

Behind the Lines

SBL Ric Palpatater

Pin # 3160

Ulr Uvi, moon of Ulress – Spaceport District

It was a dark and stormy night, well not really. It was dark and a bit cold but it almost never stormed here on the inside of Ulress. The bustle of traffic was loud, the echoes of vehicles had no way to dissipate like they did on other worlds, even those that were larger and more crowded.

Ric was so thankful that his armored helmet filtered out most of the background noise. It would have been enough to drive him crazy. He looked at his partner, Malodin, and motioned towards the darkened building ahead. He had not been to this place in years and wasn't shocked to see it hadn't really changed at all. The last time he had been here, he had been a part of Excidium and had helped to take the place from the crime lords who ruled it. Now he sort of had almost the same intention just not on that large of a scale.

The locked door in front of the two armored men stood blocking their way. Ric reached into the pocket on his belt and removed a key. He had been given it by an old friend many years go and never needed it until now. The door opened and they men went inside.

Seeing how far the place had fallen made Ric miss the old days, but it was also a challenge for him to get things going again. They made their way to the main room and Ric activated the interior lights. In the harsh light, Ric could see that dust tauntauns and spiders had taken over the bar room. The entire place looked like an abandoned Sith Lords tomb on Exogal. He knew that there was a lot of work to do before they could get the place open.

Ric jumped at the sound of a blaster shot. He dropped to a defensive posture and looked at Mal who had fired towards the corner.

“What the hell, Mal!” he exclaimed.

“Sorry, there were rats,” Mal explained as he slid his blaster back into the holster on his hip.

“A little warning next time, OK amigo?” Ric shook his head and moved farther into the bar that had formerly been Alara's Place. He walked the entire building and came back to the main room. It was going to be some work but in the end it would be worth it.

It was at that moment that Ric's comlink began to chirp and he brought the message up on his HUD. “We got to go. Reports of an attack on Brotherhood bases have been coming in and we have been summoned by the Emperor.”

The men exited the bar and locked it back up. Ric knew that they would be back to it soon enough.

XQ-1 Platform – Danktooine Asteroid

A short hop in the Holdout saw Ric and Malodin arrive at the outer platform around Danktooine. It was going to be a small layover as they only needed to refuel and rearm the old YT-1300 before heading back to clan headquarters. Ric had flown into trouble before without fuel and rockets,

he wasn't about to do it again.

As they waited for the deck crew to finish their tasks, alarms began to blare through out the station. Ric looked out the window and watched as a large crystal looking asteroid passed by. It was purple in color and was leaving a trail of what looked like static electrical emanations. The lights began to flicker and finally shut off with the glaring red of the emergency lighting kicking on. Ric locked his helmet back on and checked his HUD. From what he could tell, the crystal acted more or less like an ION cannon and had knocked out the main systems on the station.

As he turned to head back towards the hanger, he began to feel vibrations in the deck. He had enough experience in space combat to know that someone had boarded the station and there was a fight going on. Ric pulled out his blaster rifle and moved towards the corridor with Malodin close behind. It was time to see what was going on below decks.

The sound of a firefight began to intensify and so had the vibrations in the deck. Ric looked out another viewport and watched as two Victory Class Star Destroyers flew by and strafed the platform, doing massive amounts of damage and knocking out what systems that had still been active. Life support and gravity had taken hits and were beginning to fail, something that would really make things a bit more difficult. Ric knew that he and Malodin would be fine, their armor would mitigate the environment but he knew that most of the people on the station were lost.

“We need to get to the ship and get out of here,” Ric said and Malodin nodded his agreement.

“This way,” Malodin said as he took the lead and headed out.

As they entered the hanger, they took cover behind crates and watched as station personnel were engaged with a group of well, Ric didn't really know what. He had never seen whatever these things were before in his lives. They appeared to be some sort of monstrous being that was a mix of something organic and crystal. They watched as the battle unfolded and the stations defenders were overwhelmed by the assault. Ric noted that blaster fire more or less bounced off the monsters and when it didn't, it seemed to be shrugged off by the organic parts. He would look over the footage his HUD had been recording later, but for now they had to get to the ship somehow. After the fight, the enemy began to move towards the hangers exits and make their way through the station. Ric knew that they really couldn't do much for the survivors, they were lost, but he knew that they could be avenged.

Ric and Malodin moved towards the Holdout and made their way inside. Both men knew that with the enemy ships nearby, they couldn't launch without being attacked. They had to figure out a way to get out without being seen.

“I have an idea,” Ric said as he turned towards Malodin. “I am going to set a charge on the hanger bay shield and blow it. Once that is done, we should just float out with the rest of the stuff in here.”

Malodin began to get the ship ready and had everything on stand by while Ric set the charges and returned to the ship. As he took his seat, both men strapped in and got ready. Ric activated the explosives and with a lurch, the ship was pushed out of the hanger with everything else that wasn't bolted down. The Holdout tumbled out of the station and began to spin head over heel. They could see the enemy ships passing by on the way to Seraph.

Ric slowed their tumble and began to drift away as they watched the platform began to fall towards Danktooine. It wouldn't be long until it hit the surface and maybe take out the asteroid base there. Ric looked towards the communications unit and wondered if he could get a signal to the Clan Headquarters on Seraph without being detected. For now, they were drifting like any other piece of debris but if they tried to signal they would light up like a LifeDay Tree on Kashyyyk.

What they needed was a distraction, something to occupy the Victory Star Destroyer that had taken up station nearby. As they waited, the men began to bounce ideas off of each other, sometimes ones that were good and some that were horrible. As a TIE Fighter floated by, one that had also been in the hanger but had never launched, an idea struck Malodin.

“How hard would it be for you to throttle up that fighter and send it towards that Vic?” he said.

Ric had flown TIE Fighters during his service to the Empire, decades ago. He knew the controls well and knew how to set them. What he didn't know was if he could do what Malodin was suggesting. He had not used the Force in a long time, not since he had been under the influence of the Insidious.

"I don't know. I don't really do that anymore, not since, well... you know," Ric replied.

"I know that but lives depend on it. Not just ours but, others as well, including Kieras as well," Kiera was Ric's former apprentice. She had become a Knight and was off doing her thing for the clan. Ric thought of her as a daughter, he had basically raised her since she was a small child. He knew that he could always try, if for no other reason than for her.

He closed his eyes and focused his mind on the small fighter drifting outside. In his mind he could see the controls and what needed to be done to send the ship blasting away, causing the distraction that they needed. He tried to focus but couldn't seem to make it happen. With an aggravated grunt he slapped the arm of the pilot's chair in frustration.

"Give it one more try and if it doesn't work, we can just blast our way out. Wouldn't be the first time," Malodin said.

"Might be the last time though. This is a rather larger force than what we usually fight. I'll try again," Ric closed his eyes and focused on the ship again. He focused on the ignition switch and pressed it with his mind. The small ship's ION engine lit up and roared to life. With a small smile, he slowly pushed the throttle forward and the ship began to move off. This movement attracted fire from the Victory as it approached. Ric shoved the throttles full forward and the ship leapt towards the enemy vessel.

As it did, Malodin fired a small communication drone towards Seraph with a message about what was going on out here. The drone flared into lightspeed as quickly as it launched, not being spotted by the Victory Destroyer as it was trying to shoot down the TIE. With a flash of light, a turbolaser blast connected with the TIE Fighter and it exploded, sending pieces of it in all directions.

Ric hoped that the drone made it to Seraph before the assault fleet did. He was in no position at the moment to do much more.