated probes light up. All probes move in quick bursts, changing direction often.

The chargers FIRE at their moving targets. Most of the pilots struggle to achieve hits, except for one. This pilot hits the targets with extreme accuracy.

INT. DEENA'S CHARGER - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

DEENA ANDERS (25), a powerhouse wrapped in an attractive package, mans the controls. Dressed in a flight suit with a full helmet, her gender is unrecognizable.

She uses a gloved finger to operate a touch screen, which monitors various system functions. Grips the control stick and turns sharply left.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

Deena's charger disables several probes, using great maneuverability.

INT. MERIMAC BRIDGE - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Captain Weisman, focused on Deena's charger as it continues to hit the probes with acute accuracy, stands.

CAPTAIN WEISMAN
Which cadet has the highest rating?

Officer #1 checks some readings on his panel.

OFFICER #1
That would be Cadet Anders, sir.

CAPTAIN WEISMAN
I would be surprised otherwise.

On the viewscreen, Deena's charger suddenly breaks off from the pack. It heads deeper into space, where a small, red ring rotates in the far distance.

Captain Weisman whirls to Officer #1.

CAPTAIN WEISMAN
What is she doing?

Officer #1 checks some readings.

OFFICER #1
I don't know, sir. There are no
probes on her course.

Captain Weisman hits a button on Officer #1's panel.

CAPTAIN WEISMAN
Cadet Anders, return to the Merimac
immediately.

INT. DEENA'S CHARGER - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Deena steers for the red circle, which appears to grow larger as she approaches. Captain Weisman's voice comes in over her radio.

CAPTAIN WEISMAN (O.S.)
(filtered)
Cadet Anders, I repeat... return to
the Merimac imme--

Deena cuts him off with the flip of a switch. Her eyes shift ahead, to the whirling circle.

INT. MERIMAC BRIDGE - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Beads of perspiration dot Captain Weisman's forehead as he watches the fleeing vessel. He swipes an arm across his moist skin.

CAPTAIN WEISMAN
She's going AWOL.
(into transmitter)
All cadets, open fire on Charger 11.

OFFICER #2
But sir. The training craft aren't
enabled with real lasers.

CAPTAIN WEISMAN
Three direct hits from the fake beams
will shut down her engine. She must
be stopped before she reaches the
warp portal.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

The Merimac makes a slow, wide turn in Deena's direction.

The chargers chase after Deena, FIRING wildly at her ship. Most beams miss. Some come very close. One hits the target.

INT. DEENA'S CHARGER - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

The ship jolts with the hit. On the control panel, one of three dull lines illuminates red. Deena flips a few switches and pulls back a control stick.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

Deena's charger zooms ahead at a faster speed. A second hit shakes the craft. Deena guides the ship into wild maneuvers in an attempt to dodge the beams.

Up ahead, the spinning ring is huge.

INT. MERIMAC BRIDGE - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Captain Weisman bounces with panic.

CAPTAIN WEISMAN
(into transmitter)
Stop her!

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

The chargers FIRE even more rapidly at Deena's vessel.

INT. DEENA'S CHARGER - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

The vessel jolts with a third hit. The engine WINDS down to silence. Lights go off. The charger slows to a stop, just short of the warp portal.

Deena opens a compartment and removes a small light. Switches it on. Unbuckles her seatbelt and turns in the seat to reach a panel in the back.

Using the light to show the way, Deena yanks several of the wires loose from their connections inside. She touches a red wire to a small box. SPARKS shoot outward.

INT. MERIMAC BRIDGE - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Captain Weisman smiles victoriously at Deena's stopped vessel standing before the warp portal.

CAPTAIN WEISMAN
I have you now.

INT. DEENA'S CHARGER - STOPPED - CONTINUOUS

The ship's lights suddenly come on. The engine ROARS to life. Deena drops down into her seat and fastens the strap over her. She grips the steering stick and presses the button on top.

INT. MERIMAC BRIDGE - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Captain Weisman's smile fades into a frown as he watches Deena's charger take off for the portal. On the verge of exploding, he turns to his main officers.

CAPTAIN WEISMAN

She can't do that!

OFFICER #1

Yes, sir... I mean no, sir.

CAPTAIN WEISMAN

Do something!

OFFICER #2

She's out of range for our torpedos.

Gritting his teeth, Captain Weisman can only watch as Deena's charger enters the warp portal.

PILOT (O.S.)

(filtered)

Charger 11 has entered the warp portal. Should we pursue?

CAPTAIN WEISMAN

No. Return immediately.

OFFICER #3

Sir, Admiral Tramin demands an update.

Captain Weisman looks ill.

CAPTAIN WEISMAN

I'll take it in my quarters.

Looking like a man taking his final walk to an execution, he leaves the bridge.

INT. MERIMAC - CAPTAIN WEISMAN'S QUARTERS

Extra nice for someone important. Large bed. Big screen monitor on the wall. Private bathroom. Plush carpet.