*Assault Formation 7: A Painful Lesson*

*Furios Morega*

The sun shone brightly across the plains of Aliso. A strong, salty breeze blew in from the sea several clicks to the east, moving the grass in rippling green waves.  Dark clouds rumbled across the horizon, heralding its slow progress to the mainland.  At the base of the massive hill, several black figures stood clustered together in a defensive formation.  At their head stood the imposing figure of Furios Morega, the Quaestor of House Karness Muur and the only Force-user among the group.  At his side stood the Sergeant of Lamda sixteen, the one of his personally trained Spec-Ops units that held the hill along with five infantry squads of the Ascendant Legion. The fourteen fully-armored men before them were the Sith’s newest trainees, and although they followed orders, they were still lacking in combat capabilities.  Even worse, they sometimes hesitated when orders seemed particularly gruesome or difficult.  Today was about breaking that.

“Lamda Nineteen!” the Epicanthix shouted over the wind.  “Our objective is to take that hill!”  He pointed back and up for emphasis.  “Follow orders without hesitation and we will be victorious.  Fail to do so, and there will be defeat.  The only rewards for such failure are pain and death, as it is in real combat.”

“Break into two groups,” Lamda Sixteen-One ordered.  “Assault Formation Seven!”

The cluster of men dispersed and organized, forming a pair of black chevrons on the green landscape.  Each formation followed a leader, Furios to the left and Lamda to the right, flanking the fortified hill.  Wielding the greatest available defense, the Battlelord charged first, leading his half up against the main defensive position.  The men above opened fire.  Blue bolts hailed upon them, crackling with ionized energy designed to stun the training armor down to the limb.  The Obelisk leader drew his saber, deflecting several of the bolts back up to the barriers, some connecting and others dissipating into the air above.  The troops behind him weaved in for cover and out to fire, maintaining their chevron shape.  The cannon charged up, harnessing a mass of the same stun energy.

“Cannon!” yelled the Epicanthix.  The chevron split into two columns just as the charged mass fired.  It landed between the ranks, blasting clumps of dirt and grass down the slope.  The chevron reformed, unaffected by the immobilizing blast.  The group covered several more meters before repeating the motion.  Moments later, Furios’ half of Lamda Nineteen reached the pair of barricades.  Three troops charged the one on the right, grabbing it from the bottom and forcing it onto its back.  Their Force user commander did the same to the left, augmenting his muscles with Force-fueled strength.

Meanwhile, Lamda Sixteen-One had led his half of the unit up the opposite side of the hill.  His own troops formed the resistance, firing their stun rounds with normally deadly precision.  They were reduced to pistols to compensate, but their aim was true.  Two had been struck during the charge, one lay on the ground, fully stunned in the chest while the other struggled with a dead arm.  One couldn’t truly blame them with how he knew his soldiers but such losses were unacceptable to the Right Wing of Dread.  There would be a lesson, he knew it.

As both teams pushed in, the sound of infantry groaning in and yelling in pain could be heard and the sound of blaster bolts soon died out.  With the blue stun saber in his hands, the training group had only two additional “casualties” on the ground.  But despite their efforts, most of Lamda Sixteen was still standing and the cannon had retrained to defend within the barrier. The newer Spec Ops unit began to close in around their predecessors but before they could end the exercise, the trapped men attacked, charging their foes with their sidearms holstered.  Some of them managed to disarm Lamda Nineteen’s men while others ended up in hand-to-hand engagements.  Furios and Sixteen-One stood back, allowing the men to be tested against the finished product.  Within moments, most of Lamda Nineteen was stunned or incapacitated.

The Quaestor frowned as his new men failed the exercise.  He looked over each member of his training unit before his eyes stopped on one in particular.  Lamda Sixteen-Eight was probably the most massive hulk Furios had ever seen in trooper armor and pressed under the beast was one of his trainees, arm pulled behind his back in a lock just above the knee on his spine.  The Sith approached, training saber in hand.  As he got nearer he saw that the pinned man had been reaching for the base of the cannon where one of the stun detonation packs had been successfully placed but not armed.  In the chaos, it seemed only he’d had the level head required to try and take out the most threatening armament.

“What is your designation, soldier?” Furios demanded from his man.

“Lamda Nineteen-Three, Commander,” he responded, a hint of pain i n his voice.

“What is keeping you from your objective?!”

“I’m pinned, Commander,” Three answered.  “He has my arm.”

Sixteen-Eight’s leverage was perfect.  The trainee couldn’t reach any further because his body was held back by the arm’s placement.  Further attempt to move forward was simply too painful.

“Then dislocate it,” the Obelisk said coolly.  Almost as a courtesy, the massive Plagueian operative tightened his grip, making sure the man beneath him wouldn’t have to struggle with the pop and complicate the injury.  He grunted in pain, trying hard to push past it.  He had to get closer.  Furios sighed and redrew his training saber.

“Dislocate it now,” he commanded, enunciating each syllable clearly.  He held the saber over the man’s back, aiming it for the heart.  “I will impale you with this training blade.  It will not melt through you like normal.  It will crush its way through, a painful death.”  The struggling grunts became short shouts as he tried harder to get his hands to the detonation pack.  His trainer started counting down.

“Five… Four...” he began.

“Three… Two....” three struggling continued.

“One!” Lamda Nineteen-Three roared in pain with his final exertion as the blunted weapon penetrated his abdomen.  The blade withdrew, leaving a gaping hole below its intended target.  His free hand had reached the explosive device but the soldier had passed out before setting it off.  His shoulder was dislocated as ordered.

“Medic!” Furios shouted once.  All three scrambled to help the wounded soldier as their Sith commander stormed off, brooding with discontent.