



SUBMITTED IN ENTRY TO GJW XII COMPETITION -
MULTI-OBJECTIVE PROMPT

Braga

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Clan Scholae Palatinae

NOTE: Caleb Wild'en is an official alt character of Mune Cinteroph, used with
permission

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Prologue

The Braga was the strongest ship in the battle. With power that dwarfed almost anything their opponents possessed, the cruiser was symbolic of the technological prowess of the collective, unstoppable, impenetrable. ‘Captain’ Chelsie Crimson, encased in her signature black and crimson armour, stood proudly on bridge, honoured with captaincy of the Braga, a natural leader and veteran of many battles. With the high level of automation provided by the Technocrat’s guild, captaining the Braga required very little in the way of actual piloting skill or ship knowledge, paving the way for inspiring war heroes such as Captain Crimson to take direct command, earning the unwavering loyalty of the marines and pilots on board.

However, despite having the enemy outgunned and outclassed in a military sense, Battle Group Abellio were not having everything their own way. Followers of the Force, she began to realise, were prone to acts of insanity that resulted in an unpredictable style, confounded by the fact that the so called ‘Brotherhood’ seemed to be comprised of many splinter groups that never talked to each other.

‘Message coming in!’ said a voice to her right hand side. Her executive officer, Emery Rose, a diminutive ruby-skinned Zabrak, one of the greatest pilots in the known galaxy and excellent naval tactician, led the Battle Group’s starfighter contingent. ‘It’s from Lieutenant Reckra, our inside man on the ISN Sidious.’

‘What is it?’ Captain Crimson responded, her feigned interest was clear for all to see. Reckra’s inside knowledge had thus far not had the desired effect. While they could predict the movements of Clan Scholae Palatinae it became apparent that the Clan had just as much knowledge of the other Clans as the Collective did, and using the movements of the Imperial Scholae Navy to infer what the other clans might be doing was impossible.

‘He’s found a potential defector, a colonel, Zentru’la. Seems like a big deal, he was forced into the Imperial Scholae Army when they invaded his homeworld, Judecca.’

‘That was the planet that got destroyed right?’

Rose nodded to affirm. ‘He has good reason to hate Force users. One group conquered and enslaved his homeworld, then another group blew it up. According to Reckra he can board using his own YT-2000 Freighter, the Origin.’

1 Approach

Only Reckla and three soldiers hand-picked by Colonel Zentru'la were permitted to join him aboard the Origin. A huge, powerful frame, the twi'lea, commanding officer of the 1st Imperial Scholae Regiment, carried heavy weapons, a huge repeating blaster rifle and a grenade launcher, with ease. A Sephi, Lieutenant Colonel Caleb Wild'en, was his executive officer and right hand, a slugthrower expert and talented mechanic armed with two blaster pistols and an electrosword. The fourth member on board was a foreign human soldier from the Nayaman-Auxillary second army, a mercenary group hired by Empress Elinacia Rei to fight the Collective. Almost as strong as Zentru'la, Daehun was dedicated martial artist, preferring the art of dual wielding curved swords over rifles. Lamar was a talented explosives technician, a human with a lean, wiry build and long hair that had begun to turn grey as he approached his elderly years. His closest friend for over four decades, from before the Scholae occupation of Ohmen, Zentru'la trusted Lamar with his life.

The twi'lek took the controls, besides Reckla, a silver-tongued charismatic young human agent of Imperial Scholae Intelligence, as quick with a knife as he was worth words. Zentru'la, approaching his late fifties and more fond of a straight fight than dealing with lies and intrigue, was apprehensive about the true motives of the young man, but he was the only choice they had.

The transponder codes were programmed in, sent over secure channels from the Braga. Both the Collective and Imperial Scholae Navy forces would identify the Origin as an allied ship for a very brief time period. Aware that time period had almost elapsed, Zentru'la slammed the throttle to the maximum, escaping the hangar of the Sidious as quick as he possibly could.

The desert planet of Nancora rotated slowly in the background as Zentru'la guided his ship away from the battle to avoid cross-fire from an exchange between the Sidious and the Braga. The power of the Braga was terrifying, an unusual beam laser of the kind he had never seen before threatened to slice the Star Destroyer in two, and an advanced shielding system made the prototype weapon appeared impervious to anything the Imperial Scholae Navy could throw at it.

Zentru'la circled the battlefield as wide as possible at the freighter's top speed along a simple flight path. The transponder codes were sufficient to avoid fire from either side,

but the less unwanted suspicion drawn towards their ship the better. As the hangar of the Braga began to creep into sight, Zentru'la turned back to his team.

‘Remember, Reckla will do the talking,’ he said in an authoritative tone, emphasising the importance of that part of the plan. ‘They’re expecting willing defectors and we will play the part. We need to gain their trust until we can reach the beam laser power generator. Lamar will slip away, plant the explosives, we regroup and we get the fwec out of there. We detonate the bomb at a safe distance. For the Empire!’

‘For the Empire’ was repeated by Caleb, Lamar and Reckla, less vigorously by Daehun, who was mostly there for the money the Empress was offering him and the glory of the battle itself. Zentru'la guided the Inheritance into the Braga's hanger for a clean, smooth landing.

2 Landing

Inside the Braga felt like a step a thousand years into the future. The technocrats had spared no expense in modifying every inch of the ship for increased speed and efficiency. Zentru'la signalled Reckla to disembark first, then followed him alongside Daehun, Lamar and Caleb.

As the infiltration team left Zentru'la's ship they were immediately met by a security force of 5 overly large battledroids, hulking masses of durasteel, carrying heavy blaster rifles. ‘Welcome back Reckla,’ said a coarse voice that didn't sound entirely robotic. ‘We were only expecting the twi'lek. Who are the others?’

‘Those aren't droids. That's a human!’ Caleb whispered to the ear of Zentru'la. The armour looked so heavy the average human wouldn't even be able to carry it. Daehun made a *hmp* noise beside him, unimpressed, wanting to test his strength against the man.

‘Friends of the Colonel,’ Reckla responded to the guard. ‘He has a lot of influence over the Scholae forces and brought more defectors with him. Two of Scholae's best warriors,’ he gestured at Caleb and Daehun. ‘And an explosives technician.’

‘Good,’ said an emotionless voice. ‘Captain Crimson will be pleased. Come with us.’ Reckla gave a reassuring nod to the rest of the team to follow the guards into the Braga. As they passed collective naval personnel, Zentru'la couldn't help but notice the strange

myriad of cybernetic enhancements the men onboard had. Some with replacement eyes, upgraded limbs, additional limbs, it was as if they made it up as they went along. As they passed through a large automatic door nobody but Caleb even noticed Lamar, at the back of the crowd activate a holoshroud device, his appearance taking on the form of a collective technician as his diminutive frame slipped away from the guards' attention.

3 Lamar

Everything had gone according to plan but Lamar felt a shiver run up his spine as he walked through the corridors of the Braga, alone and surrounded by enemies, protected only by his holographic disguise and a small pistol at his hip. On his other hip he carried a small pouch containing an experimental explosive containing as much destructive power as Scholae's best minds could fit in a small package. Zentru'la had told him that it was designed by the Empress, but he expected he was just showing off.

Lamar made no eye contact with anyone as he moved through the ship. Following a blueprint of the Braga on his heads-up-display, he made his way in the direction of his target, the experimental beam laser. There appeared to be little security en route, which did little to clear his mind. Despite a distinguished service record as an explosives technician in the Imperial Scholae Army, Lamar had never faced a task of this magnitude, so deep in the territory of an enemy that had them outnumbered and outgunned.

The power generator was a strange device unlike anything Lamar had ever seen before. A glass tube that ran from ceiling to floor pulsed violently with crimson plasma, illuminating the room in a red glow.

'Hey!' Lamar's attention immediately snapped to his right hand side. 'Shouldn't you be doing something useful! Lamar tried to stop himself from seeming too relieved that the supervisor's command wasn't a call to raise the alarm.

'On it boss!' Lamar responded walking purposefully out of sight, looking for something that he could genuinely work on to keep the disguise going for long enough until he got a call from Zentru'la.

4 Captain Crimson

Reckla and the security guards led Zentru'la, Caleb and Daehun to the bridge. The bridge, Caleb's sharp eyes noticed, was much quieter than most military ships he had been on, most of the tasks that would be accomplished by the crew had been automated by the technocrats, and the fighter pilots were engaged in the space battle outside. It was obvious who the captain was. Crimson stood tall, arms folded, in her unique red and black armour. Reckla jogged away from the group to Crimson. 'These are the Scholae defectors, Captain.'

'Good work Reckla,' Crimson acknowledged before turning her attention to the Scholae men. She walked towards them, blaster rifle in hand, with an authority about her that would have been unnerving to those with a weaker resolve. 'I've heard a lot about you from our mutual friend, Colonel. They say you're loyal as a dog towards the Empress. And now you want to switch sides?'

There was a tone of suspicion in her voice. As Zentru'la began recalling the true story of how he was conscripted into the Scholae Palatinae Army after they conquered his homeworld, Caleb looked around the room. There was something not quite right about the situation. His hand hovered over the slugthrower pistol at his side as Zentru'la continued his story.

'Interesting story,' Crimson said as she walked backwards towards Reckla. 'Very interesting... but I don't really care. Reckla's told me all I need to know. That you are a dangerous enemy.'

'Run!' Zentru'la ordered upon realisation they had been set up by Reckla. Caleb swiftly drew his pistol and fired a bullet at Reckla before fleeing. The agent died instantly as the shot found its mark between his eyes. Two guards foolish enough to get in the way of Daehun were cleaved in two by the mercenary's twin swords.

Zentru'la drew his grenade launcher, showering everything behind him in explosion, fire and smoke as the team raced away from the bridge. Alarms rang across the ship as Zentru'la, Caleb and Daehun fired wildly at everything that moved. 'Lemar!' Zentru'la shouted into his commlink while still firing. 'We've been discovered! Set the bomb and get back to the hangar!'

‘Acknowledged!’ came an immediate reply from Lemar.

5 Sacrifice

‘This is what I came here for!’ Daehun bellowed as he drove one of his swords through the armour of a Collective marine, using the fallen foe as a shield to absorb more blaster fire. Caleb held a pistol in each hand, firing shots with impeccable accuracy and speed with Captain Crimson hot on their heels.

With Zentru’la’s ship in sight, the trio burst into the hangar, and the colonel fired a grenade at the ceiling, bringing down a pile of rubble between them and those in pursuit. ‘I’m getting too hold for this’ he breathed, his breath drawn out in rags.’

‘That was a hell of a fight,’ Daehun acknowledged, but barely seemed to have broken a sweat.

‘Lemar should be here by now,’ Caleb observed.

‘Lemar? What’s the situation?’ Zentru’la said into the commlink with urgency. The response could barely be heard over the blaster bolts in Lemar’s vicinity. ‘We’re coming to get you now!’ Zentru’la shouted down the commlink.

‘There’s no time! I’m activating the bomb!’

‘What the hell are you doing Lemar?!’

‘They could disarm it by then! This is the only way to make sure the bomb goes off! Keep fighting, Zentru’la. For the Empire!’ There was a huge crunching sound on the other side of the commlink, and then silence. Even from the hangar they felt the ship rock with the force of the experimental explosion. The sound of the beam laser could no longer be heard. Lemar had sacrificed himself for the safety of the clan.

‘Everybody aboard!’ Zentru’la commanded his team. ‘Back to the Sidious.’