



EVENT LONG CO-OP FICTION

A **STAR WARS** STORY & ENTRY TO
GJW XIV: HOMEFRONT
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Tracked Version:

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COMPETITION PROMPT

Inquisitorious field agents report that the Collective fleet assaulting Arx appears to be led by Ghafa Ordam of Capital Enterprises aboard the Dreadnaught Ocaejar. Intercepted comms chatter suggests that other high-ranking Collective targets are present in the warzone, but the Dark Council has prioritized breaking the Collective's chain of command. Key to that is neutralizing Ordam's ability to coordinate the attack.

You have been tasked by the Dark Council to form a small team capable of infiltrating the Ocaejar and capturing or killing Ghafa Ordam. Secondary objectives include obtaining intelligence on Collective battleplans and securing any available Collective encryption ciphers. Finally, destroying the Ocaejar itself could deal a serious blow to the Collective's operations and morale.

Dark Brotherhood forces in orbit around Arx are spread too thin to directly attack the Collective command ship, but the Inquisitorious may be able to provide assistance with infiltration and extract.



Chyron, Caelus System

There had been a mole in the OSI. Director of Clan Intelligence Vodo Biask Taldrya had known of it for months and saw the destructive effects of the bastard's treason in every lost asset, every failed mission, and every destroyed listening post. He knew it was the Office of Secret Intelligence's problem because, by his own design, the activities of the Directorate were only reported to the Clan Summit in a select few instances. He liked to run a seaworthy vessel and the more people Vodo had to inform the more holes where leaks could form. The mole was within the OSI and he'd found his man.

It had been one of Vodo's deputies, the Director of Counterintelligence, who had come up with the scheme. It was brilliant in its simplicity but essentially fool proof. Any number of reports or data transmissions were made from every department in the Directorate these would be used to identify the vector of the leak. Oftentimes these transmissions were duplicates of other transmissions. They had to be routine transmissions though; it perked too much interest if suddenly every department in the OSI was transmitting an unusual and important communique. Routine data was the bread and butter of an intelligence outfit. By itself it counted for very little but taken as a whole entire data sheets and assumptions could be generated with great accuracy. A series of data sheets and routine communications were distributed around the OSI, identical all but for miniscule errors or alterations. A misspelling here, a number there, a space too many between words. Each one, unique in its own way.

With their remaining resources within the Collective it didn't take long to find which version of the transmission had been leaked by the Mole. He was a middle ranking functionary in the Signals Intelligence branch. An aging Alderaanian man with few job prospects and a looming forced retirement that probably wouldn't be very comfortable on the small retirement savings he'd made. Reports of his bank accounts showed regular deposits of enormous sums of credits coinciding with known information leaks and Collective actions. It was Vodo's brilliant idea, simple in its own way, to use the man unwittingly as a double agent. The Mole continued to do his job, unaware the information he handled was carefully doctored to mislead his handlers.

Vodo Biask Taldrya stood before a holoprojector pit in the C&C room of the Clan Headquarters. The room had been emptied of everyone save a few essential personnel, who plugged away at their terminals, and the two members of the Clan Summit. The room was darkened but illuminated primarily by the projected spherical image of the planet Caelus. Small symbols orbited around it, entering and exiting the system with regularity. There were indicators of naval patrols, incoming and departing freighters, and several orbital stations.

"Okay Biask" Seraine Tenema said with a clip, "we're here."

Vodo bowed his head respectfully to her, "Lord Consul, Proconsul. I've asked you here to present to you an opportunity which I believe we cannot let pass".

Zxyl Venzos stood motionless, wordless behind his Beskar'gam helmet while Erinyes's eyebrow rose, "And what would that be?"

Tapping a few buttons on his data pad Vodo replaced the projected sphere of Caelus with the head of a Nautolan female, "This is Ghafa Ordam."

Zxyl nodded knowingly as the Warlord continued, "and this is Hirim va Noristoo. Hirim is an old friend and banker of Ordam's. They go back a long ways. Unfortunately the last time they met there was some hard words, accusations of misplaced credits, and some bad blood."

Walking around the perimeter of the holoprojector Vodo continued, "Hirim came to a rather sudden end last year at the hand of one of my Ciphers attempting to abduct him for our own purposes. He was a bit rough for the wear and didn't live long."

"Get to the point, Biask" the Consul said impatiently.

"As you wish", he again inclined his head to her, "I have means by which I have implanted information in the Collective suggesting that Hirim is alive and coming to Clan Taldryan of his own free will. I believe that Ordam will be unable to resist this opportunity to capture his old friend."

The Proconsul unfolded his arms and finally spoke, "what makes you think he would capture va Noristoo and not just turn him into so much space dust?"

The Director of Clan Intelligence grinned, "Because we'll sweeten the prize. With your permission, Lord Consul, I can have it made known to the collective that aboard one of our Raider-class Corvettes will be You, the Consul of Clan Taldryan. She's well known to be a, let's say, hands-on manager and so a secretive high-speed mission shouldn't raise any suspicions."

Erinyes was becoming more interested and it showed as she leaned forward, "but I won't be aboard, right?"

"No, I will", Vodo replied simply.

"How do you know it will be Ordam that comes? He's an important man, he can easily have people do this for him", the Proconsul was still dubious however.

"An excellent question", Vodo tapped a few more buttons on his data pad and the face of Hirim va Noristoo was replaced by that of a modified Dreadnaught heavy cruiser, "This is the _Ocaejar_, a Collective ship operating independently with Ordam aboard it. We send our ship near to him and he will leap at the opportunity. With an opportunity this good he won't wait for reinforcements."



Erinyes hit a few commands on the projector controls before her and the image of a Raider-class ship was placed beside the Ocaejar, "There's a pretty significant disparity in strength here, Biask. How do you propose to handle that?"

Lounge, *Upsilon*-class Command Shuttle Karufr Knight In Transit

The Sith Warlord and his ever-reluctant former apprentice Nihlus Vexrii stood over the small holo-projector in the corner of the Karufr Knight's lounge, going over the final details of their operation. They had the bait, the motive, and certainly the will to execute the audacious plan they had concocted.

"Do you think Ordam will suspect it is a trap?" the Umbaran cyborg's mechanical and modulated voice questioned firmly against the Twi'lek's briefing. The Taldrya's former apprentice stood tall and lithe, his features hidden from view by his ancient regalia. With arms crossed, his ominous onyx faceplate stared Vodo down blankly.

Biask waved the concern off with a quick hand gesture using the hand adorned with his Scion of Taldryan ring. Biask had specifically chosen that hand for that ring, as if to hold himself to a higher level than Vexrii. Because he was.

Still, the Twi'lek addressed the lower Equite's concerns immediately, "Even if she does, the possibility is too good to pass on. When Ghafa Ordam arrives, we'll move from the bridge to the designated holding cell down in the brig and wait. There is no eventuality in which she does not make the journey herself." The Twi'lek's response had been equally as firm as the question poised to him, absolutely certain of what the outcome in the upcoming scenario would be.

We'll see, Nihlus mused to himself. The Umbaran had already experienced a vision of what would come to pass, in his favour no less. The game was always in motion. The elder Equite broke away from the projector, his sinister reverse articulated mechanical legs carrying him with a muffled clank to the cockpit door. It made sense that Biask had sought to muffle the sound of his feet against the ground, given how loud of a noise it still made. Vodo opened the door and gazed down upon his son in the pilot's seat.

"Zakai, how long until we arrive?" his tone had turned even colder in that moment, not warm. There was a level of separation Vodo Biask Taldrya was required to keep with his son, his new apprentice, if the half-Hapan, half-Twi'lek was to prove worthy. The adolescent swiveled in the chair to face his father after checking over the instruments.

"Momentarily, Master. I've already gained authorization for us to dock with the Penumbra." The boy was the model of professionalism.

Access Corridor, Command Deck
Raider II-class Corvette Penumbra
Undisclosed Location

The black and gold Raider II-class Corvette sat motionless in the dead of space with her engines powered down, and officers prepared to raise the deflector shields at maximum the moment the vessel came under assault. This specific corvette-class ship had been uniquely chosen for this mission due to her relationship with the Taldryan Military as a vessel under the purview of the Summit Guard. While usually under command of one of Clan Taldryan's Keepers, it was requisitioned for this operation.

There had been zero doubt while planning the operation that various nefarious agents of The Collective had already determined the Penumbra was assigned to such a post, leading credibility to the leaked intelligence that the Consul was aboard the vessel and watching the rest of the current events unfold rather than engaging in the ordeal herself. As a relatively recent return to the Clan in general terms, Collective agents had no overly meaningful intelligence to use when it came to Taldryan's new leader. Erinyes was shaping up to be a formidable foe in her own right.

Nihlus Vexrii and the half-flesh half-mechanical Twi'lek trotted through-out the vessel unaccompanied by any others. Vodo's mechanical feet clanking and Nihlus' boot heels clicking against the smooth and polished floor of the cruiser's bridge access corridor on the final leg of their journey from the docking point to the command centre. It was only the Umbaran's modulated and mechanical breathing that broke the silence between the two men. The vessel's command staff had been informed of the ship's role in Operation: Get It-Get It, and were told to expect the arrival of the Equites.

As the two entered the bridge at a brisk pace, the crew came alive and the Penumbra's captain, who had been standing slightly off to the side as he awaited their arrival, approached with arms behind his back.

"My Lords," began the commissioned officer as he bowed his head in respect, before motioning with his right hand to the rest of the bridge, "The Penumbra is at your command for this operation. Consul Tenema has already personally briefed me on the plan."

"Good, Captain," grinned Vodo satisfied.

"Let us get the final preparations for the operation underway," stated Nihlus as his attention turned from the bridge crew to the ship's commanding officer as well, "I don't want to risk being unprepared when the Ocejars show up. The Collective's modified Dreadnaught-class ships are not to be under-estimated. Their entire purpose as an organized entity is to eliminate us."

The officer saluted, and headed off to organize the crew and finish the final preparations.



Vodo turned his head to face his faceless, armored ally, taking a moment to note the man's increased presence in the Force.

"Does something ail you, my apprentice?" the Twi'lek sneered with a quick jab, "You seem nervous."

"No." came the cold and heartless reply.

The Penumbra sat in orbit over a yellow-orange gas giant whose only name was a series of letters and numbers assigned by some surveyor in the distant past. There was nothing here of interest, nothing of value, and was more likely to serve as a rendezvous point for pirates and smugglers than as a destination for any legitimate purpose. It was far from everywhere except the one place that was important to the success of this plan. Gafa Ordam and her ship had been refitting above the planet Hurrica Prime while her Task Force made its final preparations for whatever move the Collective was planning against the Brotherhood. By itself the Ocaejar was still a formidable ship but without its fleet it was still only a single ship and there were many ways to deal with that.

Before long the black of space was interrupted by the sudden appearance of a warship decanting from Hyperspace. From the front it had the distinctive blunt rounded face of a Dreadnaught Heavy Cruiser but behind that, where the blocky main-section ended, it appeared to have been melded with a Nebulon B Frigate. A long slender boom extended aft for a hundred meters or more to the casement surrounding the thrusters. Two long sensor fins hung from the prow of the ship diagonally, like the whiskers on a fish while two fins emerged from the thrusters section above and below furthering its aquatic-like grace. The ship was much larger than the Raider II-class corvette and nearly as fast.

Alarm klaxons on the Penumbra wailed, announcing the presence of the enemy vessel. Personnel, not already at their action-stations, rushed fore and aft to their assigned locations. For the trap to work everything must look as though the corvette was caught off-guard and responding as though it should in this situation. The Captain called out his orders as the two Slth stood silently behind him on the bridge. This was, for now, his show and needed no input from either of them. Their part would come soon enough.

"They have us in their tractor beam, Sir", announced the helm officer.

"Thrust to maximum, try to shake it", he replied, "Weapons, target the beam generator".

"Aye, Sir", the woman at the weapon's console responded crisply.

Vodo appreciated a well run ship and it was clear this man took pride in the good order of his crew. The Warlord noted that for the future, perhaps he'd call upon them at some point.

Nihilus could sense the machinery at work in the other Sith's mind and sneered inwardly. Biask was always scheming, even when he had better things to do. Someone might teach him the error of his ways, one of these days...

"Penumbra, this is the Collective Cruiser Ocaejar", the com-officer piped the incoming transmission to the bridge's speakers, "Power down your weapons and thrusters, prepare to be boarded. Any sign of resistance and we will atomize you. Do you understand?"

The voice on the other end was a woman's voice, husky and confident. The Captain looked over his shoulder and seeing Vodo's nod of assent responded, "Ocaejar, this is Captain Dac Jansen of the Penumbra; We are powering down now."

The lithe form of the Ocaejar glided through space until its mass overwhelmed that of the small corvette. It passed overhead and the shadow it cast lay over them like a blanket. The cruiser maneuvered itself so that the corvette nestled beneath the boom between the fore and aft sections. An umbilical extended itself from the cruiser to the corvette and connected the two ships so that a boarding party could pass between the two.

Nihilus looked at his chrono, "Our turn."

The two Sith removed themselves from the bridge and made their way amid ships to the airlock. The sound of docking grapples attaching themselves to the hull could be heard throughout the bulkheads. As they walked Vodo tapped out a command on his wristlink. The device beeped its confirmation and went back to its standby mode. Upon reaching the airlock the two positioned themselves at the back of the corridor and faced the entrance.

"You know, if this doesn't work you will have killed us in the saddest way possible", the black mask of the Umbaran betrayed none of his would-be smirk.

Vodo was silent for a moment, "If we're killed, what will you care?"

The airlock's outer hatch clicked and the sound of its operation could be heard faintly through the ship's skeleton. A minute passed and soon the mechanism of the inner hatch began to click as well. With a gentle hiss of normalizing air pressure the hatch opened. In rushed two armored troopers with weapons raised. One entered and swept his weapon to the right while the other moved to the left. They took up positions at either end of the corridor. Behind them, leaving no pause, two more troopers came in with their weapons held at high-ready and pointed towards the two Sith.

"On your knees! Get down! Get down!" they advanced, making short choppy gestures with the barrels of their weapons downward, reinforcing their command.

Vodo breathed deeply, concentrating on the Force and the illusion that hid the lightsabers at their waists from the Collective troopers. Both Nihilus and he sank to their knees, an awkward task for the Warlord with his reverse-articulated cybernetics. With the room secure and the two Sith kneeling with their hands held up in stepped a tall woman from the airlock. She was a Nautolan of green skin and red eyes that were sharp and intelligent. He possessed an air of



confidence and command that suffused her slim build.

She surveyed the two kneeling before her, though she looked as though she was more interested in being somewhere else, "Who are you?"

"I am Vodo Biask Taldrya and this is Nihilus Vexrii", the Warlord replied simply.

The name struck a chord with Ghafa Ordam, "Biask? Well, that's a welcome surprise... Where is the Consul? I'd like a few words with her."

"I'm afraid we're the only persons of interest on-board", Vexrii said, his sarcastic tone only barely hidden by his mechanical voice.

The body language of the woman changed immediately as she turned her full attention on them. Her many head tails twitched in agitation, "Wait, these two are Force Users. Did you search them for their weapons?"

Ordam's eyes went wide as she looked at the two men on the deck. Where her eyes had previously seen nothing of note she now clearly saw the shape of the enemy's distinctive weapons, "YOU FOOLS!"

The comlink on Ghafa Ordam's belt chirped a brief warning before the corvette shook. The umbilical leading back to the cruiser wobbled concerningly as its metallic supports groaned under the unexpected stress.

Combat erupted in the docking area as the two Sith rose from their lower, "restrained" positions and nabbed the cylindrical weapons from their waists. The blades of the two lightsabers roared to life with the traditional snap-hiss as their hilts were already mid swing. Immediately the two Collective soldiers standing nearby perished as they were maimed into two pieces each. Blaster fire exploded from the rifles of the remaining enemy combatants, but they did little against the two trained Force users in such an enclosed space.

Ghafa attempted to make a break for it back to the Ocejara, but the attempt failed as the armored Vexrii twisted his faceless helmet in her direction to target her. He extended an armored hand in her direction, reaching out and harnessing the power of the Force to grip her by the ankle. The Nautolan quickly lost balance and fell forward, the side of her face smashing into the metallic floor plating and scuffing her cheek. The Sith Battlelord flipped his wrist, wrenching backwards as he pulled the fallen Technocrat back into the battle with a burst of telekinetic energy.

There was another shake from the Raider II and attached Dreadnaught. Ordam's comlink continued its chirp as combat erupted in the docking area, yet answering it was pointless. She knew what they were going to say. The Ocejara was under attack by another vessel, and

she had walked right into a trap. As the Nautolan lifted her head to gaze into the hard dock connecting the two vessels, the airlock door slid closed and locked. A small thud sounded from it a moment later, and her greatest fear was realized; Ghafa Ordam had been left to die.

Vodo had been cutting through the Technocrat's entourage one by one while Nihlus ensured her capture and defended himself, with the Sith Warlord's specially crafted scepter-like long-handle lightsaber burning and eviscerating its way through bodies almost like it were a sport— it was one the half-mechanical Twi'lek was winning. An explosion rocked the opposite side of the Penumbra, a sign to the two Sith that the Dreadnaught-class Collective x60 Heavy Cruiser was making a last ditch effort to destroy them as the Taldryan reinforcements struck the enemy.

Ghafa attempted to fire on Nihlus, but the barrel of her weapon was separated from the rest via an elegant side-swipe by Vodo's lightsaber before she even had the chance to pull the trigger. Before long the rest of the Collective soldiers were dispatched, leaving the Nautolan at the whim of the two Sith.

"Blast," Ordam murmured, cornered. The lead Technocrat was a prisoner of war. With two lightsabers trained on her, she scrambled to her feet and took a step backwards.

"You will come with us, or you won't live long enough to take your next breath," Vodo's voice was cold and harsh. His ruby-red lightsaber blade had been trained on her throat while Vexrii's at her chest. She scoffed at the idea for a moment, but became defeated when she realized there was no immediate way out.

Another explosion rocked the Raider II, shaking the entirety of the ship violently. The Ocejara was increasing its attack. Ghafa was accompanied throughout the vessel to the bridge of the Penumbra as smaller rumbles continued, several bodies laid across the command deck and a couple small fires raging. One of the deck hands immediately approached the two Sith and their captive.

"My lords, we've taken serious damage from the Ocejara even with our reinforcements. Most weapons systems are offline, the shields are down, and parts of the hull are beginning to crack like an egg." There was clearly panic in his voice.

"Very well," Vodo began, "Then we scuttle the ship. Get our people off the Penumbra." The officer frantically scurried away to relay the message to the ship's new commanding officer, the former executive officer. It wasn't long before the crew started scattering. Outside the viewport, the Ocejara was being hammered by the Taldryan reinforcements, one of their Vindicator-class Cruisers, as it itself fired on the Penumbra.

"Let's go, Ordam," Nihlus nudged the Twi'lek with a hand back towards the exit of the bridge. Yet another explosion caused the corvette to shake, with the power flickering. As the three made their way back to the external hard dock being forced side to side in the corridors, Vodo radioed in to Zakai to meet them at the docking point. They continued nearly unabated until a near catastrophic explosion rocked the ship, causing the floor under them to crack and heave slightly under the immense pressure the hull now faced to stay together.



As they neared the hard dock the floor crumbled slightly into the level below, separating Vodo from the two others. Nihlus and Ghafa proceeded a few more steps, before the darkly armored form of the Battlelord turned to face his master on the other side of the wreckage.

Vodo looked down into the hole, a fiery wreck that looked as though it nearly went through the exterior of the ship, before looking back at his captive and former apprentice. The Warlord took a few steps back, concentrating on the Force and his objective as he burst forward on his mechanical legs. As he reached the edge the Sith took a giant leap, carrying himself over the inner-ship chasm and onto the other side. Biask turned to look back down for just a split second to gaze back at what he had conquered, when Nihlus stuck.

The Sith alchemist engaged his former master in a surprise assault, activating his lightsaber and closing the gap with the Taldrya before he knew what was happening. The Twi'lek's focus shifted back, but it was too late. Vexrii raised a hand, reaching out with the Force as he targeted Biask's legs to disable him. By harnessing the powers and his knowledge of Mechu-Deru, Vexrii overloaded the cybernetic's power source and caused them to immediately fail, the Warlord slinking slightly.

Unable to move, it provided Nihlus the perfect opportunity to take his swing at Vodo. With one quick sweep, the Twi'lek's legs were separated at the knees. He remained there for just a moment, when Nihlus gave a little push backwards using a small burst of telekinetic energy.

"Vexrii!" cursed the Warlord, reaching out to grab the edge of what remained of the floor they were on. The edge slipped through his grip, and the Sith tumbled into the smoke and flames that encapsulated the deck below. The Umbaran carried on with his quarry, arriving at the Karufr Knight's dock a moment later. As the two entered the ship without his father and master, Zakai looked puzzled?"

"Where is-" the youth began, before being cut off.

"On the bridge of the Penumbra. We've been instructed to leave," Nihlus cut him off, aware of what the junior Biask was going to ask. Zakai hesitated with his hands over the controls for a minute, before sealing the airlock and disconnecting the Upsilon-class shuttle from the Raider II-class corvette. Nihlus never felt his master's presence in the force abate, and knew the Sith was still alive somewhere on the ship.

One final explosion rocked the Penumbra before the Ocejara was disabled by Taldryan forces, the gold and black corvette losing reactor power and becoming nothing more than a lifeless husk. A few moments later, the reinforcement Vindicator fired on the Raider II to scuttle it, sending the corvette - and it's final surviving crew member onboard, Vodo Biask Taldrya, into the abyss.

"Now, about what you know," Nihlus turned to Ghafa.