

A LIFE AT WAR: TWILIGHT

Chapter 3: The First War

I was allowed onto the bridge for the Hyperspace exit. I don't think I'll ever get sick of seeing the whites and blues of hyperspace coiling around a ship. It was simply mesmerizing. Yet when the lights receded and we exited hyperspace I finally saw the area the 347th Outer Rim Section was patrolling. Mon Cala, also known as Dac, was a beautiful world. A simple blue dot with the tiniest hints of green and gray where the few islands and cities pierced the waters' surface.

I moved my attention to the shipyards. They had been damaged recently in a series of terrorist attacks, but they were already being repaired and refurbished to return to their fullest production capacity. I felt a pang of mild jealousy on behalf of Fondor. Mon Cala had shipyards to rival many a core world and this lull in their production would only last so long. Though the greatest 'insult' was her beauty. I could tell from here how stunning the world below was. Just to think of it, a world filled with water as far as the eye could see. Saltwater mind you, but water none the less.

The cargo ship docked to one of the Stations and I exited the craft. I signed in to the Judiciary outpost and they hauled me and R4-K3 to a shuttle to take me to my new ship.

When the shuttle docked with the Little Revenge I schooled my expression. I glanced over my uniform, tapped my officers badge and readjusted my officers cap. The doors opened and I was greeted by my new officers.

"Permission to come aboard?" I ask.

The one in front saluted me and spoke: "Granted sir, welcome aboard the Little Revenge. The ship is yours."

I return the salute before stepping into the ship. I shake the mans hand and introduced myself: "Captain Thraken Dericote, of Fondor, a pleasure to be aboard."

"Lieutenant Commander Mi-Kus, of Coruscant, the pleasure is ours."

I was introduced to the rest of my command staff and was given a tour of the ship. From the engine block to the crew quarters, to the turbolaser batteries. The tour ended on the command deck where I officially took the ceremonial captain's chair. The thing was quite uncomfortable and I decided I would remove it from its central location. I preferred standing anyway.

The bridge comms officer grabs my attention: "Sir, Senior Captain Di-Van is requesting you."

I nodded and stood, awaiting the hologram to appear in front of me. A moment later a full sized man appears before me in holographic blue. He was slightly fat, with a receding hairline and a walrus mustache. His uniform was immaculate and his officers badge was very well polished. I salute the man and stand at attention.

He nods and speaks first, his core world accent thick and upper class inherent in his voice: *"Well, I suppose you're my newest subordinate. Senior Captain Di-Van of Alsakan. How do you like your new ship? I must say I never liked my Dreadnought, the Cores' Bastard a fine name, but an awful ship. Especially with the crew sizes. It is a miracle and a half that these things even fly. Meanwhile I heard Rendili StarDrive is developing a few new ships. Maybe they'll even be worth something, eh?"*

"I like my ship very much sir and I suppose we'll find out soon." Was my reply.

“Very good, very good. Now, we’re basically just patrolling the shipyards. If there are any reports of piracy we are to engage them. You will follow my commands no matter what and I think we’ll get along just fine. Just remember not to get too big for your cap. Very well, that’ll be all. Any questions, Captain?”

“Not at this moment, sir.” I reply calmly.

“Very good. If there’s anything of importance, my standard operations office hours are from oh-nine-hundred, Coruscant standard time, to sixteen-hundred, with an hour or two for lunch around thirteen hundred hours. Since that is all, enjoy your ship. I plan on sending you a dinner invitation in a couple days time and would enjoy your presence. Dismissed.” The man orders.

I gave a quick salute as the hologram went out. I look around the bridge to find the crew busy working at their stations. Finding nothing wrong with it I beckoned R4 forward and took the datapad she handed to me.

I read through the most recent intelligence report I was privy to then switched to the news. Something about a series of assassination attempts on the young senator of Naboo. Not overly unusual, but still surprising in its brazenness. I guess Republic politics doesn’t change much.

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I suppose I shouldn't be so surprised. In hindsight the warning signs had been there. The uptick in officer transfers to Carida, Anaxes and other academies. The sudden promotion of myself and letting me choose another officer for captaincy. The slightest tension in Sullust I had thought was due to the pirates.

We were at war. Tragically we found out about this during one of the slightly awkward dinners shared between the higher ranking officers of the section. The Judiciary forces had been folded into the new Republic Navy. My posting hadn't changed and neither had the names of sections, or squadrons, only the bureaucracy and the return of the old names, honorifics and titles.

Mon Cala had decided to stay loyal and so the 347th Outer Rim Section had new orders. Protect the Shipyards alongside the Dac Merchant Fleet. If the monarchy secedes, retreat and join forces for the counterattack. With the final order being blanket permission to engage any smaller Separatist force where we would suffer no more than twenty five percent casualties.

The 347th O.R. Section had also been reinforced. Senior Captain Di-Van having transferred his command to the recently arrived Acclamator named 'Petty Hope' while giving her old captain command over his Dreadnought and making her his second in command. Alongside the Acclamator came one

Junior Captain Faxe Strom in his new command, a CR90 Corellian corvette named 'Buckler'. To my surprise one final ship joined the section. A Pelta Frigate named 'Dagger' under the command of Junior Captain Luis Sicato.

Alongside the Navy reinforcements came a company of Clones. Each ship was given a handful of squads of them to hold off any boarding actions. My new Lieutenant was CT-0987-07 or Chain. He was a good man, clone, whatever, though his loyalty to the Republic was a tad too overzealous for my tastes.

We spent the first week of the war patrolling and reading reports on which planets, sectors or conglomerates chose sides. The borders were solidifying. I was happy to see Fondor stayed loyal to the Republic for now. It filled me with pride, I made certain though to request a couple of cultural staples from my family to hopefully last me through the war.

I had run out of guestbread, a traditional bread offered to guests of the household. I was uncertain if the guestcheese, another traditional guest offering of hard cheese to be eaten with the bread, would last me longer than a year. Finally I asked pa' for permission to carry the ancestral slugthrower pistol into battle. He had agreed to send it to me with the care package of guestfoods.

After about two weeks and a half into the war the borders had solidified and the first battles begun. Ryloth had fallen to the Separatists and a series of colony worlds near Fondor had declared for the Separatists, which pressured her, however unwillingly, into joining the Separatists.

My own homeworld, a world whose people relied so heavily on Republic intervention in the past. Had turned its cloak. Had struck the red banners and replaced them with blue. I was worried for my family and threw myself into drilling my crew and trying to keep my mind from it.

In the third week of the war, Senior Captain Di-Van had decided the entire Section would assault a lightly defended Separatist space station at Munto Codru. I briefed my officers of the plan and made my final checks. As I stood over the bridge I take a deep breath before slowly exhaling. First battle I'd fight in this war. Maker I hope I don't die. What'd I tell ma' and pa'? Despite my worrying the fleet made its final hyperspace calculations and we jumped.

I tapped the leather holster at my left hip as I patrolled the stations of my bridge crew. Inside was the familial slugthrower. Something used since the my first ancestors settled Fondor to defend themselves against wildlife, pirates and one another. A weapon stained in blood and passed from the head of house to their heir, either on their wedding day or when they need the family's protection the most.

Hyperspace swirls in front of me. The Section would use the traditional line tactics. The Acclamator in the center, the two Dreadnoughts flanking it. Meanwhile the Pelta, Dagger, and CR90, Buckler, would try to intercept any hostile fighters or bombers while using their point defense to target any incoming missiles or torpedoes.

“Give me a sitrep.” I order.

“We will arrive in two minutes, sir.” Comes the report from navigation.

“Weapons batteries are prepared and ready. Shields are stable.” Reports my Lieutenant Mi-Kus

“Engines are looking good, though the secondary reactor is acting up again.” Reports engineering.

“My men are ready sir.” Comes the final report from Lieutenant Chain.

“Focus shields to front, and let reactor two rest for a minute, until that’s calmed it down.” I order.

The minutes tick by until the navigations officer pipes up: “Exciting hyperspace in five, four, three, two, one.”

The swirling of hyperspace fades as we return to real space. On our portside was the Little Hope and Buckler and directly ahead of us was a small installation, about 200 meters tall and sixty in diameter, in orbit of Munto Codru.

“All ships, stay in formation, move into turbolaser range and fire at will. I want that station crashing into that world within the hour.” Came the announcement from Senior Captain Di-Van.

“You heard the man, all ahead forward. Bring us into range.” I repeat.

The five ships approach the station. The two V-19 Torrent squadrons and one BTL-B Y-Wing squadron leaving the hangers of the Acclamator and begin to escort the rest of the section. Then the first turbolaser salvos emerges from the guns of the Little Hope. They fly for a few seconds before all but one miss the target.

“All fore turbolaser batteries, open fire. Let’s try to hit the target more than once though.” I command.

A moment later a volley of blue lights emerge from around the bridge. They fly rapidly towards the station. We were closer than before and so all but three blasts hit the target installation. I nodded and bid the head gunnery officer to continue at their leisure.

Another salvo from the Little Hope followed by the first salvo from the Cores’ Bastard. As the turbolasers repeatedly smash into the station the shields fold and the first munitions smash into it’s armor.

Though something is rubbing me the wrong way. I tap the holster on my right and ask: “Lieutenant have they returned fire at all?”

A pause as Mi-Kus reads through the tactical display. He answers: “No sir, but intel did say it was a refueling station with only a light garrison.”

I turn to him and approach his station. I look at what he has pulled up the turn towards him: “Then where is the garrison?”

I return to the center of the ship and begin barking orders: "Give me Captain Di-Van now! Hold fire and give me calculations to return to Mon Cala. Prepare rapid maneuvers, but wait for my order."

"Sir, Captain Di-Van is not responding."

"I don't care punch me through if you must but I request he respond as soon as possible." I reply anger seeping into my voice.

A few moments later a hologram of the Senior Captain appears before me. He looks unhappy, his eyes almost wrathful.

"What is it Captain Dericote. You are breaking Comms silence. The whole point is to have this be a surprise!" He yells.

"Sir, intel said there would be a garrison. Where is it?"

He pauses a moment, the anger subsiding as he thinks. He answers: *"Well they aren't here. We'll finish the destruction of the installation, then return to Mon Cala, unless we are informed they are under attack. Understood?"*

“Yes sir.” Is my reply, “Open up with everything we have. I want that hunk of junk out of the sky.”

The Forward batteries open up again, this time joined by a handful of the lighter quad-turbolaser cannons and heavy laser cannons. About three minutes later, the station had been fully destroyed, a hunk of slag slowly descending towards the planet. It took too long in my opinion. Finally we returned to Dac, having met our primary objective.