Disciples of Baas Headquarters Building

Zumbro District

H+0.1

The Disciples of Baas were assembled in the top floor meeting room. The meeting had been called to discuss what to do about the missing citizens of the Zumbro District and what to do to curb the disappearances.

“We will stake out the hospital,” Ranger Lu’aisha Gresee stated, “Len will place his troopers around the perimeter of the hospital…”

She stopped, a small light was flashing on the small control panel at her place on the table.

*The master distress signal*, Gresee thought, *this can’t be good*.

Suddenly the same light began blinking on every member’s console. The holographic display switched from showing the hospital to showing data from a satellite. A massive fleet had appeared in orbit of New Tython and the *Triumph* and *Last Stand* were now debris falling towards the surface mixed with escape pods and dropships.

“The Force,” Dan Stephens breathed, “Debris is headed our way.”

“Len take the garrison and set up a defensive perimeter around the building and any wreckage or pods.” Gresee commanded.

The first bits of wreckage became visible high above the far end of the district. A second light activated, “the evacuate all” signal.

The Battle Team Leader picked up the pace, “The rest of you will assist me with collecting the wounded and bringing them here. This building will be our fallback point and the last to be extracted. The rest of you will begin the evacuation. Set up pick-up points around the city for anyone who wants out. No more than three points and the hospital. Use your locaters on encrypted frequency 2 for the transports. Go!”

Everyone scrambled out of their chairs, running for the stairs. There was no more time for words, this was time for action.

Arriving in the Barracks, Len didn’t even bother pulling off his KUDF dress uniform as he put his armor on. A Mon Calamari woman already in her armor stood next to him as he suited up.

“I already send a squad to form a perimeter around the complex sir. Any further orders?” Sergeant First Class Dembaline asked. There was slight panic in her voice.

“First and Second Squads are headed for the wreckage hurtling towards us,” Len slapped the last of the armor on his body walking towards the exit, “This is the line, you cannot fail.”

The Platoon Sergeant nodded, “We will not fail Zumbro sir.”

Len ran out the door indicating to two squads to follow him towards the main atrium.

“There is a large chunk of the *Endor’s Triumph* headed for the Central Market area,” Staff Sergeant No’rr Dza’dren, the Bothan Squad Leader of Second Squad indicated on his datapad.

“Comscan detects about 100 survivors onboard that one second,” the Bothan sighed.

Stunned at the small number, “Forward the location to the pilots. We’ll divide and conquer.”

As the squads descended the atrium stair case, a huge fire ball passed overhead, the interior of the atrium cast in hues of red and orange. The flame ball impacted a quarter mile from headquarters shaking the building to its foundation. The hit leveled two structures instantly and starting fires in many of the surrounding buildings.

Sa who was passing down the staircase at the same time as Len lowered his head, “Don’t bother Captain. They are already dead.”

The Kel Dor placed his definitively non-human hand on the Chiss’ shoulder, “There was nothing you could have done my friend. Go, set up the perimeter you’re assigned to, we will help the survivors here.”

Len took a deep breath and shouted to his troops, “Keep moving, get to the Gunships, double time! Your Squad Leaders will inform you of the mission!”

The two lines of troopers scrambled past other Battle Team support personnel, more organized than the others, crossing over the gold emblazoned seal of the Disciples on the lobby floor. As the troopers crossed the threshold they donned their combat helmets ready for action.

Len typed on his datapad, *Central Market area, and watch for fighters*, and hit send. Instantly, the pilots of the old LAAT/i Gunships began preflight checks of their craft and warmed up the engines. Typing a brief operations order, Len outlined that the two squads were to head towards the large piece of wreckage, defend the survivors and provide aid to anyone who needed it. The first squad on the ground was to set up a perimeter and the second would clear the wreckage of survivors.

Stepping outside, it was like hell had been unleashed on the District. The fire from the wreckage was spreading rapidly and producing lots of heat, which hit Len immediately as he broke into a sprint to get onboard the LAAT/i Gunship named *Serenity*, scenes of a beach and a palm tree were painted on each side. An irony that did not go unnoticed by the Captain.

As the craft rose, the devastation was even clearer. Smaller debris had fallen around the District, sparking small fires wherever they landed. The large impact, which only crushed two buildings, had turned to four. They were like sandcastles unable to flee the incoming tide, but this tide was one of fire and building debris. The small pocket fires were rapidly spreading with no small part from winds coming off the still pristine mountains.

*We’ll never escape this*, Len thought.

Zumbro District

Central Market District

H+0.5

Len clipped into the decent cable and slid down the line from the gunship to the chaos below. The most prominent feature before him was the burning hulk of a lower-forward section of the VSD *Endor’s Triumph*, though the triangular shape was still obvious. To the left was the Frisky Dewback, who’s door was blown in and the back of the shop had been blown out by an escape pod that had failed to launch until the section had crashed. Broken bodies were strewn everywhere, some in uniforms or battle gear, others simple Harkonan traditional dress. Most were being tended to by Medics from the hospital and Fire Service, some were covered by simple white sheets that had been blackened by smoke and ash.

As he unclipped from the line moments before his feet touched ground, making sure to bend his knees as he landed. Letting go of the last connection to the gunship, he brought his A280 blaster rifle to the high ready, scanning the area for any sign of the Iron Legion Forces almost certainly inbound to “cleanse” the planet as the Grand Master would call it. Taking his place next to Second Squad’s leader in the formation, he dropped his rifle to the low ready, but kept up the scanning.

“Sir,” Sergeant Valton the human male squad leader of First Squad called through the comms system.

“Go ahead, Gonar,” Len replied still absorbing the devastation.

“No sign of survivors yet,” the young man reported, “We are holding outside of the wreckage.”

“Understood. We are,” Len looked at his datapad, “3 minutes out. The smoke seems to be increasing from the buildings around us.”

“We noticed that too, sir. I already contacted local authorities,” There was a pause, “Savant Ool has arrived sir, I informed him of your ETA.”

Len smiled, “Good work Sergeant.”

*Let’s hope it counts for something*, Len thought but didn’t say.

As Second Squad approached the wreck, they could see survivors helping other survivors out of the twisted metal. Their uniforms and equipment torn and tarnished from the crash. Many were bleeding or bruised. The squad passed through the line First Squad had made to help bring the wounded over to safe ground while they waited for the gunships to land.

“Start performing triage on the wounded who are already outside,” Len ordered, “Valton, Dza’dren, come with me and Savant Ool to look for survivors.”

1st Armored Assault Column Headquarters

H+0.6

In the 36 minutes since the attack had begun, the 1stAAC Command Center became abuzz with activity. Red lights flashed as many technicians of the different races that made up the KUDF rushed to try and assess the situation before it became worse.

“Sir,” a corporal called out to the duty officer, “Captain Iode confirms that his team is on site at the *Triumph* crash site.

The young Major in charge of that section of New Tython nodded, “Very well. Send what reinforcements we can spare to a…”

“SIR, high energy discharge detected from the nearest capital ship!”

“Sir, I confirm. Large energy object approaching…Our headquarters!”

The Major drew breath to issue an order, but it never came.

Wreck of the VSD *Endor’s Triumph*

Central Market Area, Zumbro District, New Tython

H+0.6

Walking slowly down the hall, Len used his hand torch to light up the darkened corridor. It was quiet in the wreck, quieter than he anticipated. The halls were clear, mostly due to the decompression, leaving a creepy clean appearance to the interior. Everything was shifted 90 degrees.

About 45 meters from the hole he had picked to go down, Len heard someone coming. Drawing his pistol from its thigh holster, he placed his flashlight hand’s wrist under the grip. Slowing his breathing, he clicked the light off.

From the darkness, “Courage! Courage!”

“Strength,” Len finished the challenge password combination clicking the light back on and holstering the pistol.

“Thank the Force,” the wounded Twilek became visible staggering towards the Captain, “My friend, she’s stuck in an access conduit. She can’t move either leg.”

“Take me to her,” Len commanded.

The Twilek gestured for Len to follow him further into the wreck and both took off at a jog down the dark corridor.

Reaching an intersection, the Twilek stopped, “Here. The access conduit below us.”

Taking a knee, Len opened the hatch and saw an unusual scene before him. Her one leg was stuck in a fissure created by the failing deck plating, and from the way her other leg was twisted, it appeared to be broken.

“Technician?” the Captain called into the hatch as he got a heavy duty knife from his lower leg pocket, “I’m here to help you get out. What’s your name?”

“Technician Third Grade Lianna Holt, engineering department” the structure creaked, “Who are you?”

“Captain Len Iode, 1st Air Assault Battalion. Your friend here helped me find you.”

“Who?” the perplexed reply came.

“Your friend,” Len chuckled, “You know I didn’t ask you name…”

The man was gone, disappeared into the dust now hanging in the corridor. Looking down the technician was gone as well, the only thing that was left was blood on the deck where it was now obvious she had been sucked out.

Len hung his head, a feeling of failure overwhelmed him, centering himself he took a breath and whispered a short prayer in his native tongue for the two dead crew. Taking one last look he checked his scanner dummy corded to his shoulder armor.

*No life signs*, he thought.

The captain drew his rifle and carried it at the low ready jumping off the ledge to make the short drop and continue down the hallway. After a walking another 40 meters, he received a page on his comlink

“Len,” the familiar voice of Sa entered his ear, “We aren’t detecting any more vital signs in your area. Head back and wait for pick up.”

The Chiss turned around, “Roger that. How many runs have the gunships made?”

The Kel Dor smiled inside his mask, “Several, at least four or five. Evacuating civilians now. We haven’t been able to raise 1AAC command in a while though. We need to return to HQ before we head out again.”

Len reached the brief climb, “Be right there.”

Landing Zone Kappa

Central Market, Zumbro District, New Tython

H+0.8

Len emerged from the twisted hole in the side of the wreck. Dropping down the half meter to the duracrete road. He walked over to Sa who had his hood drawn up over his head.

“The gunship should be here soon,” Sa reported.

Len nodded “The sooner the better, we are really open out here.”

A loud crack overwhelmed everyone, knocking some people off their feet.

Slightly dazed Len tried his best to shrug off the noise and heard a crackle from his comlink.

“Captain, this is the *Serenity*,” The pilot called.

“Go ahead.”

“I have a huge light emanating from the direction of Seher. It doesn’t look good sir,” the pilot replied.

“No contact with Command?” Len asked Sa who shook his head, “Keep landing *Serenity*.”

“Roger that, sir.”

A few moments later, the two gunships landed. Troopers helped load civilians to capacity and then crammed themselves onto the gunships, which took off very slowly due to the extra weight. Through the window slats, Len saw the light off in the distance. Seher wasn’t just burning. It was gone, lost in a river of magma.

*My Go…..*

Len’s thoughts were cut off by screaming hot plasma cracking though the air and crashing into the wreckage. The concussion tossed the craft like a toy in a bathtub, throwing its passengers everywhere, which made the pilot’s job harder as their weight shifted. After losing a couple hundred feet in altitude, the pilot regained control.

“Everyone okay down there?” He called through the internal comms.

“I think so,” Len replied looking out the window.

Outside another round of shots crashed into the far end of the District. Turning the surface into molten slag.

He could see in the distance two GR-75 transports heading off world and into orbit, away from the Grand Master’s forces.

*Hope*, Len smiled.

Disciples of Baas Headquarters

Just outside of the landing zone

H+1.0

Ranger Lu’aisha Gresee, her medical staff, and the other Battle Team Members had begun transporting the worst wounded and those who could walk from the headquarters to the GR-75 transport callsign *Echo*. As she brought up the rear, monitoring the patient’s status. The LAAT/i gunships carrying Len, his troopers, and the last civilians landed in the open area in between the transport and the headquarters building. Once the doors opened, troopers began helping civilians off and leading them towards the transports. Len jogged to catch up to his Battle Team leader, who was now running towards a patient.

“Gresee!” Len shouted.

He caught up with the woman, who was stabilizing a Harkonan.

“Len, hold this,” she commanded pointing to a piece of gauze covering a shrapnel wound, “What’s going on? I can’t raise anyone.”

Len shook his head, “Seher is gone. No response from the Praxum or KUDF HQ. We are lucky to have escaped the area when we did, they’re glassing the planet.”

“This is unbelievable,” the woman replied sadly with a hint of anger and disgust, “To think a person could willingly order this level of destruction on innocents, INNOCENTS! It’s, IT’S…”

“Sickening,” Len finished, “Thank the Force Legion troopers haven’t made landfall.”

Gresee calmly kept working on the Harkonan, “That’s a good thing. That means we can evacu…..”

A large explosion tore through the air as three bolts of hot plasma seared through the air, slamming into the Disciples Headquarters, instantly incinerating the structure in its path and those beings in the atrium. Troopers dove to the ground in the last second before the explosion. Gurneys were knocked over as troopers, medics, doctors, and nurses tried their best to protect the wounded. Len and Gresee both pulled the patient down, covering his face and theirs from the shards of glass and building that were flying at incredible speeds away from the now ruined headquarters.

A deafening silence followed for what seemed like an eternity.

Ruins of the Disciples of Baas Headquarters

Zumbro District, New Tython

H+1.1

Dazed, Len stood up, helping Gresee lift the Harkonan back to his stretcher.

Regaining his hearing, he heard moans and screams.

“First and Second Squads!” He shouted into his commlink, “Go check on the headquarters!”

He looked at the smoking crater, “How many were in there?”

“I…I’m not sure,” Gresee was still a bit to stunned. Regaining her composure, “Fifty…There were fifty wounded, all of Third Squad, and 5 medical staff.”

Len nodded, “If they’re alive we’ll find them.”

Running to join his troopers, Len approached the maw where the structure stood. Sergeant Valton walked up next to him.

“No chance sir, the rounds hit home.”

Greif swelled inside of Len, Dembaline had been a close friend and had even helped form the Air Assault concept. Now here and 64 others were dead, vaporized in an instant by a madman who sought to eliminate those who he didn’t like.

Grabbing the nearest communications specialist, Len ordered a message directly to up the chain to the House Summit on Gresee’s behalf:

*Disciples of Baas HQ destroyed, STOP. Confirmed orbital bombardment, STOP. 65+ Casualties, STOP.*

Moments later a reply came:

*Three transports from Zumbro survived, STOP. Fourth shot down, STOP. No survivors, STOP. Last transport available is* Echo*, STOP. CONFIRMED GROUND FORCES IN YOUR AREA, STOP.*

Len called out to his surviving squad leaders to form up on him.

“Boys, they have made landfall. Probably to sweep for us, set your squads up to defend the transport as it preps for take-off. We hold until they are ready to go and then fall back.”

“Sir with all due respect, this is our home. We will defend you all to our last breaths if we have to…”

Len lost control, “NO, I WILL NOT HAVE YOU NEEDLESSLY SACRIFICE YOURSELVES! You will follow your DAMN ORDERS! We have lost enough today.”

Three more green bolts screamed through the now dusky sky crashing into more buildings around the district. The whole area was now ablaze around the former HQ compound. The glassing of the Zumbro District had truly begun.

Len recomposed himself, “Kill all the Grand Master’s soldiers you can. Using bounding cover to fall back to the transport when you make contact. Make them pay for what they did to Third Squad you’re your Platoon Sergeant.”

Both men nodded.

Staff Sergeant Dza’dren set his heavy weapons troopers in the widest fields of fire positions possible, allowing his men to fully use their heavy blasters. Sergeant Valton set his men in between, ready to cover Second Squad when they fell back. Everyman had a least a portion of the marble base that was left from the bombardment to protect them and hide them.

The first unit of Legion Troopers marched directly into the sights of the waiting KUDF who had taken up position overlooking the crater and using the remnants of the headquarters as cover. The plastoid armor of the Legion gleamed fires of the district as it was torn apart by heavy blaster fire from No’rr’s entrenched heavy weapons. The second squad Legion troopers rushed in attempting to flank the heavy weapons squad, but were ambushed again by First Squad lead by Len, who personally took out three of the 12 troopers will well placed shots from his A280.

During that fight, Second Squad retreated to some light cover by the now derelict LAAT/i gunships. Once in place, First squad fell back further heading straight for the transport that now carried the remaining wounded and anyone else who wanted to escape. Stopping short of the ramp and setting up good fields of fire, Len ordered Second Squad to catch up, but a battalion of Legion troops crested the top of the crater. The whole battalion charged the LAAT/is all at once, overwhelming the outnumbered Second Squad. One by one, the troopers fell. First Squad tried to pick off the troopers from their position, but only killed a few. As Dza’dren was pummeled by a riot baton wielding trooper, he let a grenade roll into one of the transports.

The explosion threw any Legion troopers who weren’t caught in the fireball back in piles. It knocked the wind out of First Squad, who was now withdrawing to the safety of the loading area.

The transport took off and the true damage to New Tython could be seen. Deep cuts in the crust could be seen in the major cities and Districts. Len and his team watched from the boarding ramp, seeing the fires, explosions, and more orbital bombardments fall into the Zumbro District until they reached 800 meters and the ramp was closed.

As they walked to the makeshift quarters, the only survivors of the Air Assault Battalion breathed a sigh of relief but also one of guilt.

*We made it.*

*They made it.*

*At what cost.*

*Who will pay?*

Transport *Echo*

En route to CLASSIFIED

Battle Team’s Mess

H+24.0

The Transport was so full of refugees that sleeping in hallways had become mandatory. The remaining 10 KUDF troopers and the Disciples of Baas were now the law and order on the transport. Several fights had broken out, but thankfully none had actually become serious.

After a disagreement between a Mon Calamari and Harkonan business men had been settled, Len went forward to the KUDF/DoB mess to get some caff. The “mess” was truly that. It was a converted portion of the main mess hall that had been blocked off with plastoid pieces. The room doubled as a briefing room and if necessary a courtroom. Len sipped his caff and reflected on the last day, in that time he had lost two squads and essentially a whole district of people the KUDF and the Battle Team had been sworn to protect. Now there was this, life aboard a transport until a new home could be found.

*Hell of a way to start a career*, Len thought, *Maybe I should start expanding my knowledge*.