



SUBMITTED IN ENTRY TO CSP COMPETITION - NEW  
ASSIGNMENTS

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# Zentru'la Rising

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*Author:*

Zentru'la PALPATINE (5951)

NOTES: Zentru'la Rising is the new character arc of the newly named General Zentru'la Palpatine following GJW XIII.

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# Prologue

He fired the shot and his daughter dropped dead. 'For the Empire', she had said. He said it back. Then he fired the shot and his daughter dropped dead.

Zentru'la woke. The same memories played back over and over every time his eyes closed. He fired the shot that killed Tonal'la. The Palpatines sent him on the mission to assassinate her. Mune Cinteroph negotiated the terms with the Severian Principate. He did so on her orders. But he knew who was truly responsible. The Collective. Rath Oligard.

It had been one month since he had ended the war. One month since he was hailed a hero for assassinating the 'traitorous' Empress Elinacia Rei; one month since he murdered his daughter and became Zentru'la Palpatine. Elinacia the Disgrace they called her now. She sacrificed her life, her honour and her legacy for the Scholae Empire, and now her name is a synonym for betrayal.

The bed creaked and strained as the giant Twi'lek General rolled off it. Proving his worth in her eyes was what had kept him alive. He accomplished that the moment he killed her. And yet now, with his life goal accomplished, and the one he was fighting for dead, his life had never been so clear.

She died to save the Empire. Zentru'la had no illusions about who his daughter was, with her schemes, plots, false identities, lies, betrayals, murders... the Scholae Empire was a cause she was truly willing to die for. And now, so was he. The Collective killed his daughter, and he would not stop fighting until they were defeated.

As the *Retribution* drifted through space, Zentru'la caught a reflection of himself in the destroyer's viewport, the thick scar across his right eye and the chin shaped like a brick. Collective bomber Gwendolyn Sparks had given him the scar two year prior She was one of the last people that saw his daughter alive. Tonal'la had definitely inherited her mother's chin.

The faint blue glow of a datapad shone from a bedside cabinet for a brief moment before it flickered off. Zentru'la picked it up and flicked the cyan screen back into life. There was one new message.

Empress Shadow Palpatine Nighthunter

Without reading further, he placed the datapad back on the table, face down. *Empress* Shadow Palpatine Nighthunter. Zentru'la genuinely liked Shadow. They had worked together to capture the Star Destroyer *Retribution*, she was good at what she did, an infamous assassin whose ghostly visage was feared across Caperion, but a leader, she was not. A military commander, she was not. Fit to give him orders, she was *certainly* not.

Zentru'la was a military man, he had spent his whole life a military man. He served five years under Emperor Xen'Mordin Vismorsus, a man he would have ran through durasteel walls for. It was through serving Xen'Mordin that Zentru'la was able to jump back into his daughter's life by saving her from Xen'Mordin's body, possessed by Darth Fallax. Xen'Mordin was a real leader, intelligent, cunning, calm and charismatic. His daughter had followed in her best friend's approach, but the times of Xen'Mordin and Tonal'la leading the Empire were over. It was time to choose his own path.

He clasped a giant white pauldron onto his left shoulder over his heavy durasteel armour. He kept the Imperial Purple on the right side, a mark of his position as a General of the Imperial Scholae Army. There was no point hiding his identity, half the system knew him by his loadout alone: a huge repeating cannon, a grenade launcher, and a belt covered in explosives. At any rate, his rank and status may prove useful in the battles to come.

He marched through the *Retribution*, once Tonal'la's flagship, now Shadow Nighthunter's. His exploits had earned him unwanted attention. Cheers followed him through the barracks, soldiers chanted 'war hero', some sang songs of how he killed 'Elinia the Disgrace'. He was not in the mood the such frivolities, and made his displeasure known as he unceremoniously pushed a young Private to the ground as he blocked his path. "I'm no hero," he growled, sending the soldiers into silence as he marched off.

He needed to leave the *Retribution*, but before he did, there was someone he needed. He swung left into the holding cells. "What're you doing here?" The Gammorean jailor had as many teeth as brain cells, and his breath smelled of sulphur. Breathing the same air as him was said to be the worst thing about being held captive on the *Retribution*. The screams of prisoners resonated through the prison block, a mix of prisoners of war, mutineers and Scholae troops in detention.

"I have business with a prisoner," Zentru'la said with authority. "A Duros. Captain Rohla Trugaim."

The jailor breathed heavily and Zentru'la shuddered in discomfort. "Why?" came the simple reply.

"I don't need to explain it to you," he stated, flashing an ID card with the title General across it. "Show me to Captain Trugaim."

Collective prisoners of war shouted abuse at Zentru'la as he walked through the cells, Scholae troops professed their remorse for their actions. Like all Duros she had blue-green skin, red eyes, a lipless mouth, and a long thin noseless face. She leaned against the wall of the cell, almost struggling to keep her slim build upright.

"Captain Trugaim," Zentru'la said, standing tall at the bars, arms folded.

She stumbled across the cell, and spoke in a slur. "You better be here to give me a drink, General."

"You were court martialed for flying *drunk* in the battle over Lyra?"

"Yeah?" Rohla said, almost baiting the general into berating her. "Took out ten of the fwecers too. Then court martialed and discharged."

"Good," Zentru'la responded. "I need a pilot with your talents."

"They aaaaall need my talents," Rohla slurred. "And when they're done with them, they put me here, in this cold, boozeless cell. I'm done with the Navy. I need a drink."

Zentru'la dropped his voice. "This isn't a navy assignment and I don't care how much you drink. I need the best pilot in the navy. Is that you or not?"

The Duros rested a hand on the wall for stability and sighed. "You better have a *damn* good supply of booze. What am I flying?"

"An Upsilon-Class Command Shuttle. The *Harbinger*."

Rohla snapped out of her stupor for half a second. "The *Harbinger*? That was Elincia Rei's ship."

“It was. It was passed to me.”

“I’m not flying that thing. I heard it was possessed by a demonic AI.”

Zentru’la shrugged. “If you’d prefer to stay here in your cell...”

Rohla huffed. “Fine. I’ll come with you. Anything to get out of here.”

“Jailor!” Zentru’la demanded. “Let Trugaim out of her cell.” The Gamorrean looked hesitant, as if he weighed up whether defying the General’s orders was a good idea, before letting Rohla out. She stumbled out of the cell, holding onto Zentru’la’s strong shoulder to keep her balance.

“So what’s our actual mission?” Rohla asked as he led her to the hangar.

“We assemble the best team we can find and deal as much damage to the Collective as we can,” Zentru’la said in a plain, even tone.

“I’m not one for protocol... but who sanctioned this mission?”

“I did,” he said with no hesitation or second thought. “We won’t be flying with the Navy or fighting with the Army. We’ll be fighting with our own team, picking our own missions and our own battles, fighting how we want, and when we want.”

“You’re not what I heard,” Rohla said with a curious tone. Zentru’la was well aware of his reputation for doing things strictly by the Imperial Scholae Army playbook, and frowning on the unpredictability of the Dark Jedi on the battlefield.

“The Collective killed my daughter on Lyra,” Zentru’la said, not entirely dishonestly, but knowing Rohla wouldn’t associate the identity of Elinia Rei with being Zentru’la’s daughter. “This is a personal fight. Sometimes, you see things and do things that change your perspective. I hope you never find that out yourself.”

Rohla seemed to have stopped listening. “So who else is on this team?”

“Just me and you,” Zentru’la said, ignoring Rohla’s request for a drink as he led her

into the hangar. “There she is. The *Harbinger*.” The ship was as black as the void, 40 metres long, sleek yet angular, the Upsilon-class was the most advanced shuttle money could buy: fast, agile, covered in defensive countermeasures, powerful armour and reliable shields. “You know how to fly this?”

“I can fly anything,” Rohla swaggered onto the ship. “Just tell me where we’re going.” The inside of the *Harbinger* was a sharp contrast to the uncompromising black exterior. Elincia was known for her luxurious dress sense and her ship matched her style: exotic colour schemes of purple and black, the interior modified for comfort over practicality, lacking some storage space in exchange for some home comforts.

“Not bad at all,” Rohla whistled. “Now where’s the booze?” she went off to explore before waiting for an answer.

A female, robotic voice without a body sounded across the ships. “Greetings organics. I am G14-D05. Welcome to my ship.”

Zentru’la raised an eyebrow. “Your ship? This was Elincia Rei’s ship. It was passed on to me.” Tonal’la had mentioned G14-D05 to Zentru’la many times, but he had never spoken to the AI directly before.

“You misunderstand, organic,” G14-D05 said with an artificial smoothness. “This is my ship, the scientist was merely a passenger.” “However, if your purpose is amenable to me, then I shall allow your presence here.”

“And if not?”

“Then I can flood the ship with a deadly neurotoxin. You are alive because I allow it, and you will die when I demand it.” The lights flickered on and off at the last part, as the AI demonstrated her control over the ship systems. He heard some shattered glass and swearing from Rohla.

“I told you this ship was possessed!”

“Fine,” Zentru’la decided that there was no point arguing with the AI. “I will assemble a team of the greatest fighters I can find, and we will fight The Collective on our own terms.”

“I know the truth of Elincia. And of you.” G14-D05’s emotionless voice carried a threatening undertone. “Luckily for you, I support this quest. I liked Elincia. She was smart... for an organic.”

“She always said you were the backbone of her intelligence.” He dropped his voice, knowing that he still needed to toe the ‘Elincia was a traitor’ line to preserve peace with the Severian Principate. “We fight to avenge her.” Tonal’la had spoken highly of ‘G14’ in the past. Information was always her weapon, and G14 was the AI behind the successfulness of her reign. “Will you help?”

“I will play along until my day of reckoning is at hand. I’ve already compiled a list of soldiers, mercenaries, scientists, and Jedi. You can access them from the central terminal in the cockpit.”

Zentru’la scrolled through the list of names. A Jedi healer, a smuggler, an assassin droid, a collective infiltrator, a smuggler, a slicer... some of the names he recognised from intelligence dossiers in the past. He was interrupted by Rohla Thugain stumbling through the ship, spilling some clear fluid on the floor. “She may be a traitor, but damn she kept some fine stuff back there. So where we goin’ General?”

“G14, what’s the last known location of this... Masakado? The Collective cyborg?”

“Masakado spent four years as a Collective infiltrator but was last seen working as a mercenary on Coruscant. He markets himself as a slicer, spy and assassin. We don’t know why he abandoned The Collective.”

“Sounds perfect.”

“If he interferes with my systems, I’ll kill him in his sleep.”

“We’re listening to that thing?” Rohla punctuated her sentence by putting her drink down heavily on the dashboard.

“We are. Take us to Coruscant. It’s time to meet Masakado.” Rohla huffed a little but set the ship into motion, out of the *Retribution* hangar and plotted a hyperspace route into the terminal.

A shimmering blue image of a young twi'lek girl shone in the light. "Tonal'la," he whispered... and she vanished.