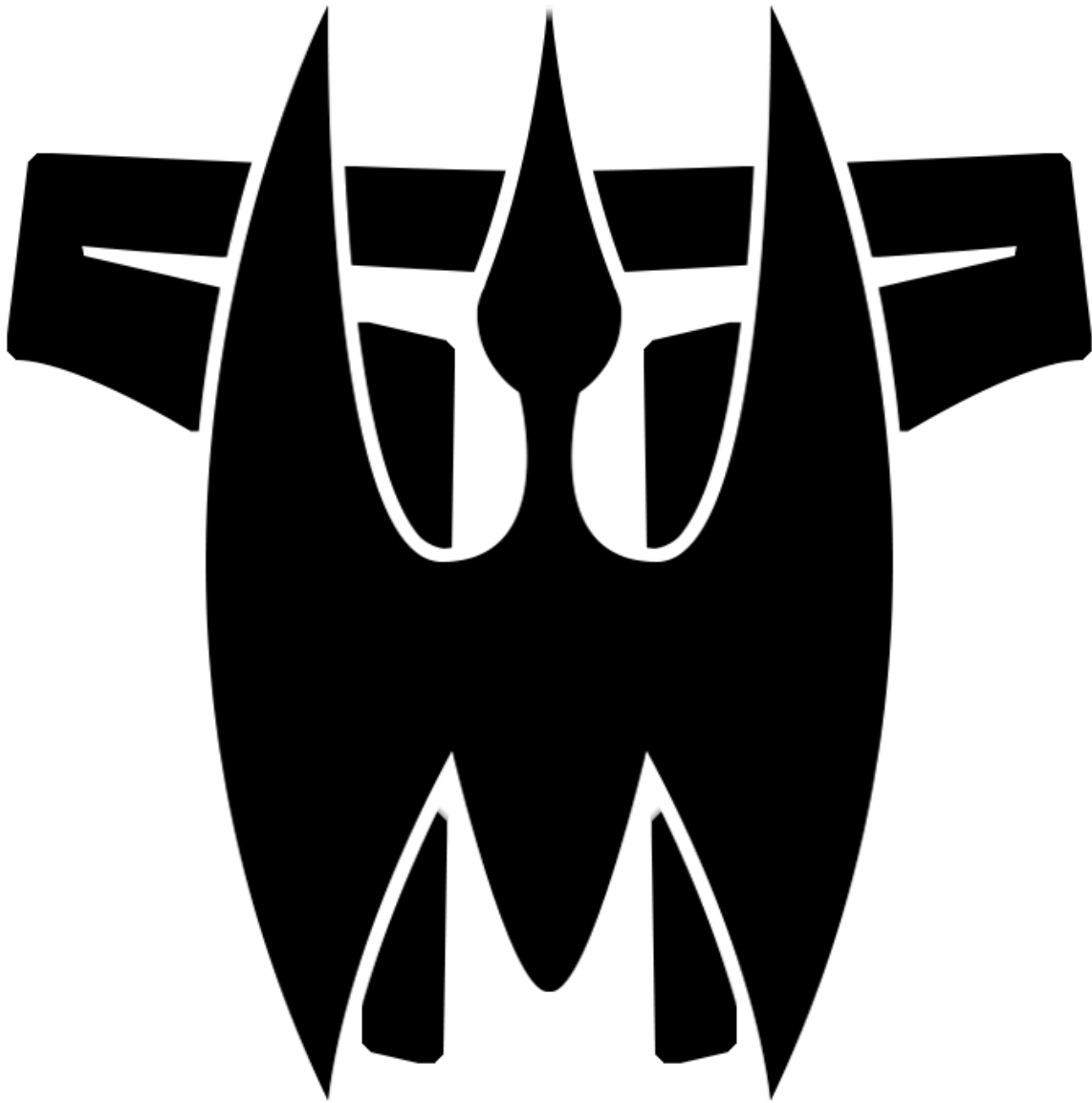


The Protector of Ullr

A submission for:

[Clan Vizsla] Bounty #1: Nnelg Nosliw



Written By
Idris Adenn (#3783)

Clan Vizsla

Dramatis Personae

Idris Adenn - A Mandalorian Bounty Hunter

Rayjax - A Wookiee. Co-pilot and Mechanic of *The Viper Fang*

Ashara Kyl - A Twi'lek. Medical Expert on *The Viper Fang*

MJ Kilvaari - A Human. Pilot of *The Viper Fang*

Takkoo - An Ewok. Traveler onboard *The Viper Fang*

Elia Adenn - Daughter of Idris Adenn

Nnelg Nosliw - The Bounty, a Murderer, and Rapist. Last seen near the Saga Drinking House

Arikor Bucbra - A Native of Ullr

The Viper Fang
Enroute to the Saga Drinking Hall
Zsoldos
0800 Hours

The Viper Fang, a VCX-100 freighter, tore through the early morning skies of Zsoldos. The crew remained silent, sitting in the cockpit of the ship. The only noise for company came from the ship's engines, and from somewhere in the common area, the sounds of a seven year old girl playing with an Ewok.

The silence in the cockpit was weighed down by a conversation the four beings had been wrestling with addressing. The unspoken argument of the last several months, starting all the way back in Coronet City on Corellia. The human pilot kept her grip tight on the controls. Next to her the Wookiee co-pilot fiddled with some instruments, verifying their readings. Behind them the Twi'lek sat, arms folded tightly across her chest. Only the Mandalorian seemed somewhat relaxed, leaning back in his seat as if ready to drift off to sleep.

Unable to bear it any longer, it was the Twi'lek who finally let out an exaggerated sigh and spoke.

"You kriffing arrogant moof milker," Ashara said, glaring at the Mandalorian. Idris sat upright at the comment. He stared at his lifelong friend, waiting for her to continue. He knew better than to interrupt once she got started.

"You brought us out to the edge of nowhere and group with a bunch of *strangers*. You didn't even talk to us. Just because you got a coin thrown in your face doesn't give you the right to just change all our lives," she continued, not stopping to take a breath.

"Then leave," Idris responded unexpectedly. Ashara's mouth opened and closed several times.

"Leave? *Leave?* This is home. This is our livelihood. And you decided to just start trusting this... *clan* for no reason," she finally managed to say. Idris rolled his eyes and leaned forward in his seat.

"I know what I'm doing. I answered the call," the bounty hunter said firmly, eyes fixated on the moving forest landscape before them.

"Answered without consulting us," MJ interjected. She turned back from the ship's controls long enough to mirror Ashara's glare at Idris.

"We need the work. I'm the one who gets shot at. I don't know why you all are complaining. We could use a little stability in our lives," Idris said. He gently smacked the back of MJ's seat before continuing. "Besides, you of all people shouldn't complain. You would be sitting

miserable and alone in some palace married off to an old man with a tiny cock just to appease your father right now. I saved you from that,” he said emphatically.

Rayjax looked up from the flight instruments he was fiddling with and let out a gentle growl.

“Alright, yes. You are correct, Rayjax, it was a group effort. But it was my plan. I get... at least 75% of the credit for it,” Idris said as he leaned forward and patted the Wookiee on the shoulder. He sat back and continued, “And you know if things go sideways, we will drop it and venture on our own again. But right now, we’ve got some new friends and a lot of new job potential. Now isn’t the time for airing your grievances at having a steady flow of credits. We are on the clock right now.”

“On the clock... Hunting a degen from upcountry. This is a bit beneath a man of your skill set, don’t you think?” Ashara asked. Instead of immediately replying, Idris began to fiddle with one of the displays next to him. After a few mostly silent moments of him aggressively navigating the computer’s menu system, a single still image appeared on the screen.

Ashara abruptly recoiled and looked away. Even for a medical doctor it was a shocking and unpleasant image to behold. Even Idris felt his skin crawl, and he had been responsible for putting more than a few bodies in the ground.

The bounty information that had been given out called it a ‘shallow grave’, which Idris found to be a generous term for it. It was more like a ditch that the body had been rolled into. Some rocks, dirt, twigs, and leaves had been pulled off from on top of the body. There wasn’t much left of the woman’s face, not enough that they were able to make an immediate ID on the body. It had been crushed badly, and following several days of festering half exposed, the bloated decaying flesh was teeming with maggots. Her clothing had been shredded to tatters around her, and several bloody handprints still stained her pale skin.

“This bounty is far beneath us all,” Idris said staring at the image on the screen. “More of an animal than a man I would say. But I will sleep much easier knowing this is one less monster on this planet to threaten my daughter, or any of you. It has been two long months since this happened. That is a lot of wasted oxygen this man has breathed.”

An alert flashed across the image and on to the other screens of the cockpit. The bounty, Nnelg Nosliw, had been spotted heading into the village. Blaster fire was reported. It appeared the rat had finally come out of his hole for supplies.

Ullr 0820 Hours

A plume of dark smoke began to rise from the northern end of the village as *The Viper Fang* approached. Rather than land on the village’s outskirts, it came to a sudden and abrupt stop

directly above the village. The shockwave of cool morning air disrupted and ruffled the clothing of the citizens of the village who had ventured outside to see what the ruckus was about. The citizens turned to look up at the floating freighter as the main entrance ramp dropped and a crimson blur flew out, propelled forward by a powerful jetpack.

Idris Adenn hurled himself toward the smoke, blaster fire, and screams. As he neared the plume of smoke, he cut the power from his jetpack and dropped like a stone toward the ground. At the last possible moment, he gave a quick burst of power, slowing him down to a manageable force of impact on the ground.

With both of his WESTAR-35s in hand, Idris moved with a singular purpose. Nnelg needed to die. Smoke poured out of a shattered window of a hovel that appeared to be a small store. The words "Food 'n Stuff" was barely legible through the rising smoke and ash. The smell of burning food, plastics, and fabrics filled the Mandalorian's lungs. Idris quickly peered into the burning shack and swore. There was a body on the ground, struggling to crawl toward the doorway and away from the flames.

Idris holstered his weapons as he delivered a powerful kick to the door of the shack. The weak wood shattered apart, catching his foot for a moment. Regaining his balance, he rushed into the dense smoke and grabbed the crawling man. In a single fluid motion, he rolled the man up and onto his shoulders.

He had just barely placed the man gently on the ground a reasonable distance from the building when a large explosion tore the shack and several neighboring buildings to shreds. Splinters of flaming wood rained down as Idris shielded the man with his body.

Fuel canisters, Idris thought as several chunks of wood bounced off his back. Idris' comlink buzzed and the sound of a concerned Wookiee came through. Idris began to examine the face of the man he had rescued while the Wookiee's concerned growls filled his ears.

"No, I wasn't in there, Rayjax," Idris responded, tilting the man's head to the side. There was blood pouring from a gash on the man's forehead, and parts of his body were badly burned. He was bearded, but not Nnelg.

The shop owner.

"Ashara, are you there?" Idris said through his comm. The Twi'lek's voice came through quickly.

"Yes, we just landed outside the village."

"We've got wounded civilians. I think they could use a hand," Idris told her.

“I’m already gathering my supplies. I’ll be over there as fast as I can.”

In the distance there were several shots of blaster fire. Idris unholstered his own blasters again and ran down the street straight towards the noise.

The bounty hunter passed several more wounded civilians, people who had the misfortune of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. There were several dead ones as well, each with a weapon in hand. They were the ones who had tried to stop Nnelg. One lay in a pool of his own blood, arm cleanly severed and several feet away.

Then, like someone flipped a switch, there was no more village. Idris faced a wall of trees, the forest border against the village. Nnelg had made it back to the safety of the forest. Idris spun on the spot, looking for a sign of where the murderer had fled into the trees. He paced up and down the tree line, knowing time was of the essence. After what felt like ages he spotted what he was looking for.

A trail of blood drops, along with some heavy footprints. The blood was fresh. This was where Nnelg had entered the forest. Idris paused for just a moment, staring at the dark tree line.

“I’ll be hunting in the woods. Don’t stay up,” the Mandalorian said to his crew through his comm. He then took off into the forbidding forest.

Deep Forest

1800 Hours

“I am going to enjoy killing you, Nnelg, you mother-kriffing sack of Hutt slime,” Idris said to himself as he yanked his boot out of the mud yet again. He was caked in mud and sweat. The trail had gone cold hours ago. Nnelg’s boot prints had been lost in the undergrowth of the forest. The blood trail had dried up as well. Idris was still not sure if it was Nnelg’s blood, or the blood of one of the poor fools who had gotten in his way as he escaped. Not that it mattered much now, deep in the forest, miles from the village.

Movement had been easy enough close to the village. It was clear the citizens of Ullr still at least somewhat utilized the woods in the immediate area around the village. But the further Idris had gone, the more dense the trees and wild the growth of the forest floor.

Idris sighed and leaned up against a big tree. He removed his crimson helmet and breathed deeply. At least the forest air was fresh and clean. He wiped away the sweat that had accumulated on his forehead.

“This is why I love cities,” he muttered as he went to get a drink of water. He tilted his head back and opened his mouth, but all that fell from his canteen were a few measly drops of

water. He groaned and tapped the back of his head against the tree a few times before just staring at the canopy above him.

It was almost peaceful, the quiet calmness of the woods. The gentle murmur of life as the wind flowed around the leaves and branches. That notion faded quickly as he thought of the murderous raping berserker he was hunting here. The moment passed, turning to discomfort and unease.

Idris was sliding his helmet back on when he noticed something out of place. Hidden among the leaves and vines it was an easy thing to miss. It was the fact it was solid, unmoving that caught his attention. While the leaves and vines moved and breathed in the breeze, it stayed stationary. Fixed, perfectly unnaturally still amongst the living growth.

An arrow.

Idris was impressed at how well hidden it was. The primitive and ancient type of trap was perfect for the woods of this backwater planet. He neared it carefully, cautious to not set it off. He pulled the arrow from its taut bowstring. The bowstring was held back and attached to a tripwire, hidden in the undergrowth. Unsure if the wire connected to anything else, he left it alone.

Should have expected this, he thought as he rolled the arrow in his hands. It had been very lucky he hadn't triggered any else while he been searching in the woods. In his rush, he had gotten sloppy. He stared at the arrow as he rolled it, studying it. He wasn't sure what it was, but something just felt *wrong* about it .

The Mandalorian's skin was crawling. He had intended to head back, but he knew to trust his gut. There was something else about this place. He moved carefully, slowly and surefooted. He kept the arrow with him, wondering what he was missing about it.

That is when he found him.

Idris wasn't sure who *he* was, other than it not being Nnelg Nosliw. If there was one thing Idris knew for certain, it was that Nnelg wouldn't have gotten caught in one of his own traps. And what had been done to this unfortunate soul took a special kind of barbarism. The body had been dead for several weeks.

Local. Looking for justice.

"Ashara, you around?" Idris called through his comm.

“Yes. We are all back on *The Fang* now. I did what could be done for the injured locals. It was a mess. Two were caught in the blast at the shop. Three more dead from severe blood loss and blunt force trauma. You kill him yet?” The Twi’lek responded after a moment.

“No. I found someone, but not Nnelg.” Idris paused as he took in what had been done to the body again. After a moment of silence he continued.

“Elia isn’t around to catch an incoming image is she?”

“No. She is with MJ and the Ewok. They stole all the sheets and pillows on the ship and have been building a wonderful fort in the seating area of the AUX fighter,” Ashara said. Idris nodded even though there was no one around to see it.

“Alright. Incoming. I need another pair of eyes on this,” the Mandalorian said as he transmitted an image back to the ship. Ashara went silent as the photo came through.

An arrow stuck out of the man’s decaying leg. It looked like he had managed to drag himself some distance before being found and tied up. He was hanging by his wrists between two trees. His chest cavity had been sliced open. Whoever had done this had hacked apart the cartilage connecting his ribs to his sternum. The heart was still in place, but the man’s lungs, stomach, intestines, liver, kidneys, all rested in a very neat and orderly pile beneath him.

“Id... Idris... why would someone do this?”

“It is a warning. I’m coming back now. I’ll see meet you guys at the drinking hall.”

Saga Drinking Hall

2000 Hours

The crew of *The Viper Fang* sat in a back corner of the great hall. Idris had pounded back several large glasses of beer before even acknowledging his companions. As he took a final large gulp from yet another, he pulled out the arrow he recovered from the woods. He placed it on the table and pointed at Rayjax.

“Okay bud. I need a former forest hunter perspective. Something is bothering me about this thing,” Idris said.

The Wookiee carefully and deftly picked up the arrow. He spun it around a few times in his hands. Rayjax’s eyes went wide and he let out a low series of growls. He pointed to the direction of the notch for the bowstring, and the direction of the arrow head. Idris swore under his breath.

“What is the big deal about that?” MJ asked sipping on her drink.

“If you hunt game with a bow, the arrowhead usually stays in line with the notch for the string. Vertical arrowheads are more likely to go through the ribs of quadruped animals,” Idris explained. Rayjax nodded in agreement.

“This arrowhead is perpendicular to the notch. That makes it easier to fit through the ribs of a bipedal organism. He is crafting arrows specifically to kill people. These traps are out there for food. It is just to kill people,” he continued. The Mandalorian raised a hand and signaled for another round of drinks. Saga was slowly starting to fill up with locals, looking to unwind.

“I’m going to talk with the locals. Maybe they have some insight on where this rat hides,” Idris said, slamming his hands on the table. He grabbed his glass from the platter of drinks arriving at their table and downed it. He pointed to his crewmates.

“No no. You lot stay here. No need for us all to interrogate people.”

The first group of people Idris attempted to talk to, had no idea where Nnelg ran off to, but had all manner of opinions on the year’s harvest yield. Idris had a round of drinks with them and moved on. The next group also had no idea where Nnelg went, but expounded on what kind of man would do what Nnelg had done. Idris agreed with them all and had a round of drinks with them and moved on.

Several groups later, Idris found himself waist deep in a drinking contest. Staring down a man twice his size, he won. Several of the man’s friends accused him of cheating, though by this point Idris had no idea how he possibly could have cheated. He also wasn’t exactly sure how many of the man’s friends there really were. He counted eight, but his fists were only finding four.

Saga Drinking Hall

0930 Hours

“I dunno what more I can tell ya mister. Ain’t no one knows where Nnelg goes. He’s wanderer. Comes and goes. Aint no one sees him outside of that big fuss yesterdays,” Arikor Bucbra said before finishing his drink. He let out a loud belch and Idris restrained from grimacing. He was a friendly very down to earth sort.

He also happened to be one of the guys that Idris was forced to fight the night before. But like many of the bar fights Idris had been in, no hard feelings remained by morning. Offering to buy the man a drink had smoothed things over nicely this morning. Idris however, was massively hungover, and was nursing a glass of water himself.

Idris sighed. No one he had talked to knew anything. Not a single person knew where Nnelg Nosliw holed himself up in the great forests outside of the village. “*North*” was as specific as anyone could get. Even then, they weren’t sure.

While Idris attempted more fruitless questioning of locals this morning, the rest of the crew of *The Fang* set up scanners around the northern part of the village. If Nnelg showed up, Idris would know immediately. But sitting and waiting wasn't something Idris enjoyed, even when the waiting involved the loud rowdy nights at Saga. He was a bounty hunter, and he would hunt.

"Well, thank you for speaking with me. I will see this matter resolved, one way or another Arikor," Idris said as Arikor's next drink arrived. The Mandalorian began to stand up.

"Aye, I hopes ya fair better than the last fews who've tried," Arikor said, grabbing his new glass. Idris stopped, halfway between sitting and standing.

"Last few?" Idris asked.

"Aye, after several of the local boys failed to find him, two or three of ya outsiders rolled through into the woods. Ain't no one seens them again either," Arikor said. The man took a long drink from his glass and Idris finished standing up.

Now *that* was new information. If any of them had been part of Vizsla, there was a chance he could track their current location, or at least, the location of what was left of their armor. That could narrow down his search. Idris thanked Arikor again and dropped some credits at the bar before running to his ship.

Once there he quickly opened a secure line of communication with the Yuanming.

"I need to know if any of our people have attempted to take the Nnelg contract," Idris said to the clan representative on the other end of the line.

Deep Forest

2200 Hours

The forest at night was a special kind of dark. It was hard to see far in the dense trees at high noon, and at night everything was exponentially worse. Idris had been right, one of Vizsla's new recruits had come looking for Nnelg nearly five weeks prior. He hadn't been seen since. But the recruit had made it far enough. Idris traced the location of his remains to a ditch in the forest, just out of eyesight from Nnelg's home. Idris could make the glow of Nnelg's campfire standing over the body of the recruit.

Idris would have found the hut Nnelg lived in quaint, if it hadn't been home to a raping murdering lunatic. Nnelg had been cooking, singing horribly off key while roasting some small indigenous creature over the fire. But now, Idris' target had retreated inside his shanty hut of a home.

Idris had circled the place several times, disarming traps as he went along. From what he could tell, he had cleared out most of the dangerous traps he could fall into, and he couldn't see any other way out of the hut. There were no windows, and only a single wooden door.

Idris decided to make his move, it was late, and he was silent. He walked slowly toward the door, blasters drawn, ready to fire. As he neared the door the crunch of thick boots on the forest floor caused him to turn away from the hut. Nnelg lunged out of the shadows, swinging his massive ax upwards toward Idris' groin.

The bastard must have had an escape tunnel out into the forest, Idris thought as he jumped back to avoid the swing that would have easily sliced him in twain. He pulled his blasters up to fire, but before he could shoot, Nnelg had spun. The sharp ax head glinted in the firelight as it raced toward Idris' torso.

Idris was forced to jump back again to avoid the swing, and missed his footing. Idris lost his grip on his blasters as he fell on his back. Nnelg let out a primal scream of rage and brought his ax down. Idris rolled away and his arm clanked against something metal. Idris turned his head quickly to see what it was before turning his attention back to Nnelg.

What Idris was a metallic snare trap. It had sharp teeth meant to sink deep into the flesh of whatever poor fool set it off. It looked like it could snap a foot clean off. Nnelg stepped closer to Idris and prepared to swing yet again, screaming with rage. With little time to act, and blasters laying somewhere on the ground, Idris did the only thing he could think of.

He grabbed the base of the trap and flung it at Nnelg's leg. It snapped shut around the mans calf. Along with the snap of metal teeth, the clear sound of crunching bone could be made out. Nnelg's scream of rage turned to one of pain. The man dropped his ax and fell, trying to pry the trap open.

Idris quickly got to his feet and located his blasters. Nnelg continued screaming as he struggled to open the trap. The screaming stopped when he realized Idris was pointing a WESTAR-35 in at his face. His face contorted in pain, Nnelg attempted to spit out a line of bravado in the face of death.

"Do it you little bi-..."

Idris cut him short by pulling the trigger. Nnelg fell lifeless to his side, trap still embedded in his leg. Idris stood over the man and fired a few more shots into the corpse just to be sure the job was done. The monster of Ullr was dead.

Yuanming
One Day Later

Idris stood at the reception desk in his casual wear, waiting for the receptionist to get back to him.

“Body confirmed as Nnelg Nosliw. Bounty marked as closed. Credits transferred to your account. Will there be anything else Mr. Adenn?” She said, taking her place behind the desk. Idris smiled and shook his head.

“Not at this time. I’ve got some creds to spend,” the Mandalorian said as he sauntered away and out into the midday sun of Zsoldos.