

Zentru'la Rising



CHAPTER 5:
The Vanishing

General Zentru'la (5951)

A Star Wars Story

THE STORY TO DATE

Zentru'la Rising is a single continuous story that spans multiple fiction competitions, following Elinia Rei's death. This fiction covers Chapter 5. The full story can be found **here**.

In Chapter 4, Zentru'la, Masakado and Rohla Trugaim, still flying Scholae Palatinae colours, travelled to Chyron to track down a Collective Signal and healing mystic Lilina Mirin. While they found the healer, they were left stranded on Chyron, chased down by both the Taldryan army and the Collective.

05

THE VANISHING

This mission really wasn't going the way the General had planned. The healer that Masakado so badly needed standing beside them was the only consolation, rescued from a Collective prison camp from a combination of pure firepower from Zentru'la and clinical bladesmanship from the cyborg ninja.

Death and smoke filled the air of the Collective prison camp on Chyron. Corpses of both Collective guards and the Taldryan Army littered the floor. It was a matter of time before reinforcements arrived. The *Harbinger* had whisked away to lands unknown by the on-board AI to prevent a suicide evacuation attempt. To make the matters of being stranded on a hostile world even worse, smoke plumed from Zentru'la's repeating cannon, damaged in the skirmish with Taldryan troops.

“Stand back,” Zentru’la said as he raised the cannon towards a wall. He pulled the trigger tentatively. *Crunch*. The General cursed as the mechanisms inside made a sickening noise like a speeder bike being crushed into a cube. He hoisted the huge weapon onto his back, drawing his grenade launcher, but something didn’t feel right. His armoured hand flipped open the cap for the thousandth time... “Out of grenades.

There was a good reason Masakado preferred blades. No moving parts, no ammunition, no malfunctions. The sword did exactly what the wielder told it to do, and in his hands, it dealt death at his whim. His own body was a cautionary tale on the foolishness of over-reliance on machinery. His home was now a ship controlled by a psychotic AI, flown by a pilot that was always drunk, which were now systems away while they were pursued by two armies and Zentru’la was reduced to his sidearm. This was not what he signed up for when he agreed to join the legendary general’s vendetta against the Collective... but he did follow through on one promise. Lilina’s work on her fellow prisoners had been nothing short of miraculous. Perhaps there was truly hope for him with Lilina at his side. He watched Zentru’la return his grenade launcher to his back alongside the cannon, and draw his pistol from a holster at his hip.

Masakado’s hand slowly moved towards the black sword on his own hip... Zentru’la was vulnerable. His sword against the twi’lek’s pistol... that was an easy fight and he was sure he could slide a short blade through the gaps in that heavy armour. The Silencer was the perfect choice, the vile dagger given to him by the General seemed to thirst

for the blood of its former owner...

Before he could move, he felt the healer's hand brush along his own. His mind snapped back to reality. His road to recovery would be long and difficult, and he needed all the allies he could get. Killing the General in cold blood would not secure Lilina's long term support. He consumed a pack of Bacta gel. The headaches were getting more and more severe with each passing month. He knew he didn't have long left.

"When we can find some peace and quiet, I'll take a look at your illness," said Lilina serenely, as if she knew exactly what was on Masakado's mind "There must be something we can do about it."

"Taldryan and The Collective will be sending reinforcements to our location once they've found out their squads have been killed," said Zentru'la. "And there's no way I can fight them off with this," he waved his pistol around.

"We should find the Blacksmith," Lilina replied.

"The Blacksmith?" Masakado queried. "Who's that?"

"No-one really knows," Lilina said smoothly. "Just appeared here recently, set up shop in an old garage. No-one knows his real name, but he's an expert gunsmith and mechanic. He seems dubious, but he'll be able to repair your weapon."

"I guess we have no other choice," said the General. "We can't just stay here and wait for them to come to us."

"Clear," said a voice in the distance. The team fell silent. They were not alone. "Clear," said the voice again. Masakado's canine ears perked up as he listened to the sound of distant footsteps... a clank of metal on metal. "Collective cyborgs," he breathed. "They're getting closer. We need to

hide.”

“Clear.” Masakado quickly scanned the surroundings for a good hiding place, and ushered the team into a dark corner of a nearby cell, behind a locker and slightly out of view from the main corridor. It wasn’t great, but it was dark, and there was every chance that the Collective patrol might not notice them.

“Clear.” The footsteps became louder and louder as the patrol came closer. The patrol was now walking down the corridor towards their location. Masakado and Zentru’la rested their hands on their weapons. It would take a miracle for them the Collective to not notice them where they stood.

“Stay calm and still,” Lilina whispered softly. The mystic closed her eyes, allowing The Force to flow from her, enveloping herself and her allies. A peaceful aura seemed to emanate from her. Masakado could barely believe his own eyes as Zentru’la and Lilina both vanished in front of him. He looked down. His body was gone too.

They stayed perfectly still, breathing as slowly as possible, staying absolutely silent as the patrol checked each individual cell. Over twenty of them... they would have no chance in a straight fight. Time seemed to stand still as a small group checked the cell they were hiding in. “Clear.”

The Collective patrol moved on. “That was close,” Zentru’la breathed. “How did you do that?”

“If the Force wills it, we will get out of here alive,” she replied. “The same goes for your condition, Masakado. But such tricks will not work against the Taldryan army.”

He had never been the optimistic sort, known for being extremely cynical of others and of the bleak, short fu-

ture that lay ahead for him. But seeing Lilina's unerring calm gave him a tiny sliver of hope that the mystic might truly represent an opportunity for him to have a somewhat normal life.

The team waited for Masakado's signal before the footsteps had died down and coast was clear to leave. They moved briskly through the collective prison camp towards a rear exit. Just as they turned a corner, a violent burst of blaster fire bore smoking holes in the wall behind them.

The team spun around on the spot. There was no Collective team. Just one man, bigger even than Zentru'la and only half as pretty, a dull green skinned Weequay whose face was in better condition than the General's rifle despite encasing himself in heavy armour. "MASAKADO!" he roared, identifying the Collective turncoat. "YOU'LL PAY FOR WHAT YOU DID!" He fired another burst of blaster fire at Masakado, which crashed harmlessly off Lilina's barrier. "Mixing with *those* now are we?" he sneered.

Masakado's blade sang with a high pitched ring as he unsheathed it into his right hand, standing in between the monster and the others. "Go, General," he growled. "Find the Blacksmith. Protect Lilina." Masakado flashed into action, moving as fast as his cybernetic legs would carry him towards the Weequay. The assassin sprang himself towards the wall, taking three steps along it to dodge a blast from the Weequay's cannon and making a sweeping aerial cut towards him.

The target had no time to switch weapons and blocked the acrobatic attack using the barrel of his cannon. Masakado's blade cut three deep notches into the barrel as more attacks were blocked on the improvised shield. The Wee-

quay lowered his stance charged forwards with his shoulder, deflecting a quick cut on the pauldron of his heavy armour and striking Masakado in the chest.

As Masakado stumbled backwards, the Weequay threw his cannon to the side, drawing a riot control baton. "You know who I am?" the his words shook the building to its foundation.

"You're all the same beneath the armour," Masakado said as he deflected a series strike from the electrified baton with his sword.

"I am *Lon Osul!*" he continued, brandishing his weapon up high. "And I will have my revenge."

Osul? The surname seemed familiar. Perhaps part of the team that built his cybernetic body... the team he killed. But he didn't care. It would be more surprising to Masakado if he met a Collective officer whose family or friends he hadn't murdered. Lon Osul was just ten thousandth pile of soft muscle hiding in a metal shell to meet his blade.

Osul attacked with a flurry of hate-filled, venomous strikes that forced Masakado back up the corridor in defence. He braced his sword on the spine to reinforce his guard as he parried a brutal series of full-blooded attacks.

He darted to the side and swung a cut at the back of Osul's kneecap, but the colossus was quicker than he looked, and blocked the attack on his shin plate, sending sparks to the floor. Masakado dodged a counter attack, ducking below a swing from the baton and slashing upwards, missing the inside of Osul's elbow by inches as he returned to a high guard.

Masakado immediately pressed the attack to prevent the berserker from fighting his own way, striking to the

left, the right, and the left again from his high guard position, forcing Osul onto the back foot, constantly changing his angle of attack to keep the Weequay guessing. Masakado feinted high, drawing a reaction from Osul and striking for the face with a full power thrust. Osul lent to the side to avoid the attack and swung his left arm towards Masakado's blade.

A heavy gauntleted hand grabbed hold of his sword towards the base. Osul used Masakado's sword as a lever to pull the cyborg towards him, throwing an upwards strike with the baton at close range, but was stopped by Masakado grabbing hold of his wrist.

Weapons were dropped to the floor as both fighters began to grapple with each other. Masakado landed a series of sharp elbows to the side of Osul's head, but it did little damage through the heavy armour. The Weequay leveraged all of his weight forwards, forcing the fight to the floor with Masakado on his back.

"You die here tonight, traitor!" Osul thundered as he postured up on top of Masakado, throwing a series of punches. Masakado raised both of his hands in defence, taking heavy impact on his cybernetic forearms. He grabbed Osul by the back of the head, pulling him downwards to prevent him from delivering any force. Osul broke away from the grab with pure force and chambered his arm for another punch.

Masakado reached for The Silencer at his hip, drawing it and plunging the bloodthirsty blade into the unarmoured armpit of Osul. The Weequay roared in pain and gave Masakado all the opportunity he needed to cut him apart, slashing the dagger into the opposite elbow... the

back of the knees... and then the neck.

He wriggled out from under the dead weight of Osul, cleaning the blood off the blade. The General was right. The sinister dagger really did feel like it wanted to kill. He was no big believer of light and dark, or good and evil, but as he held the Sith blade he felt a demonic aura coming from it. He sheathed The Silencer and picked up his sword from the floor.

He left the Collective prison cell out into the cold, Chyron night, where his black clothes and fur allowed him to seamlessly blend into the darkness. He paused slightly, crouching down to the floor, picking up the scent of Zentru'la and Lilina. There were advantages to being Shistave nan. He made followed the trail, leading to the Blacksmith's garage.