

A LIFE AT WAR: TWILIGHT

Chapter 16: The right honorable business of Privateering

I have recently found, that being shot at is far more preferable to being shot. I am currently at the portside docking port, about to greet Hondo, with my left arm in a sling and some gauze wrapped around my right ear, both bathed in a less than recommended amount of bacta. A B1 had hit me in the arm with a blasterbolt and the last B2 grazed me just above my ear leaving a gash of cauterized flesh on my head, cutting through my usual hairline.

It had not been a fun shouting match with the medics. It took most of my willpower to not only convince them to prioritize the bacta and painkillers for people who needed it more than me and to let me out of the damn med bay to meet Ohnaka. I think I'll make sure the med bay is overstocked for the future, the idea of Doctor Tevre imprisoning me for my own good was giving me shivers. My pockets feel a bit empty too, without the spare slugs in them. I had almost gone through my entire supply of them in the fight and would need to either make new ones myself, have someone scrounge the droids for them or find a fellow Fondorian who'd be willing to sell me some of the right make.

Ohnaka enters the Little Revenge from his frigate, walking past the first blastdoor like he owned the ship. He had four of his men behind him and a red

kowakian monkey-lizard on his shoulder. I had Chain on my right, one of the Clone Lieutenants, I think his name was Bugs of the remnants of first platoon, on my left. Behind them was a Midshipman and another clone, while R4 stood slightly behind me.

“Ohnaka. Welcome aboard. I wish to thank you for your assistance in the previous battle. I understand you wish for further negotiations, as well as the formal hand off of the letter of marque?” I ask.

“First, my friend, it is so good to finally meet face to face.” The pirate states, “I am glad to see I backed the right pod with you. Haha! Commodore Dericote has such a fine ring to it doesn’t it? Now, I of course am more than happy to assist you in your endeavors, but fighting is expensive. I used up quite a few valuable munitions. Those missiles are not cheap! Especially with the black market up-charge!”

“I understand that, maybe we should discuss the finer details in my office.” I say, wanting to get into a more private setting.

“Why not, I am sure my men here can stay outside, no?”

“I have no objections to that.” I reply. We walked to my quarters, avoiding some of the droid scrap. The dead had already been moved out of the way

and the wounded were in the slightly above capacity med-bay. We finally reach my quarters where I gestured for my escorts to wait outside with the members of the Ohnaka gang, while I, R4 Hondo and his monkey-lizard enter my quarters.

I sit behind my desk, R4 rolling next to me, while Hondo sits himself on the chair across from me, putting his boots on my desk and his hands behind his head. I ignore the lack of manners and pull out a bottle of whiskey I had picked up back on Corellia, before the war, and hadn't bothered opening yet. I pour him a glass, then myself and pull out the suitable guestfoods for him alongside a knife for the cheese. I raise my glass in toast which the pirate returns. We both drink, though I'm certain he waits until my glass is half empty before he starts drinking.

"Well, Ohnaka. I have the letter here for you to look over.-" I start as I hand the prepared datapad over- "Standard bounties and bonuses. Limited reward for Separatist civilian ships, usual rates for Separatist supply ships, corvettes and frigates, double that for a cruiser, triple for a battleship. A bonus for a monthly information package, a doubled bonus for any information given which immediately leads to a Republic victory. A major fine for any Republic information sold to third parties, with a revocation of the letter of marque for selling information to a party which the Republic is at war with or for fighting against Republic vessels. For collection you just head to a Republic controlled port, though I think you'd want to keep to the outer Rim, since I am almost certain you have a warrant or three out for you for kidnapping two Jedi Generals."

“I object to that! I did not kidnap them, that was a cultural misunderstanding.” The pirate prince lies as he moves his boots off the table.

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“Sure, well a couple of my superiors disagree.” I say before continuing, “Anyway, any high grade weaponry used in destroying something bigger or equal in value to a cruiser will be reimbursed by the Republic. Now, that does it, you simply need to sign at the bottom, biological signature, if possible in case of any gang splitting, and the letter is yours.”

The Weequay finished browsing the letter before giving it a quick signature with the stylus. He hands it back to me and I pass it along to R4 who places it within her chassis to make a copy of it on another datapad. A moment later she hands back the original which I pass back to Hondo, who hands it to his monkey-lizard to hold onto.

Hondo pets the animal as he speaks: “Now this is all well and good, but you are forgetting my additional fees!”

“This would be the rough agreement made between yourself and my representative Lieutenant Mi-Kus?” I ask.

“Yes, him. He agreed to any price!” “Within reason.” “-Within reason!” the pirate finishes.

“Well I am willing to listen to your terms.” I say.

“I want supplies, foodstuffs, metals, medical supplies, things I can sell, no credits.” The pirates starts.

“I believe we can spare some military grade rations now, or I can request a supply ship with rations and some extra medical supplies within the month.” I reply.

“We will wait. An exchange here or somewhere else?” The pirate prods.

“You can safely travel to Mon Cala now.” I reply.

“Then I shall oversee this transfer of foodstuffs and medical supplies myself when you give me a precise date. However! I wish for something more.”

“What?” I ask, taking another sip for my sanity’s sake.

“Weapons. For our increased effectiveness against the Separatists!”

“I am not giving you one of my ships.” I immediately shoot that idea down.

“I was thinking slightly smaller. I want some military hardware. Ground vehicles and fighters and blasters, with ammunition for all of them.” The pirate demands.

“I do not have the authority to sell, let alone give away Republic war material.” I say.

“Come, now. Certainly this is negotiable” The pirate says.

I pause for a moment, thinking it over carefully. If someone finds out, I’m getting court-martialed. I am also putting a lot of trust into the pirate in front of

me. Something else I could offer him? Something outdated? No, the closest thing to outdated are in militia units or in planetary security forces, it would ruin any goodwill at best and be impossible at worst. Fuel and ammunition and the supplies are possible, simply give him partial credit for the duel here and fudge up some dates, by accident. Maybe ...

“Understand legally I cannot offer any such options with my current rank, however if you were to scavenge a battlefield afterwards. I would simply be informing a valued ally of a location where potential wounded are located. Wounded which we would be happy to have retrieved without having to slow any time sensitive operations. If some weaponry or equipment does not come with the wounded, or the dead, who are we to judge.” I offer.

Ohnaka looks at me. He appears to come to a decision as he puts forward his hand to accept the offer. I shake it and we toast to a successful agreement.

I will be honest. The casualty report did not inspire me. The destruction of the hangar ended up costing the crew a hundred and six lives. Hope Company ended up losing fifty one men, mostly from first platoon. The only officer left, from it, a Lieutenant Bugs had renamed her Door Platoon. The entire remaining platoon, all eight of them, had painted hand sized blastdoor over their shoulder pads. The arms-men had lost a further forty nine soldiers. The remaining crew suffering a further hundred and twelve dead through fighting off the boarding party and dying from enemy fire. A total of three hundred eighteen dead. Not to mention the four hundred twelve wounded.

Too many. Too many dead, too many injured. And my wounds were itching under the damn bandages. The medbay had made do, but I did not want something like this to happen to my ship again. So damage control. We made it back to Dac relatively safely and were stuck there for another week for repairs. I made my report as meticulous as possible, trying not to omit anything, though I argued with myself about writing down that I had left the bridge twice to fight off the boarding party. I decided I might as well include it at this point.

Something else was bothering me. The barricades had worked quite well for holding off the enemy. The main problem had been the inability to set them up quickly as well as the immobility of them. It was the tank question all over again. A soldier is getting shot at, so how does he get from where he is to where he's going without getting shot dead. The First World War on Earth had the most innovation to this question. Foxholes, trenches, almost Medieval suits of armor, tanks, tankets, shields. Shields.

I move to my data-terminal. This required a full paper. Scientific if possible with a true thesis. Multiple experiments, it would have to be light enough to be carried around, blaster resistant, slugthrowers aren't used in enough numbers to force a change. Something was itching at me. Which peoples used shields? Usually uncivilized species would. Ones which refused blaster technology. Didn't the native Naboo have another species on their world which were like that? Food for thought.

I would need multiple technicians, or. Or I made the argument for the shields and request a thorough test after a preliminary production run. Boarding actions. Why should the Republic be the only ones to risk being successfully boarded and having their ships taken. The shields, heavy weapons, explosive charges for blastdoors. I would need support from other officers, preferably those not directly under my command. Who could I ask?

Admiral Dao died on Ryloth recently, so my senior on Carida is unavailable. Rear Admiral Tenant could work, though I would need to give him partial credit at least and co-authorship if he is stubborn about it. Maybe a couple other Captains would be willing to co-sign a petition once the paper is done and published? Tenant could easily help with that.

Maybe I'm getting ahead of myself. However I am stuck here anyway, so I might as well start drawing up military theory. At this point I would be willing to make a fool of myself if it had a chance of saving more lives.