

A LIFE AT WAR: TWILIGHT

Chapter 14: Pilots, Promotions and Panic

The route we were taking out of Separatist controlled space was allegedly an old lane, that got less maintenance after some Duro explorer found the current routes. The current lanes were safer and quicker overall, but this one had the advantage of avoiding a lot of worlds we had hit this last week and being rather seasonal. I was rather lucky one of my older starcharts mentioned it, even if it took R4 and I a couple hours of scouring older Judicial charts to actually find the damn thing. It would take us dangerously close to the Separatist Capitol of Raxus, but it would avoid going through the same systems we had come through on. It should spit us out somewhere between Dellalt and Pakuuni, where we'll recalculate our path with another seasonal route back to Mon Cala via Munto Codru.

I had secluded myself in my quarters to start writing up the reports for the last battles, the resupply request report and the start of the campaign report. I was cursing the over complicated bureaucracy of the Republic. The paperwork was about a thousand years out of date, because why would the Senate reform military procedure without a military? Another reason to curse the Ruusan Reformation and demilitarization of the Republic, I guess.

We had finally reached the re-adjustment point. I had used the opportunity to inform High Command of the casualties taken by the squadrons and my request to promote all survivors. They had agreed, and informed me that I should not expect any reinforcements until the full report had been sent off and reviewed.

A whistle from R4 brought me out of my musings to remind me I had requested to meet the five survivors of the Little and Bastard squadrons. The meeting would be in ten minutes, which was enough time for me to tidy up my uniform a tad. I took my officer's cap off and removed my gloves. Full morning etiquette would be too personal, but a personal touch would be required.

I stood up from my desk when the five survivors entered the office, handing the report I was writing to R4, who took it from me with her metal arm. I came around my desk and observed the two clones standing at attention alongside the volunteer pilots. I motioned for them to relax which the volunteers did.

"I must commend you all for your success. I am glad to see you five still among us." I begin.

"Thank you, sir." One of the clones answer, I think this was CT-932-227 also known as Crash.

“I was lucky to have Crash as my pilot, sir.” My assumption was confirmed by the other clone, CT-997-228 also known as Teight.

“I am glad to hear so.” I reply, my eyes now drifting to the two human women and Zabrak male.

“I just feel lucky to have survived.” Fri Laus, the Zabrak says.

“Don’t know if we would have gotten in without Solo, throwing off their targeting computers by cutting her engines.” The Pilot, Ara Apu speaks up.

“Just doing my job.” Hege Solo replies.

“Well I am happy to inform you all about your imminent promotions. Not only excellent maneuvers and high kills, but for surviving in the first place. I have been permitted via a quick communique with the higher ups to reward you all. I wish to promote Sergeant Solo to Lieutenant of Little Squadron, Corporal Apu to Lieutenant of Bastard Squadron, with the remaining members of Bastard Squadron promoted to Sergeant. Any objections?”

I wait a moment to let it sink in. I receive no objections. I smile a little at that before continuing: “Excellent. I thank you for meeting with me. If you require any help you can ask one of the maintenance droids for assistance. I will inform the higher ups of your acceptance. Anything else?”

It takes a moment for the newly minted Sergeant Teight to speak up: “Would it be possible to add nose art to our ships?”

I blink at that. Another request for paint from the clones. Was that a part of their bred in culture or just a quirk of their combined characters? It didn’t matter, I simply nod in affirmation. The five survivors salute before marching out. I return to my desk and return to writing my report.

I didn’t fully relax until we exited hyperspace within Mon Cala. We had almost been intercepted by a random Separatist Patrol near Mintooine, but we jumped away before they exited hyperspace. Honestly I don’t know how long I’ll be able to live under this kind of stress. Might need to smuggle some booze on board or find a way to contact some older friends and see if they can get a message to my folks.

I had a bit of a shouting match with the local harbormaster because I insisted on having all my ships repaired in the same area. The Mon Calamari administrator had said it would be too much of a hassle to move the ships being constructed or repaired, while I insisted it was for operational security. I

finally caved and let the harbormaster repair the ships where he could find space.

I managed to finish my reports faster than I expected. I suppose getting thorough casualty reports from my subordinates made the entire thing easier. I even managed to send the after action reports in at the same time as my resupply request. I needed at least twenty nine clones to reinforce Hope company, as well as the fighters and bombers to replenish Little and Bastard squadrons. And to replenish about four dozen crew who died during the campaign. Though I was not looking forward to writing the letters of condolence for their families. At least I wasn't the one who handed them to the grieving family members of the deceased.

A couple days after we'd finally returned safely to Dac, I received the notice for a high priority meeting I was to have with High Command. I was happily residing in my room, R4 playing some calming music for me as I finished up the formal Letter of Marque and reprisal for Hondo when I received the notice. I would be having the meeting in an hour.

My first thought was that I was being called in for a court-martial. After a moment of panic I realized they would demand I leave my ship for that and this was simply a meeting, right? So, I stopped what I was doing, grabbed my after action reports, my campaign report, my logistics resupply request, which was still being processed, and polished my officer's badge before assembling my dress uniform.

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I rush to the private communications room with ten minutes to spare, R4 trailing behind me loyally. I had to calm down. This was probably some higher up, doing office politics or I had made some mistake in one of the dozen odd reports I had sent in. Making the paperwork the Grand Army and Navy of the Republic demanded was absurd.

I finally calm myself when the notification comes through. I answer the call and a miniature blue holograph of Jedi High General Plo Koon emerges before me. I salute then stand at attention waiting for the Jedi to speak. In retrospect I suppose it made sense for him to give me the reply from High Command since he green-lit my plan.

"At ease, Captain." The Kel Dor says. I relax my stance a bit and remain silent.

The Jedi Master makes a noise that sounded a lot like a sigh before continuing: *"After reading your report and hearing of the success of your operation High Command wishes to commend you. The Supreme Chancellor offers you the promotion to Commodore. As the current closest Systems Army*

leader it was my pleasure to approve of the recommendation and inform you of it. Do you accept?"

Thoughts swirl through my head. Relief at not being subjected to a court-martial, worry and pride about the Supreme Chancellor recommending me for promotion, shock at the idea of being promoted after about twelve weeks of fighting a war and concern about the 347th being shuffled around.

I finally organize my thoughts before speaking: "What would happen to the 347th Outer Rim Section, sir?"

The Jedi smiles, though it is hard to tell with the mask, then speaks: *"You will remain in command of the 347th alongside the 159th Logistics Section. This should ease your supply concerns you mentioned in a previous report of yours."*

"Sir, may I inquire of the capabilities of the 159th Logistics Section?" I ask.

"Of course, three Peltas in logistical configuration and one Pelta armed frigate alongside two Consular class corvettes, Captain." I receive in reply.

Karabast, kark, fuck, scheiße, son of a bitch, those fucking hurensöhne are incompetent Mulks and Rurk hating idiots. They where sticking me with my

own logistics section, but nothing actually secure enough or fast enough to escape an enemy convoy raid. They essentially increased my responsibilities for the worse. I would need to split the 347th to escort the 159th safely, which would undermine my offensive capabilities. I can't not accept, that would undermine my authority and likely sour any positive relations I may have had higher up. Karabast some sleemo has me by the balls. They're making my damn command more fucking difficult.

"Then I accept, sir. When should I expect the 159th to arrive?" I ask, my voice sounding slightly choked.

"Within two weeks, though a separate convoy will reinforce your clone casualties before then. I am furthermore pleased to say the following, Commodore Thraken Dericote. I hereby place you in command of the reactivated 97th Outer Rim Squadron, made up of the 347th Outer Rim Section and the 159th Logistics Section. May the Force be with you." Jedi High General Plo Koon says. I salute him as the holograph goes out.

-----Panic attack starts here-----

Two weeks, I was fucked. This was too fast, too much responsibility. Is my breathing increasing? Someone is out to get me. High command wants me dead. I am doomed, set up for failure. Is R4 nudging me? Surrounded by

enemies. I'm gonna die, I'm already dead. Kark. I think I'm hyperventilating. Why am I on the floor? Oh dear. What's even the point? I can't breathe.

R4-K3 is a good droid. When baby Thraken cried she either got him help or helps him herself. When Little Thraken falls to the ground, breathing rapidly and without much oxygen getting to him. R4-K3 knows this is probably a panic attack. Little Thraken had suffered them in the past. She was never able to help him out of them alone. She starts nudging him to try and snap him out of it anyway. He only falls down on the floor and she starts to worry more. She cannot help him, Little Thraken would not want his subordinates to see him like this. He needs a family member or friend, an old one preferably.

She starts calculating rapidly: Father Owen is not in system. Mother Naomi is not in system. Cousin Hugo, also not in system and Little Thraken dislikes him. Elix, is not in system. Charley is deactivated (Deceased). Alice, is not in system. Luis is in system, but a subordinate, Dao is deactivated (Deceased), Faxe is in system, but a subordinate. Little Thraken needs more friends.

Seniority of friendship will have to do. She begins to hail Luis Sicato and apparently wakes him up if the loud thud and moaning is anything to go by. She quickly whistles and wines at him until he gets the message. That's why she like Sicato, he knows enough droidspeak to get by and is a quick learner. He says something about being there in five minutes.

Little Thraken is remembering his exercises to help stop the panic. He is trying to adjust his breathing to her whirring and slow whistles. He is touching her leg and is quietly counting down five things he can see, four things he can feel, three things he can hear, two things he can smell and one thing he can taste. His eyes are still distant and his breathing is still too fast for comfort.

-----Panic attack ends-----

The door opens and Luis is standing there, in an undershirt and pants. He forgot his shoes again, R4-K3 remembers Little Thraken complaining about Luis forgetting them when late to class, she is surprised he hasn't removed that habit. Silly organic.

R4-K3 turns her head back to Little Thraken and whistles to him: "Got your friend here. Calm down. You're safe.-" she turns back to Luis and continues- "Little Thraken has been promoted to Commodore, he had a panic attack and is currently recovering. You can converse with him easier than me. I will stand guard."

R4-K3 is a good droid. She leaves Little Thraken with his friend and stands in front of the door. If anyone asks her anything she will say Little Thraken is having a meeting, no one will interrupt that and it is not a lie. She is a good droid, even though she can only do so much to help. She is a good ... sister. Yes, she is a good sister. Because it is all she can be right now.

I look up to see Luis look at R4 leave. Oh, thank the Maker I think I'm done. Damn haven't had a panic attack since I was ... 24? During the navigation final on Carida, that had been fun, turns out I had a misprint of the map, somehow. I was permitted to retake the exam the next day when they realized the mistake.

Right, Luis is starring at me in concern. I should probably get up. Never mind, the floor is far more stable I'll stay here.

"Are you alright now?" Luis asks.

"Ignoring the concerns I have, yeah." I reply.

"Did I hear R4 correctly about you being promoted to Commodore?"

"Yup, unless that was a hallucination." I reply again.

"What caused this?" He asks, so full of questions.

“The promotion. The fact that they’re sending a Logistics Section to serve under me. The fact that the karking Supreme Chancellor recommended me for it. The feeling that this war isn’t going anywhere. I mean while we were gone we lost Felucia again, full scale retreat this time too. I don’t think we’ll survive this and I don’t know if I can keep doing this.” I say, eyes pointed at Luis bare feet. Huh he forgot his shoes again.

“Thraken,-” he sighs- “you know you can trust us, right? Delegate. I know you’ve been writing every casualty letter. I know you’ve been writing every report and resupply request yourself. Maker knows the form you have us fill out is open for all Captains to edit and change when we’re in the same system.”

“Come on, It’s my duty to-”

“It is your duty to delegate and command.” He interrupts me. Luis sighs again before continuing: “Really you should delegate more duties of the Little Revenge to Lieutenant Commander Mi-Kus and with the promotion someone should take the Senior Captaincy of the 347th. Did High Command even promote anyone for that?”

“Fine, I’ll delegate some more duties to Mi-Kus. And no, they did not. They also did not give me express permission to do so myself. With the whole giving a letter of marque to a well known trouble making pirate I don’t want to push any further than my mandate specifically allows for a while.”

He nods at that, smirks, then speaks: “Fair enough, I thought they’d haul your ass in for a hearing at least for that.”

“Don’t remind me. I still need to hand the damn thing over to him.”

He chuckles at that: “What are you gonna take when handing it over?”

“Probably just the Little Revenge. I want as many people to relax until we next head out. I plan on taking all of Hope Company with me, we’ll have the new recruits by the time I head out for it. It should be a nice training exercise for them.”

Luis nodded again before speaking: “You good now?”

“Yeah. I think so. Let’s hope the next one takes longer than three years to show its ugly as a Hutt face.”

“I’m pretty sure that’s racist.” Luis counters.

“Almost all of them deserve it.”

“Not claiming otherwise.”

I finally get up before motioning for the door: “Yeah. Let’s just ... get out of here, I’ll get you some breakfast since R4 ever so kindly woke you up for me.”

“Sounds like a good exchange to me.” he says.

We both walk out of there and head for my quarters, though I think this whole ordeal may have started a couple rumors.