

Operation Acklay

General Zentru'la

June 2020

1 Prologue

Major Nuy Vexus had seen more than most, at 122 years old, although most found it difficult to age the Pau'ans, their skin was so drained of all colour it looked almost on the verge of decay, the first thing most people noticed before the bizarrely jagged teeth and sunken eye sockets containing a natural silver left eye in contrast with the black cybernetic right. In his century of life that spanned a tumultuous era, he saw the Galaxy plunged into war the first time during the Clone Wars - a result of the Jedi plot to take over the Galactic Senate. They were little more than war criminals. He lived through the Galactic Civil War, and witnessed the devastation unleashed on the Galaxy by the reign of Darth Vader and Darth Sidious. Two galactic wars - one caused by the Jedi and the other by the Sith. They were no different from each other. The sooner the Galaxy was rid of their childish power squabbles, the better things would be.

The answer was in front of him. He knelt before Rath Oligard. "You summoned me, Lord Superior?" Oligard stood tall, with a broad, powerful frame and fiery orange hair matching the colour of his intense, focused eyes. A thousand games of Dejarik were being played behind them, and he was winning in all of them. He was barely a third of Nuy's age, but a visionary, a natural leader. The Collective was the first true, organised resistance against the evils of the Force and its worshippers. Nuy had joined as soon as he heard about the growing organisation ten years prior.

"Preparations have been proceeding according to schedule," said Oligard, as if they could possibly have been going any other way with him at the helm. "Gwendolyn's Hive Mind troops have surpassed all expectations at every phase of testing. The fleet has never been stronger. The time for proxy wars is over. It is time for us to strike the Dark Brotherhood where they live, at their home-world... on Arx."

It was the moment Nuy had been waiting for. No more messing around on Nancora or Lyra Colony, no more fighting to help the Meraxis Empire on Seraph for minor gains against one Brotherhood clan. He trusted Oligard's strategy,

and understood these proxy wars were smaller parts of a bigger puzzle, but he was glad that the pieces were all coming together for a real attack. For as important as the outer pieces are, the real fun of any puzzle came in the middle. “Show me where to go,” he said, his voice trying to mask the murderous passion in front of the master strategist.

Rath waved a hand. Between them, the hologram of a space station flashed into life, the blue hue forming a torus with a large, castle-like structure on one side and turbolaser batteries protruding outwards. “Nesolat platform,” Oligard said as the hologram began to rotate. “The home of the so-called Shadow Academy.” His disgust at the name was almost palpable. “This is the centre of everything we fight against. This is where their Jedi and Sith train. This is where they study their dark secrets. Without the Shadow Academy... they cannot train new recruits. They cannot continue to use their... mysticism... against us. This is their greatest weapon. We’re going to take it from them.”

“You will be leading a strike team of Liberation Front Partisans. Nefarious, dark secrets are held on the Nesolat. Make sure none live to pass them on. Purge the platform. Leave *none* alive.”

“Acknowledged,” said Nuy, steeling himself for battle. It had been too long since his axe had tasted Dark Brotherhood blood.

“Clearly, they may be anticipating an attack. Our men on the inside tell me they have hired the services of a private military company to protect the platform, the Vornskr Battalion.”

“Mercenaries?” Nuy scoffed. “No challenge?”

“Only a fool goes into battle without understanding the enemy,” Oligard snapped before regaining his composure. “The name of their leader is General Zentru’la.”

“Is that a name I should know?” Nuy said, in the back of his mind imagining a man with interest only in credits, with no integrity, honour, or passion for the fight.

“He assassinated one of our most valuable hostages on Lyra. An old Scholae war hero. Gwendolyn barely got out alive after fighting him on Nancora.”

“So what’s the plan?” Nuy asked. He was perfectly capable of coming up with a battle plan by himself, but there was no need when working with Oligard, he already had everything planned out ten steps ahead.

“Battlegroup Scargill will drop out of hyperspace here,” Oligard said as a formation of red ships flashed into existence, bearing down on the cyan hologram

of the Nesolat. The Lancer-class frigates will open fire on the enemy defences. That's where you come in." Another red ship appeared on the other side of the station. "Once we've got their attention, the *Ziera* and the *Grixxo* will appear here." A swarm of starfighter holograms flooded out of the hangar bays of the Cruisers, boarding the Nesolat. "You will be supported by 40 Partisans. Your helmet has been fitted with a state-of-the-art artificial intelligence programmed to analyse information from our informant to advise on the best course of action. You'll know the enemy's position better than they do. The Hive Mind Marines will provide reinforcements when the space battle has been won."

"Understood. I will proceed to the *Ziera* immediately, Lord Superior." Nuy rose to his feet and saluted Oligard.

"Exercise *extreme* caution," Oligard warned as Nuy exited the room. "General Zentru'la is to be taken seriously. They call him the One Man Army. His men will charge through hardened durasteel for him."

2 21 seconds to launch

The crew of the *Ziera* were calm for a warship about to go to battle. Not being the spearpoint of the attack for a change had instilled a relaxed atmosphere among the crew, knowing they wouldn't be the first to be shot at. Heads turned to face Nuy as he approached the bridge. The Pau'an stood out at the best of times, but at the dawn of war, it wasn't his physical features drew attention, it was his axe. An Arg'garok: a colossal, two handed weapon strapped to his back that would have given most men trouble even walking.

"Major Nuy Vexus," Nuy saluted to a human woman, whose sharp, deep brown eyes contrasted with her bright complexion, and her black hair was matched by a black and gold cloak with standard-issue blaster rifle signifying her as a Partisan.

"Lieutenant Magners, sir," she responded with a voice that echoed with confidence and power. "Welcome aboard the *Ziera*. I'll be your second in command for Operation Acklay."

"It's Major Axeman!" blurted out a young blue-skinned twi'lek beside Magners, earning herself an admonishing glare from the Lieutenant.

"Private Seela is a new recruit," said Magners. "She will be flying your B-Wing Starfighter onto the Nesolat, and *she will remember to address her commanding officer with respect*," Magners growled and Seela huffed petulantly.

Nuy could immediately tell he would enjoy working with Magners. While he personally was known to take some degree of creative liberty with his in-

structions, he would not tolerate the same of those under his command. A firm executive officer made things so much easier. Especially when Seela looked like she belonged on a cantina table, not a military ship. The blaster pistol at her hip covered more skin than her clothing did. Sometimes it was hard to find good recruits. “I hope your talents outweigh your ability to follow military etiquette. Or I’ll show you how I *really* earned the name Major Axeman,” Nuy warned and Seela notably recoiled backwards.

The only thing common to the Partisan army was the colour scheme of black and gold. Humans, rodians, zabraks, men, women, large, small, armed with blaster rifles, pistols, heavy weapons, swords, vibroknucklers. Even on a mission like this, recruitment was tough. They didn’t have much, but they had something to believe in, and that’s all they needed. That is why they would be victorious. It was the one thing that kept them all together, the belief in Rath Oligard’s ideals.

A bleep sounded in Nuy’s ear, followed by a synthetic female voice. “Scargill has engaged with Dark Brotherhood forces. Commence Operation Acklay immediately.” It seemed he would not get the pleasure of getting to know his whole team personally.

“Captain, make the jump!” Nuy ordered. “Partisans, to the hangar bay!”