

A LIFE AT WAR: TWILIGHT

Chapter 10: The First Chevauchée

The Chevauchée, the process of a medieval cavalry force burning and pillaging everything in front of them. Most famously used by the Black Prince of England during the 100 years war. I don't know why I know this, but it is almost fitting to what we were about to do. The ships were fueled and we had enough food to last a month and enough spare hull pieces to rebuild an eighth of each ship in the fleet. Just in case we had enough ordnance to last just short of a continuous two week long engagement.

Finally we had crammed eight AT-RTs and two LAATs within the Little Revenge and the Dagger. The entire mission had lead to Hope company being reshuffled. Captain Chain was still stationed aboard the Little Revenge with about fifty of his men, but the remainder had been moved to the Dagger for the first target.

I had also bent the rules a tad and only sent my request for the mission as far up as it absolutely had to. I have the annoying feeling that there's a leak within Republic High Command. So I only sent it up as far as my closest Jedi General, who happened to be Jedi High Generall Plo Koon. It only took a day for him to approve the plan. I have a sneaking suspicion that the Jedi aren't

used to the level of paperwork they're being subjected to, because that was unreasonably fast.

With all members of the section briefed and the final checks being made I stood at my usual position on the bridge. I readjust my officers cap before glancing out the window. One of Bastard squadron's Y-wings had gotten slightly too close to the ship during their repositioning. Simultaneously I notice the Lucky Kelp being left by her last transport, the shuttle having brought a couple stragglers and munitions into her hold.

"Sir, we're ready for your orders." I hear from Commander Mi-Kus.

"Wonderful, put me on all our comms channels."

"You're on sir." I hear from Sargent Slas.

"Members of the 347th it is time for a fine campaign. We will show the Separatists the error of their ways and help take pressure off of the other front lines. In the name of the Republic we will destroy the enemies' production and protection. May the Force be with us and may the Maker preserve us. All ships make the jump to Munto Codru."

A moment later the 347th Outer Rim Section was swallowed up, one by one, by the swirling lights of Hyperspace.

The section exits hyperspace piecemeal and assembles into a spearhead. The Little Revenge was on point, the duet of MC30cs on either side, the Buckler wedged in between the Lucky Kelp and the Little Revenge and the Dagger and Bastard Squadron in reserve.

“Sir, scanners are not picking up any enemy presence. Our sensor buoys at the edge of the system are also not detecting any immediate movements.” I hear Mi-Kus report.

“Excellent, move us into low orbit above the reported factory and prepare the orbital bombardment. We’ll keep Little Squadron in hanger for now.”

“Yes sir.” I hear multiple voices bark in return.

As we moved closer and closer to the planet I was getting mildly anxious. That the Separatists would build a factory without obvious defenses seemed quite stupid and I was already expecting to meet some kind of resistance. All ships had to cut shield power to successfully fight off the gravitational pull of the planet, a good time for the enemy to attack.

"We're in position sir."

"Is the factory in range?"

"Yes sir." Comes the reply.

"All Ships, begin precision bombardment of 52 degrees 52 minutes longitude and 13 degrees 40 minutes latitude. Make it three volleys. You may fire at will."

I look through the window to see lasers, proton bombs and turbolaser blasts descend towards the planet below. The first volley smashing into the ground, throwing up debris, slag and stone into the air. The remaining two volleys disappear into the cloud of dust.

"Report." I demand.

"First volley appears to have damaged outlying infrastructure and warehouses. It appears the enemy has shielded the central factory."

“Kark. Alright, we knew this might happen. Jam their communications. Captain Chain?”

The clone moves closer to respond: “Yes, sir.”

“Deploy Hope Company. Lieutenant Mi-Kus I want their landing zone cleared. Make a precision bombardment at Point Pot. Captain, you will deploy your men from the Little Revenge to secure the landing of the Dagger. You will disable the shield generator. I don’t care if you do it by disabling the power supply or by destroying the shield outright, but I want it gone.”

If you discover this tale on Amazon, be aware that it has been stolen. Please report the violation.

The clone nods before saluting and heading off. I walk over towards the center of the bridge and nod towards one of the bridge officers. A moment later the tactical display is up and is showing the ships in position above the factory.

“Sergeant Slas, inform the Lucky Kelp, Prince’s Duty and Buckler to move outside the gravitational pull of Munto Codru. They are to assume a defensive

position in case of an enemy counter attack, they will follow Captain Faxe's command until we rejoin them. Keep an eye out for any Cronau radiation, I want to be informed if there is an inkling of an enemy attack."

"Yes sir." The Mon Calamari replies.

Now, time to trust the flesh droids. Who knows they might even impress me.

Chain thought this was a bit over the top for a landing, but he wasn't the type of Clone to question his orders. Senior Captain Dericote had requested the landing zone safe and if the Captain thought the best way to do that was to create a slag landing pad who was he to judge.

"Sir, we're green light in one minute." The Clone heard through his headset.

"Alright boys," he started, "we're going to clear the landing zone and allow the Dagger to unload the rest of us and the couple arms-men who have the guts to join us in this. I want the perimeter cleared and Besh Squad will start scouting around. Double up towards the factory."

As the Clones jump to do as ordered the LAATs return to the Little Revenge to gather up the last members of Hope Company. The Dagger meanwhile slowly begins to descend, touching down its landing gear with a series of thuds and opening her frontal cargo bay ramp to unload about a hundred Clones and a dozen Navy arms-men.

The Clones and two dozen arms-men move into formation and begin heading in the direction of the factory. The foliage and hills of the planet giving the squads cover to move between and obscuring any movements the Republic ground forces make. They reconvene with the scouts Chain had sent ahead and carefully continue forward. Finally the command squad make it up to a small ridge overlooking the many craters the bombardment made around the still intact and shielded factory.

Chain places the macrobinoculars to his helmet and zooms in on the enemy emplacement. Originally the factory complex had sat on three square kilometers. The shield had protected two square kilometers from the bombardment, leaving the occasional ruin among the craters before him. Maybe half a kilometer within the shield was a large generator, though it looked like a rush job to him. Scattered throughout the other remaining buildings were a couple bunkers and fortified walls, manned by B1s and the occasional B2.

Chain returns to his men and starts giving orders: "Roll Squad and Mud Squad will cause a distraction near opposite of the target, call the LAATs for

your evac when I give the command, they should have dropped off the rest of us by the Dagger by now. The rest of us will make an attack on the power generator. We run in and set up a perimeter around it and secure our entryway for later exit. Link Squad will place as many explosives as possible, so hand over any spare ordnance to them. After that we retreat back here and blow the thing. Any questions?”

“No sir.” the Clone’s brothers reply. The Navy arms-men meanwhile mostly nod in affirmation.

A few minutes pass then, *“Contact made sir. Enemy are starting to gather on our position.”*

“Move out, FOR THE REPUBLIC!” Chain shouts as he and his men begin to rush inside the shield, dipping inside ruined buildings and craters as they run forward. A couple B1s move barely outside the shield and begin to fire upon the clones. A half ruined warehouse reveals itself as a droid rapid laser nest and the enemy blasterfire stops the advance for a moment until a couple Clones silence the nest with grenades.

The droids return within the shield and Chain is the first Republic soldier who passes through the blue hue of the field. He shoots a blasterbolt into the head of one of the B1s and continues forward, firing all the way at any droid he sees. His men were close behind him, arms-man to his left and brother to his

right. The assault had shaken up the formation more than expected yet still they advanced until they were fighting next to the generator.

The droids continue to fire on their position. There were more of them now. Whoever was in command had seemingly realized the Republic's actual target and was sending more clankers to try and recapture the area around the generator. Blue and red blasterbolts fly between the cover of the Republic force and the advancing droids of the Separatists.

"Sir, the charges are in place." Chain hears from his helmet comm as he nails another B1 in the chest.

"Alright boys, let's get the kark out of here. Quickly now!" He shouts.

The Republic forces started to leave the factory complex. The way was still held open by the Clones' brothers. Blasterbolts still flying all around the complex, impacting on the bodies of retreating Clones and advancing droids alike. The Clones were left where they fell, their comrades unable to risk the mission for the bodies of the dead. Finally they emerge from the shield and run through the rubble to the brush and foliage, where they could count on more cover.

“Roll and Mud squad, call your evac now and return to the Little Revenge. The rest of the company will bunk on the Dagger. Lieutenant Bugs, contact the Dagger and inform them we will be arriving shortly. Whoever has the detonator may blow the damn thing now.” Chain orders.

A moment later an explosion shakes the earth and makes a few of the men to stumble. Behind them the generator had gone up in flames and the shield started to fizzle out. Despite meeting their objective they weren't out of the woodwork yet. A couple hundred battledroids were pursuing the clones through the brush. The Republic forces were in sight of the Dagger when the droids finally caught up with them, forcing the Clones and arms-men to take cover and return fire. After diving behind a log Chain punches in his comms codes before activating a miniature holodisplay. The display took a moment before depicting Captain Dericote in miniature.

“Sir, we have eliminated the enemy shield, requesting air support about half a kilometer in front of us, roughly three from the Dagger. This is a danger close target, I repeat a danger close target!” the Clone shouts, trying to get the communications device to pick up his voice with all the blasterfire.

“Understood Captain. Bastard Squadron has detached multiple bombers to support you. They will be informed on the required accuracy. Helmsman bring us about. Dericote out.” The man replies.

Chain could see the Little Revenge reposition itself a bit as a quartet of Y-wings break off and head towards the droids. As the first turbolaser impacts the ground kilometers away the Y-wings unload their payload across the battledroid line, turning the droids into slag, scrap and debris, flying in all directions.

Chin sighs in relief. The fight was over, now all that was left was to finish the evacuation: "All right men, get onboard. Besh Platoon look for any survivors outside the target area of the bombardment. Rest of you hurry up."

Chain looks around to see the destruction surrounding him. It had felt like a blur, like the battle should have taken longer. His armor was stained with ash and grime and he looked around to see maybe half the company moving back to the Dagger.

"Fire at will. The battery with the best fire rate at the end of this will be given bonuses and commendations." I inform.

The turbolasers impact on the factory again and again, turning the installation to a sea of craters, rubble and slag. I wait patiently for them to finish before looking at their work. Scanners were reading nothing, no functioning electronics, lifeforms or anything else of note.

“Excellent, inform Captain Chain of my compliments on his good work and request a preliminary casualty report from him. Tell Captain Sicato he is to pick off as soon as possible. Bring us into orbit and assemble the Section, if possible I want us gone within the hour.”

“Yes sir.” Comes the reply of Sergeant Slas.

As I watch the planet grow farther and farther from us as we move into the void. Shields returned as our systems normalized and I felt myself release some tension I didn’t know I had. It only took another twenty minutes for the Dagger to rejoin the formation.

“Sergeant Slas, inform the fleet we will jump to our next objective. Helmsman bring us to the exit point. Prepare for jump.”

Another five minutes and we were in the relative safety of hyperspace.

Bonus chapter 1: Comrades in Misery

I was mad at my parents. Those assholes first never listen to me and then when I finally tell them what I want in life and they actually **hear** what I'm saying those bastards fucking tell me no. They say no! To pursuing higher education like ma' did! Well fuck them then. Fuck the bullies at school. And fuck my brain for being different. I don't care what they want me to be and if I can't decide what to do with my life than I might as well do something enjoyable.

That is how I find myself walking into one of the shady bars in one of the less prosperous parts of Fondor City, maybe an hour away from home by train. That was fine by me. I didn't plan on going home until school started again day after tomorrow.

I had scrounged up a bit of pocket money and ... relocated some cash from the bullies who pick on some of my fellow classmates and previously myself. Rich assholes the lot of them. Who even needs credits when the food is free? Anyhow, I finally sit down at the bar and order a beer. Maybe half an hour later I had three empty bottles of beer and five empty shot glasses next to me as well as being a few dozen chits poorer. I felt better, less stressed, like most of my problems didn't matter anymore.

"Hey, buddy."

“Wha? Leave me lone m not your buddy man.” I mutter back. Not bothering to turn towards whoever the fuck is speaking to me.

“Come on friend, you’re plastered and need some sleep and water.” The bastard who is bugging me continues.

“Leave me lone. I’ll be fiiine and who says I’m your friend, guy?” I mutter back. Can’t this asshole just leave me alone? The misery is coming back and I think I want another shot. Yeah another shot sounds nice right about now.

“Dude, if you don’t come with me the Ministry for Justice will lock both of us up.”

I take a closer look at the dipshit that has the audacity to warn me. Slightly older than me, maybe seventeen. Black hair, green eyes, stubby nose, a tad shorter than me.

“Alright, lead the way.” I say, jumping from the barstool and walking up to the guy. He nods and we both walk rapidly out of the bar and into the less traversed alleys of this workers district. A couple turns here and there and I

was totally lost. If I found one of the larger roads I could find my way back, but from here I was at the mercy of my new acquaintance.

“Sooooo. Guy. Where we heading?” I asked.

“Nowhere.” Came my answer. I suddenly found myself pushed up against a wall with the forearm of my acquaintance uncomfortably placed against my neck. On top of this he pulled a blaster on me and levels it against my stomach before continuing, “I hate to do this, but I’m desperate and I would like you to hand over your credits.”

“Hmmmmm.” I hummed, trying to process what just happened to me. After a moment it clicked and I started speaking, “I almost thought you wanted a kiss. Instead, like every harlot I’ve met, you’re just after my money. I thought we’d clicked man.”

Stolen novel; please report.

That confused him and I felt the pressure on my neck give a little. That was all the opportunity I wanted, I slammed my fist against his blaster, throwing the aim away from me, while pushing him away from me with my other hand. He stumbles back a bit and I throw myself forward and slam into him. My weight and momentum throw both of us to the ground. I wasn’t sure where the blaster

was, but we were currently exchanging blows with our fists while rolling across the road and the sand, trying to get on top of the other.

“If you wanted some credits, kark, I would’ve given ya some, ya , fuck -ing bastard.” I got out in between punches.

“Yeah right. You upper class, ouch! Snobs don't give a damn bout us.” Came my reply.

I finally managed to get on top of him again and straddled him and got a hold of his wrists with my hands. Now in a position of power I started processing what I was hearing and feeling. I really wanted to figure out what I was thinking, but the damn booze was messing with my head.

After a moment of him squirming I finally got out what I wanted to say: “Look, firstly, pulling a blaster on me iss not cool. Secondly I don’t want to fight you. Thirdly if you wanted credits I would’ve given ya some. Believe it or not I don’t give a flying fuck about much right now and I would’ve happily parted with my questionably acquired money.”

I wasn’t quite sure what emotions were flickering across his face, but after a bit he stopped struggling and I slowly got off of him. I walk to one side of the alley and lean against the wall. The nausea hits me bad right then and I empty

my guts into a gutter. Ugh, nasty. After catching my breath a little I lean back against the wall and pull a tobacco stick from a pack I had in my jacket. I stick the thing in my mouth before pulling out a package of matches. A quick flick of my wrist later and I inhale the smoke before slowly releasing it from my nose.

I didn't even notice it when my attempted mugger leaned against the wall next to me, starring up past the buildings into the smog filled sky.

"You shouldn't smoke those." I hear him say.

"I probably shouldn't drink either." I reply.

"You really meant what you said?"

"Sure, I have about a hundred spare credits I was planning on drinking away tonight, but since you ever so rudely interrupted me, I guess I might as well give em to ya." I say before taking another deep drag of the stick. My left hand sneaks into my pocket then and grabs a couple credit chits. I hold them out to my companion. He waits a bit before snatching them up and putting them in his own pocket.

“What’s your name?” He asks.

“Thraken. Yours?” I ask back.

“Elix.” Comes my reply.

“Well Elix, wanna tell me why ya needed dem chits?” I ask, feeling the adrenaline fully leave my body.

“I got a ship from my parents. I need cash to get the fuel and a spare part or two so I can start working with it.”

“So you decided to rob a teenager in hopes he’d have enough cash to buy you a full fuel tank?” I ask, barely able to understand his logic.

“In my defense I am trying to be legitimate, but the wills only left enough money to pay for the parking and to pay off a couple debtors. I can’t really pay the rest off without a tank of fuel now can I? Barely making enough cash at the day job to pay off rent and interest. I’ve been getting desperate.”

"I can tell. Ya know, I feel bad for ya. If ya wanna I might be able to get you some cash every now and then. It'd take a while, but I think I might be able to help ya." I mutter back.

"Thraken, if you're being honest I would kiss you."

"No thanks, helpin ya is enough for me. And don't really swing either way too." I mutter.

"Well ... thanks anyway." My new friend replies.

"Might as well start trying to do something good with my life." I reply, my own head turning up towards the sky. A moment passes before I speak again, "Think we'll see the some stars tonight?"

"Probably not. I'd be surprised if we saw the shipyards in this weather."

"At least there isn't a sandstorm." I mutter back. A speeder passes overhead, its shrieking engine probably waking everyone up on the block.

“You really mean what you’ve promised?”

“Sure, might be difficult to find ya, but it’s the least I can do for a friend in need.” I reply.

“Friend?”

“Worse ways to start a friendship than an attempted muggin.” I say.

“Better ways too.” Elix replies.

I drop the finished stick and stamp out the last embers on the street. I pull a piece of flimsy from a pocket and a pen from another before writing down my address and handing the flimsy to my new friend.

“What’s this?”

“My address, if you’re ever in need. My folks ain’t round much, xept every third workday, they both got that off.” I answer.

“Thank you Thraken.”

“What are friends for.”

After that we left the alley and I started heading towards the closest train station. I ended up home a lot earlier than planned, but I had as much money left over as I'd planned and was richer in a better way too.