

Siege on Klatoonie

SAV Kordath Bleu
#13593

*AGV Nighthawk
Briefing Room
0500*

"Sir, we've dropped off the Commandant's team and have disengaged from the comm relay. Proceeding to next target," came the voice from the speaker on the conference table.

"Thank you, Commander," replied the Captain, sitting at the center of the long, rectangular table facing the only door to the room.

Before him stood a tall Human, with a slightly red tint to his otherwise fair skin. Broad shoulders and a proud bearing showed through as he stood tall and at ease, hands clasped behind his back as he waited.

"Did ya get some caf, Ernor? Bit early in the mornin' for me ta be callin' ya down, I know."

"I'm fine sir. Did some calisthenics shortly after you commed me."

Kordath stared at the man, he'd gone from dealing with a nervous and young Arcean not an hour ago, to this.

"On purpose?" was all he could think to say before continuing.
"Anyways, got a mission for ya, mate."

The Captain pushed across a datapad, and keyed the holo-projector set in the center of the table. A sphere appeared in shades of blue and white, before taking on more features that suggested it was a planet. It spun slowly in the display for a moment before zooming in on a continent set along the equator. Further enhancement showed an area nestled against the foothills of a mountain range.

"This is the S.C.E.P.T.E.R. trainin' facility on Klatoonie. Some crazy buggers decided to attack it as of last night. We don't got much intel on them, to tell tha truth. Somebody also hit the communications relay that lets us keep in touch with these guys."

"That's where you dispatched Mako and his troops, Sir?"

"Aye, their job is to get the comms back online. Lord Uji is tryin' to coordinate a defense, but it's hard goin' without the phones on, eh? I want you, Ernor, and a couple others to hit this base and reinforce 'em. Keep it from fallin' until more troops can get to ya, yeah?"

"I...see, Sir. Who..?"

"You'll be taking the Falleen and Kalon down with ya. Kalon will be flyin' the shuttle, and we're having to drop ya when we get in system. Got someplace else the *Hawk* has gotta get to still. We'll be comin' back ta help after the comms is online. Not lookin' for a miracle here, Ernor, just hold the bloody line."

"Shuttle. Sir, if they attacked the training base, don't they likely have naval assets in system?" Enordeth spoke slowly, wondering if Kordath simply had overlooked such a simple part of intelligence and mission planning.

"Uji's in system to, mate. *Darkest Night* should be able to cover you lad's insertion to the planet. Comms aren't what they should be, ya know? Not sure what they got in system, whose der, what not. We'll do a sensor sweep when we get there, but right now *this* is the plan, mate."

The Battelmaster nodded, "Well. This should be a good test of my talents, Sir."

"Sure, whatever floats yer boat, Ernor. Just don't get killed saving a bunch of trainees, eh? Somebody is hitting Galeres' assets, gonna have plenty more people for ya to go up against soon."

"Oh, I don't doubt it," the Human's grin sent a shiver down the Ryn's spine.

-x-

AGV Nighthawk

Hangar Bay

0520

Klatoonie System

"Final check is good, lights are green. Can't help but think we're a little light on manpower here, Ernordeth."

"Stow it, Kalon. This is what the Captain ordered; he might be inept at fighting but he is at least a bit clever. Sure there's a reason he's only sending us down first."

"Perhaps the Ryn thinks we'll do all the heavy lifting before he comes back," spoke Egregious, contempt in his voice.

"Could be," agreed Ernordeth, "or, we're just the best he's got for front line fighting. This mission isn't high priority to him, is part of it I think. He sent the Talons and both Bnar and Vol to get the communications back online, so that says a lot."

"Don't know why the Barabel and his creepy girl don't have to come along," muttered the Falleen.

"You want to take a shuttle ride down with Nath?" teased Kalon from the pilot seat. He was one of the few on board that enjoyed amicable relations with the lead interrogator.

"I'm fine," snarled Egregious, settling back into his seat and crossing his arms.

'Shuttle One, you are cleared for departure. Be aware: a Strike-class cruiser is holding orbit near your atmospheric entry point. The Darkest Night is prepped to provide cover fire but stay sharp.'

"Oh great," muttered Kalon, "Well, guys, looks like this is going to be one of those 'fun' flights."

"Fanfrickentastic."

"Oh lighten up, Egregious, it could be worse."

"How? How could this be worse?"

"The shuttle could be on fire!" piped up Kalon from the cockpit.

Ernor sent a little glare towards the fore of the shuttle, before pausing and shrugging at the Falleen.

"Oh, yeah. Feeling real good about today."

"Gods do you ever quit whining?"

"Oh shut up and fly the kriffing shuttle."

-x-

Ten minutes later and thirty seconds from atmospheric entry

"Oh kark oh kark oh kark," shouted out Kalon, jerking the flight stick hard port. Bright green turbolaser fire flashed past the cockpit's viewports.

"What the frak happened to that *covering fire!*?" screamed Egregious.

"It's not exactly foolproof! It doesn't work the same as on the bloody ground!"

"Would you shut the hell up and *FLY THE KARKING SHUTTLE!*?" shouted Ernordeth.

"SIR! YES SIR! FLYING THE KRIFING SHUTTLE! SIR!"

"Stow the sarcasm, it doesn't help any of us!"

"Yelling at the pilot is very helpful, Ernor!" screamed Kalon, pushing the yoke forward, diving towards the planet.

"Can we *please* just land this thing before we all die?"

"Working on it!"

-x-

Kalon sighed and wiped his brow with his sleeve, coming back damp with sweat. He had collapsed into his seat as soon as the landing gear touched down on the duractrete pad inside of the base. After getting past the cruiser's barrages he'd thought he was homefree to land. Then the anti aircraft fire came lancing up at him. Screaming

at his short range comms to find out why the training base was firing at him, he learned that the anti-air batteries were in the enemy's possession.

"So that blew"

'Alert! Nighthawk Shuttle! Evac now! Get out! Get out now!'

"Huh? Hey, Ernor, somebody is telling us to scuttle."

Egregious looked up in question, "Does anybody else hear a 'boom' sound?"

"Oh kark, out of the shuttle!"

"But..."

"No buts! Out!"

Ernordeth pulled Kalon out of the cockpit and shoved him towards the loading ramp, grabbing the Falleen on his way. With a push and a wave of Force energy he flung the two away from the shuttle, before diving himself. The booming sound intensified, before a ball of superheated plasma came slamming into the shuttle. It exploded in a shower of metal and fire, much to Kalon's dismay.

"Oh, poodoo. The Admiral is going to kill us."

"What about the Captain?" asked Egregious.

"What *about* the Captain?"

"Good point. What the hell was that?"

"Artillery," growled Ernordeth as he stood, dusting himself off and looking at the wreckage. Movement from his right, towards the main area of the base caught his attention. A soldier was leaning out from behind one of the buildings, waving his arms at the trio of Sith. Ernor pulled Kalon from the ground and pushed him towards the trooper, before turning to help Egregious.

Jogging to the soldier's position, they found a small cadre of troops and a man in a better cut uniform. A Colonel by the rank insignia

displayed, along with an impressive looking hat. Ernordeth deduced by such markings this must be the man in charge on the base. Or at least the highest ranked one still alive.

He stepped forward with a short bow, "Ernordeth Puer-Irae, of the *Nighthawk*, arriving with reinforcements, Colonel...?"

"Cardiin, welcome to Klatoonie TC-101, gentlemen. Sorry about your shuttle, seems like you're the only ones who got off in time," the man shook his head sadly.

"Oh yes, quite the tragedy," piped up Kalon before Ernor could reply, earning him a smack on the back of the head from Egregious.

"I'm afraid we're all that was sent, for now Colonel. I assure you that Egregious and I are up to the task until further assistance arrives."

"Yeah, hey, wait a second--"

"Quiet, you already got the shuttle slagged."

"That wasn't my kriffing fault!"

"Would you two just shut up for five karking minutes?" growled Ernor, glaring at his fellow crew mates. "They have artillery sighted on the airfield, I suspect?"

"Aye, they do. Must have spotters though, no way they could get a line of sight from where the artillery is installed."

"Installed?"

Cardiin looked uncomfortable for a brief moment, "You lads weren't fully briefed on our situation, I take it?"

"Primary communications got knocked out about the same time they hit your base. We've got a team working on it now, part of why there's only the three of us here. Can you give us the short version so I can determine how best to deploy?"

With a sigh the Colonel pulled a cigar from his uniform pocket, waiting while a subordinate officer rushed to light it before starting to speak.

"I say installed, because the artillery they're shelling us with is from the training range. It's on the end of the base that opens up to the plains. Anti-air batteries are out there as well, so that's been grand. There's a command bunker out that way; we use it for live fire exercises and the like."

The man blew out a plume of foul smelling smoke, and sighed again.

"Up that way there," he said, gesturing towards the foothills that lead into the mountains, above and behind the landing field, "we got a natural cave complex. Men use it to train on how to clear that sort of thing. Part of the reason we built the base here, just too good of an opportunity to pass up on. I got about a thousand recruits on this base, boys. Half of them were in those caves running drills when the enemy hit."

"They took the bunker and artillery first, knocked out our comms and turned the cannons on the hills. We've had some limited, short range communication with the men inside the caves, so they're still alive. But we can't get up there to dig them out, not while that artillery is ready to rain fire on us."

"You said they don't have line of sight on the airfield, what about the caves?" queried Ernor, mind turning options over and examining them.

"Shouldn't, no. They've got to have a spotter team somewhere above us. One of my bloody stupid new Captains sent a squad up that way to search for them and I was just in time to see them get fried by an artillery strike."

"New Captain?" This was Kalon, half paying attention as he scanned the hills for some sign of movement.

"I got half a dozen brand new Captains getting trained on this base. Partially by running the men through drills, partially by getting lessons from myself. Got a few more than that number of Lieutenants, two of which are veterans, one of them is a supply officer so he's nearly useless for teaching."

"Oh kark, didn't realize it'd gotten this bad after Korriban," muttered Egregious.

"Korriban, Slovent, every other blasted planet you lot fought those One Sith folks on. Every few months you'd pull another company from the PMC and send them off to reinforce. Most of them don't end up coming back, we're severely under strength. Luckily I've got about a dozen damn fine NCOs on base or this whole place would have been blown to hell within a few hours. Most of the Captains wanted to start hopping troops across the trench training area to hit the bunker. Put a stop to that before it could get out of hand, but the officers are getting antsy."

"The bunker was placed there to oversee that sort of training, wasn't it then?"

"Aye, it's got controls for all the live fire weapon systems. I can assure you they've turned off the safeties, we've had casualties. Whoever it is, they haven't pushed on the main base yet. Don't think they intend to unless they get reinforcements. Only time they really tried to hit anything with the artillery is when we started prepping a shuttle. Nearly lost a flight crew to that, did lose the damn shuttle."

"So what, they're just holed up and waiting? Grand." muttered Egregious.

"How many men would be needed to run that bunker?" asked Ernor, looking as if he was thinking hard on something.

"With the level and coordination of fire I've seen them put out? At least a dozen."

"So a group of spotters, maybe two but at least three is more likely, and at least a dozen, probably more like twenty or so in the bunker. I'd like to think that's all of them, but I somehow doubt it. Hrm. Kalon," spoke the Sith, turning to smile at the pilot.

"You want me to go find the blasted spotters, don't you?" sighed the man.

"Good man, get to it. Egregious and I are going to scout out the bunker approach and see if we can't find a better way across. We'll gather some first hand intel, if nothing else."

"Great, sure. I get burned to death by a ball of incandescent death hurled from two kilometers away, I'm blaming you." Kalon sighed and set off for the hills.

"Whatever, just scream if you get in trouble."

Ernordeth sighed and shook his head at the exchange, wondering how the Captain had expected them to be of any real help down here.

-x-

"Well. This isn't good."

"No poodoo. We try and get across this we'll be riddled, sabers or no."

"So, oh mighty leader, what's the plan?"

"Plan?"

"Yeah. You know, 'of-action'?"

Ernordeth sat in silence for a few moments. The two Arconans had found themselves a quiet spot in one of the camp's buildings that faced the mocked up trench lines. They could see the command bunker about half a kilometer away, squatting atop a slight hill. A few bodies could be seen just past the first trench line, tattered uniforms marking them cadets of the base.

"Our orders are to keep the base from falling. They're not attacking. So it's not going to fall."

"Resupply?"

"Ah, yeah," responded the Human with a grimace, "the anti-air does make that bit of a problem. Well if comms come back online, we can probably half the *Darkest Night* take care of that. Though I doubt Uji wants to blast the whole base to bits. Hmmm."

"There's gotta be a way to knock out the power, that way the troops can just sweep in and resecure, yeah?"

"Could be, but the Colonel would have likely said something if that was a real option."

Egregious looked grim, as if finally taking the situation seriously.

"Well. This isn't good."

-x-

'Why do I have to go up into the blasted mountains to find some bastards with a set of macrobionculars and too much time on their hands?'

Kalon continued to grumble internally as he ascended the hills, using the mathematics that came along with piloting to chart his course.

"Right, if the shot came from *that* way, and the shuttle was over *there*, then the spotters were probably...that way?" He looked around, wondering why the military had thought it was a good idea to build with its back against a crescent of foothills. This was going to take...for...ever...he felt a mental itch forming. Crouching behind some rocks the pilot closed his eyes and reached out with the Force.

"Oh, well. That simplifies things," he muttered, setting off again, saber hilt in hand.

-x-

'..repeat, this is the Darkest Night attempting to contact Nighthawk ground team, Ernordeth, respond. I repeat--'

"Is that the comms? The comms are back up?"

Ernor waved off the Falleen, fumbling with his comlink.

"This is Puer-Irae, *Darkest Night*, I guess the lines are back up?"

"Affirmative, Ernor, good to hear you're still alive down there. We've received confirmation that the other team from your ship did

manage to secure the primary relay. Obviously they got it working again," came Uji's voice, sounding serious yet relieved.

"Alive for now, yeah. The enemy isn't moving, Sir. They're just sitting on the artillery and triple A's. Not sure how to proceed, to be honest."

"Well until we manage to run this *Strike* cruiser off, I'm afraid you're pretty much on your own. I believe Captain Bleu is bringing the *Nighthawk* back to reinforce us, though, so..."

"So who knows when that'll be," sighed the Sith.

"Roger that. Keep your heads down, don't die. And don't blow up anything important, replacing the equipment will cost more than the blasted base is worth. That means do **not** blow up the anti-air, that's an order."

The comm clicked lightly as the transmission ended. Ernor and Egregious looked at one another, then out towards the bunker.

"Well, this isn't--"

"Shut up."

-x-

Kalon nudged one of the spotters in the ribs with his boot before deactivating the brilliant white blade of his saber. Whistling to himself he policed the bodies, finding a few packs of cigarettes and a comlink. Also a flask, which he tucked into the back pocket of his pants for later. Keying the comlink on he heard nothing but static, and shrugged to himself. His own comm started to chirp, causing him to jump in surprise, thinking for a moment that he'd missed one of the enemy.

Looking about in bashful silence, he pulled the comlink out. "This is Tscuyra, go ahead?"

"Kalon! You find them yet?"

"That's is an affirmative. Three dead spotters. I haven't sensed anything else in the area, so this is probably all of them. We get a plan of attack yet?"

"Not...quite. Comms are back up, Uji says not to blow up anything important."

"What, like my kriffing shuttle?" growled Kalon.

"Oh get over it!" came Egregious' voice, shouted in the background.

"ANYWAYS! If you're done playing hiker, come back down, we're on the far side of the camp with a line of sight on the bunker."

"Yeah, sure, roger that. Dicks."

-x-

Two Hours Later

"I'm bored." The Falleen sighed, repeating himself for the fifth time in the last twenty minutes.

"That's helpful. Come up with any ideas in your infinte boredom?"

"...no."

"Then get over it, I swear you whine more than the Ryn."

"At least he smells better," muttered Kalon.

"Well that's not hard," grumbled Egregious, staring out at the bunker. "I don't suck down a fifth of whiskey and a pack of smokes every day. Not to mention I bathe on the regular."

"At least the Captain comes up with ideas, even if they're insane half the time. Also inane, but still."

"That's helpful," mocked Kalon, throwing a ball he'd scrounged somewhere on his walk back to them. It bounced against the wall with a hollow thonk sound, which had been haunting Ernor for the last hour.

"I swear, I'm going to take that blasted ball, and--"

'Nighthawk ground team, please respond, Ernordeth please respond.'

"This is Ernor, please tell me there's been some kind of progress on your end, Uji. Because this speeder is stalled down here."

"Roger that, Ernor. First of all, Lord Kaeth has just been delivered to the *Darkest Night* via shuttlecraft."

"Hurrah? Was he missing?"

There followed a long pause, and the trio could just barely hear Uji mutter something about 'smacking the blasted Ryn.'

"Affirmative. But he's home now. One moment."

A shuffling could be heard on the comms, and then, "Ah, there we are, Puer-Irae, yes? This is Braecen, my but it's been sometime since I had to use one of these, can he hear me? Do I need to press down--no? Okay, fine."

"Ahem, as I was saying, good job down there! I see the base hasn't fallen, likely due to you lad's intervention, very good!"

"Easy to defend when they won't attack," muttered Kalon, shaking his head and chuckling to himself.

"Now if you are in position, the *Darkest Night* is capable of assisting you in an assault on the captured command bunker. I'm sure you three are more than capable of cleaning out the rabble within."

"Sir? How? Yes. Yes we are in position." Ernordeth glanced at his two fellows and shrugged helplessly. "Guess the waiting is over."

"Fantastic. Now don't go too soon, wouldn't want you to get caught in the light show."

"Wait, light show?" asked the Human, but the comm was silent. "Well, I...have no idea what he's planning on doing, but let's be ready for it."

"Be ready for what we don't know that he's going to do. This *must* be a military op."

"Oh just be ready to run, Egregious, it'll be alright. Lord Kaeth is said to be far more competent at this sort of thing than our CO."

"That's not hard," Kalon began to say, before pausing and turning pale. "Do you hear booming?"

"Oh kark, artillery incoming!"

"Not this time," said the Falleen, staring up into the sky.

"Oh, that light show."

Turbo laser fire rained down across the trench lines, throwing dirt and debris up, vaporizing corpses. Clouds of dust rose in it's wake as the barrage stopped.

"That's our cover! Go go go!"

-x-

Ten minutes later

"I cannot believe that worked so easily, or that we're both still alive!"

"Hey! I'm still here as well, di'kuts!"

"Nobody cares, Kalon, now let's go clean up and call in for an extract."

-x-

One hour, a round of refresher visits and a shuttle ride later

"Ah, good, everybody made it back in one piece, eh? Even Kalon?"

"Why is everyone surprised!?"

"Eh, calm it down mate," said Bleu, letting a grin show through. He sat again behind the conference table of the briefing room, eyes traveling over the members of the crew that he'd gathered.

"Arcean, ya got the comms back up, good on ya. Guessing the old men kept ya bored. Work off some stress, Mako?"

The Commandant glared at the Captain and went back to working on after action reports on his datapad.

"Aye, great to see you too. You lads, Ernor, Egregious, and even Kalon, helped keep the training camp together, that's good."

Ernor gave a little half bow, still unsure why they'd been sent down there in the first place. Kalon simply crossed his arms and stared at nothing, jaw clenched. The Falleen had found a beverage and was relaxing in one of the chairs, even though the Captain hadn't told anyone to sit.

Kord gave a little shrug, before nodding towards the Barabel in the corner. "Zakath and Nath...assisted me in rescuin' the Quaestor, Lord Kaeth is with Uji all safe like now."

"Assisted you? We gave him a ride, the man could have walked out whenever he pleased."

"Aye, but we were there when he needed the ride, Zakath! So yeah, three missions, three jobs done, good on ya lads. Now I'd like ta tell ya that we're putting inta Port Ol'val for some rest and re-lax-ation."

The gathered members of the crew perked up, turning to look at the Captain. He was smiling at them. The smile dropped, and the Ryn looked more serious than most of them were accustomed to.

"That ain't happening, not yet. Kaeth is gonna hit these buggers back, promise ya. Nath has got one of 'em down in her special room, under her tender care. Hopefully he'll be nice enough to tell us what we wants to know, but eh, who knows?"

Egregious raised a hand.

"Aye?"

"Just curious, what happened to the enemy ship in orbit, the cruiser?"

Rulvak sighed and ran a hand over his face, even as Kordath started laughing. "Tell him, Commander, eh? Comeon!"

"After we dispatched the shuttle. Our one, remaining shuttle," the Sephi turned to glare at Kalon, who threw his hands up in exasperation, "the Captain asked for an update. When he determined the *Strike* cruiser was impeding 'his boys down on the dirt', he decided to deal with it. In his own, unusual fashion."

The Sephi let out another sigh, "Captain Bleu proceeded to get on the comms, on an open channel, and insulted the enemy ship's Captain. He said some rather disparaging remarks concerning his parentage and any possible female siblings. I will say that I found the tirade rather...creative, if crude and unsuitable for ship operations."

"Worked, eh?"

"Yes. Yes it did. The Cruiser chased us almost out of the system, at which point the *Darkest Night* was able to assist the ground forces. So. That happened."

"Great, great job all around, mates," said the Ryn, nodding in approval. "Now I dunno what's gonna happen next, but I'm sure we'll be fightin' some poor buggers who decided to poke us. We don't like gettin' poked, not like this, anyways, eh? So. Get some bloody rest, it's been a long day, we're all tired, me thinks."

Kordath stood, taking a rare moment to actually straighten up and salute his crew. They snapped to attention after a few moments of surprise, most of them did anyways, and returned it. It had been a hell of a long day.

--Finished. There.

--Yes all three are connected, if you read them A-B-C, it makes more sense.

--If you didn't, it should still make sense, but eh.

--Don't count these bits in the word count, okay?
--Or do, I don't work for the Voice.