

A LIFE AT WAR: TWILIGHT

Chapter 7: Princely negotiations

“Five, four, three, two, exiting.” I hear navigations say.

“Launch fighters and kick reactor two back on. We’ll need accuracy for this and I think the turbolasers ought to be unnecessary, give them a broadside of our heavy lasers.” I order.

The ship starts to turn giving her flank to the separatist convoy. Intelligence and the buoys had been right, two Gozantis and four Hardcell-class transports. We had found a relatively safe entry point and were facing them from the enemy port side.

“Have the Dagger and the Buckler move to cut off the main avenues for retreat.” I continue.

The Little Revenge came about as the two Gozantis moved to attack us. The first heavy laser salvo left the starboard turrets and raced towards the enemy

ships. Two smashed into the leading Gozanti, another in the trailing Gozanti and three smashed into the shields of the transports.

After a moment of observing I continue: "Send the bombers to assault the transports, make it an attack from above, have the fighters split. I want half escorting us as a reserve and the other half moving to connect with the Buckler."

Another salvo of heavy lasers smash into the separatist forces. The shields of the first Gozanti break leaving weak scorch marks on its front. A series of laserblasts from the Dagger join in the bombardment. They smash into the transports, one gets lucky and hits a fuel stockpile on the edge of one of the transports and the entire ship lights up like a candle before being snuffed out by the vacuum of space.

Another volley of heavy lasers emerge from the Little Revenge and race towards the advancing Gozantis. The Gozantis themselves finally open fire, their light lasercannons firing rapidly, but unable to penetrate the Dreadnought's shields. Our return fire smash into the corvettes, one piercing the forward armor and emerging from the engine block. The Gozanti subjected to this starts to drift off its course of attack, dead in space.

Another volley from the Little Revenge puts the remaining Gozanti out of its misery. Just then the Y-Wings had started their attack run. Each bomber firing

one of their proton torpedoes towards the remaining three transports. I loom towards the display five hits, seven misses, no misfires. The successful torpedoes smash into the opposing transports. All but one do not last the attack. The sole remaining ship turns rapidly and suddenly jumps into hyperspace.

I frown at this and begin to pull the fleet together again: "Reform the formation and begin calculating the jump back to Mon Cala. Have the fighters re-enter the hangar and let's blow this place."

It only took seven minutes before we were enveloped by the comforting glow of Hyperspace. Kark, I could have done that better, even with one enemy escaping the reinforcements would probably mean more dead clones and lost Republic war materials. Another mistake like this and I could get someone killed.

We returned to Dac, morale slightly improved. There had been a couple of reasons behind choosing the previous target, mainly to raid a nearly unsupported group of enemy military hardware, but also to improve morale after Dellalt. If we had not had such a decisive victory I may have had to expect a tripling of transfers. Instead only six further transfers had been filed and accepted.

I did have to worry about negotiations with the Polity of Mon Cala, there was little certainty in them being willing to hand over two frigates, even with their considerable Merchant Fleet. Especially after the failed Insurrection of the Quarren Isolation League at the beginning of the war, they may be more willing to negotiate the purchase of two frigates and the induction of their crews into the Republic Navy, but an official meeting was still needed to smooth over egos and clarify details.

I sighed before finishing off my preparations for the meeting. Uniform was without issue, officers badge nicely shined, ancestral slugthrower loaded and attached to my hip, R4 fully charged and as usual recording for the meeting. That had been a good investment, increasing the memory banks to add holorecordings in case he needed them for court or simply to expand the historical record. I was still a historian at heart after all.

Finally I board the shuttle and begin reading through the newest intelligence report while waiting for the ship to land on one of the few above sea level cities where the negotiations would be taking place. The shuttle shudders slightly notifying me we had landed. I hand the datapad to R4 who takes it back into her internal storage. As the ramp starts to descend I step onto it, arriving at the floor shortly after it had fully descended.

I was greeted by a mix of Mon Calamari Guards and a Quarren negotiator. I approach the party and stop about a meter in front of the Quarren. I give a salute before offering my hand. The Quarren taking my hand and giving it a

firm shake. Time to put on a slight facade. My father had pounded this lesson into me when I'd started my military career. It is almost always safer to be seen as the overeager and unburdened officer when dealing with most politicians early on. I had used this with a couple professors at the Academy on Carida, who had balked at someone not from the Inner Core trying to be an officer, Maker watch over any rimward students those dolts had.

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I smile before speaking: "Good afternoon sir, I am Senior Captain Dericote of the 347th Outer Rim Section and Little Revenge. It is an absolute pleasure."

"Greetings Captain. I am Chief Nossor Ri, representative of my people and in this case the world of Dac." The chief spoke.

I nod in recognition before speaking: "It is an honor that the people of Dac have decided to honor us with such a high ranking member of governance."

The Quarren releases a sigh at that: "Well we will also be joined by Prince Lee-Char, as a silent observer."

My eyebrows shoot up at that. To already have a member of the monarchy alongside the leader of the Quarren people join in negotiations bode well for the Republic. As Chief Nossar motions for us to head inside I was almost giddy at the prospect of getting the new ships. My smile didn't widen when I spoke again: "Wonderful, I look forward to meeting the young Prince."

As we pass through the halls I admire the architecture. Mostly white walls tapering into the floors and ceilings. It made the entire building feel like the inside of a fishbowl. We finally reach a room, which while under the surface of the ocean was without water, to my benefit. Inside stood a young yellow skinned Mon Calamari, his blue eyes shining with excitement, I think. It was always a tad hard to get used to other species' facial expressions, though an old Herglic neighbor had long ago gotten me used to some of the more common expressions used by aquatic species in the galaxy.

I give a curt bow before following the Chief towards a table besides a large window, which gave a view of the waters below. The Quarren sits on one side of the oval table, followed by the Prince on his right. I sit myself on the opposite side of the table with R4 scurrying to my left. I wait for my hosts to begin the formalities, it did not take long.

"Senior Captain Dericote, next to me is Prince Lee-Char, future Chief of the Mon Calamari. I hope these negotiations are quick and prosperous for all parties involved." The Quarren started.

“It is an honor, Chief Nossar, Prince Lee-Char. I wish these negotiations are quick and bring you wealth.” Came my reply.

The Chief nods before speaking once more: “Are we, the people of Dac, correct in understanding the Republic wishes to commandeer two of our frigates and press their crews into service?”

I stilled at that. Though it was the Republic’s right to do that in the most dire of circumstances, that had not happened yet during the war. The fleets made from Rothana, Kuat and other major shipyards had ensured that. This however was the Outer Rim, where the fleets were spread incredibly thinly, it would not be unreasonable for any governments here to doubt the Republic’s sincerity in purchasing ships.

“That is not fully correct honorable Chief. The Republic wishes to purchase two frigates and hire enough local crewmen to fully man them.” I reply.

“Yes you would say it like that. What ships are you ordered to purchase, what are the rates you will purchase the ships for and how much will the crews be paid?” The Quarren asks.

“I would enjoy purchasing two frigates, on behalf of the Republic. My superiors suggested the new MC30c model for a total of eighteen million credits. The pay the crew will receive shall be the same as any full fledged member of the Navy. The usual rates for officers, Captains, engineers, gunners and the remaining crew.” I reply.

“that is not what the frigates are worth, Captain.”

“The Republic is not in the best financial state, wars are expensive and we are tragically a low priority section.” I reply.

“We will be pleased to part with the frigates for twenty three million credits. Our crews will not part without an additional stipend for joining under duress.”

“Duress? We are asking for volunteers.”

“Yes, yes, volunteers. Why would they join you, when the Merchant Fleet pays better and is safer?” The Quarren asks.

“We are willing to give them full benefits, befitting any member of the Navy. However we may have problems going higher than nineteen million for the ships.” I say.

“I am certain we can find some willing sentients to join under such circumstances. However going lower than twenty two million is still an insult to our peoples.” The Quarren refutes.

“Well at least the issue of crews has been set in stone, R4 note that please into the contracts.” The astromech gives a small whistle before I continue, “I think I will be able to persuade high command to part with nineteen million seven hundred thousand credits for the frigates.”

Despite my expectations a different voice answers me: “Deal!”

I slowly turn my head towards the young prince who had just now accepted the deal on behalf of his government. Ah monarchical privilege, so wonderful when it works out in your favor.

“Wonderful, your majesty. R4 adjust the price on the contract and upload it to datapad two. I think we’ll go ahead and sign it now.” I press.

The Quarren Chief glares at the Prince, who has started to realize his blunder. R4 ejects a datapad from her frame which I finish pulling out of her. I quickly sign the document then push it towards the opposite negotiators, a slight smile gracing my face: "Of course, if this was a misunderstanding we can re-draft the contract on another day, though my superiors will not be pleased in the negotiations taking longer than strictly necessary."

The Quarren picks up the datapad before reading it in detail. It takes the chief a view minutes, this was a relatively simple contract after all. Purchasing ships and exercising the right of the Republic to ask a member state to request volunteers for the military, only the exact amount in payments really needed to be adjusted. This entire meeting could have been done in a few messages if I was being honest. Though I suppose Navy tradition and politicking had to be kept alive somehow. Finally Chief Ri signs the document and hands the datapad back to me. I place it back into R4's chassis who copies the contents of the contract before ejecting the datapad again. I hand it over to the negotiators before standing up. The other two join me and I offer the Chief my hand.

"Truly it is wonderful when negotiations go so smoothly." I say.

Chief Nossar takes my hand and shakes it once before replying: "Truly so, though I wish cooler minds had prevailed more."

“I am certain we can forgive slight missteps from our youth. Even those who will hold power in the hopefully distant future.” I reply, “Though I still hope this deal has been satisfactory for all parties involved.”

“It will do. Close enough to our wishes to not upset too many members in Parliament.” The chief answers.

“Lovely, now if you excuse me I need to transfer the details of this deal to my superiors and update our logistical needs. That reminds me R4 see if you can find some space to add a couple more sensor buoys, please. Thank you for your hospitality Chief, your majesty, and I wish you both a lovely day.”

I receive nods from them both before heading out. Thank the Maker the Prince had made that blunder, it was getting dangerously close to the maximum my superiors had allowed for the purchase and I did not want to continue operations without the two new ships. A smirk graces my face as my shuttle leaves atmosphere for orbit. It is about time to cause more havoc upon Separatist trade lanes.