

Star Wars: Imperial Treachery

Chapter 3

Nayt Fillion sat back in his chair and listened to the soothing voice that sang away on the radio. The voice belonged to Arcia, the Krayt maiden, the most beautiful woman of Voltar. Nayt knew that there was a long history to the title, but he, like every soldier, just loved to hear her beautiful voice play away on the radio.

“And that was our very own Arcia ladies and gentlemen, singing a battle hymn for our men-at-arms,” the announcer addressed. “Remember to show your support to our soldiers and their fight against the rebel scum.” Fillion shook his head, *he* was a rebel.

The rebels and the Nationalists had been at war for years, it was a bloody war that had cost thousands on both sides their lives and so far, the Nationalists had everything: they held the government, the church and the Krayt maiden. He sighed and waited for the next hymn. As the next hymn began he imagined Arcia on a stage with her light brown hair flowing in the wind singing to him and only him. A blinking light on the radio filled the small closet that served as his office in a red light and interrupted his thoughts. The red light signified that a Nationalist was reporting to their Headquarters in Viscera. Fillion turned a knob on the radio which cut Arcia out and switched to the communication line.

“HQ, this is prisoner transport TX-18, we’re delivering the rebel sympathizers to Caucasus, ETA 20 minutes,” the soldier spoke. Fillion leaned forward and began to write down what he had heard. Fillion’s job was to intercept Nationalist messages and report them to his superiors. Fillion sat back in his chair and sighed as he ran his fingers through his short brown hair. He was always the first to hear everything but the last to do anything and he hated it.

The week before, he had intercepted a message that said that Nationalists were on their way to raid the village of Cicatriz. But like the Nationalist propaganda that was splattered across the towns said, the rebellion was nothing more than a group of people who couldn’t work together, and by the time his superiors had finished their latest argument of “I won’t work with an Easterner or Westerner or whatever” and finally sent troops, Cicatriz had been reduced to only a few unlucky souls. Fillion remembered when they brought the survivors into the medical bay, which was conveniently placed across from his office. He had walked in and saw a rather muscular man sprawled out on a cot, crying uncontrollably. Fillion later read that the man’s name was Eska Var, a deeply religious man who was found in the rubble of the local church along with the bodies of his wife and sixteen year-old son. His daughter, Kea Var, who was around fourteen, had been captured by the Nationalists.

“My baby girl,” Eska sobbed. “They took my baby girl.” He turned to one of the doctors. “Why?” he asked the doctor, who simply ignored Eska’s crying and continued to tend on another injured man. Fillion walked back to his office with a feeling of dread in his heart and knew that that poor man’s daughter had been taken to become a hornet.

A hornet was the Nationalist's elite soldier. During the initial years of the war, hornets were soldiers who had volunteered to undergo a grueling training regiment and transform into essentially an organic machine, but as the years passed, the Nationalists grew desperate and began to kidnap their "candidates". But by now, their candidates were nothing more than children. Fillion had read the report: the average age of the kidnapped was around *eleven*.

Back in the present, rage had begun to bellow in his chest. If *he* had been in control, there might have been a chance. Instead of arguing with his racist comrades, he would have been sending troops to help out Cicatriz and maybe, just maybe, that poor man and his daughter would still be together with the rest of their family.

"Got anythin' interestin'?" a tall red-headed man asked Fillion, which caused him to snap back to reality. He turned to the red-head. It was Skoti Romero, another member of the rebellion. Skoti had joined the rebels after his hometown had been overrun by the Nationalists. He was a good soldier, if you could tolerate his accent. Skoti suffered from what other soldiers called "the Northcent". He had a problem pronouncing the "-ing" suffix, a predominant feature among Northerners. Regardless, he was the one of the most loyal soldiers the rebels had.

"The Nationalists are sending another round of prisoners to Caucasus," Fillion answered in an informal tone.

"You think Neek's on there?" Skoti asked. Neek was a rebel spy who was caught trying to smuggle information to the rebellion a few day before. The higher-ups had deemed Neek a lost cause, and refrained from sending a team to rescue him. Neek had also been a part of Fillion and Skoti's base, so the higher-ups informing them that it wasn't worth the risk to rescue him hit them pretty hard.

"I doubt it," Fillion said. He knew he didn't mean it. There had been no other reports of prisoner transports, so there was almost a hundred percent chance that Neek was onboard that transport.

"HQ, this is DF-88, an unidentified aircraft has just entered my radar," Fillion and Skoti overheard on the radio. "They appear to be transmitting Republic codes."

"Did they just say Republic?" Skoti asked. Fillion nodded his head.

"DF-88, regardless of affiliation, that ship is violating our treaty. You have permission to fire upon Republic ship," The Nationalist headquarters said over the radio.

"HQ, I'm unsure if there are other Republic ships approaching as well," the fighter said. "I'm prepared to stall the Republic ship until reinforcements can arrive."

"Proceed DF-88. Reinforcements will arrive shortly." The Nationalists said.

"Unknown Republic spacecraft, please respond," the fighter said over the radio.

“It couldn’t really be the Republic,” Skoti assured himself. Fillion instinctively grabbed his pad of paper and began to write down the impending conflict.

“This is captain Ial of the *Frayed Hunter*,” the feminine voice said over the radio. Both Skoti and Fillion looked at each other in amazement. “I have orders from Mon Mothma of the Galactic Senate to discuss the integration of your people into the New Republic.”

“You’ve got to be kiddin’ me,” Skoti balked as the two ships communicated with each other.

“I’ve got to report this to command,” Fillion said as he got up and ran down the hall to the nearby communication relay. He punched the code in for the rebel headquarters and waited for it to connect, but he was unable to receive an answer. He punched the code in once more, but still heard dead air. He began to walk back to his office when Skoti walked out. “I can’t reach command,” Fillion explained.

“The radio went dead,” Skoti said, “the Nationalists probably killed all communications.” Fillion went back to his pad of paper and tried to finish his report when suddenly he heard a loud explosion outside. “What was that?” Skoti asked as the ground shook. Fillion stopped writing his report, walked towards the door outside and opened it with caution, unaware of what was happening on the other side.

He was greeted to the sight of escape pods as they rained from the sky, crashing onto the surface. Skoti ran outside and stopped behind Fillion, awestruck at the sight before them. “Is this ... an invasion force?” Skoti asked. Fillion shook his head.

“They’re too small,” Fillion answered, “it’s got to be escapees from the Republic ship.” Suddenly, an escape pod crashed into a bunker within the base. “Secure the area,” Fillion ordered to a group of nearby soldiers, “bring the survivors to me unharmed.”

“Where’s Meda when stuff like this happens?” Skoti asked Fillion. Meda was the leader of the outpost, and was once a ruthless soldier, until the rebellion reduced him to following orders by-the-book.

“Meda is meeting with his superiors,” Fillion informed Skoti, “that technically makes me head of the outpost.” Skoti shook his head and looked back at the sky.

“It looks like they stopped,” he remarked as he headed back inside. “I’ll try to contact Meda. Don’t get too power-hungry,” he said to Fillion before the door closed. Fillion swallowed hard and looked towards the ruined bunker as a group of soldiers approached it with their guns drawn. He hoped that the Republic soldiers would give up without a fight. He was reassured after a few minutes without any gunfire and shortly after, six people exited the bunker along with the soldiers. Fillion walked towards the awaiting survivors.

“Who is the highest ranking officer here?” he asked the group as he approached them. The group looked at each other for moment and then looked at Fillion but remained silent. Fillion grabbed his pistol, removed it from his holster and pointed it to the man in front of him. The man in front of him swallowed hard and a bead of sweat began to form clearly on his forehead. Fillion drew closer to the man and hoped that he would be intimidated enough by just the gun. He didn’t want to kill anyone, yet at least.

“I am,” one of the other men answered. Fillion walked over to the man as he holstered his gun.

“I know your captain isn’t with you,” he retorted. “Do you know where she is?” The man looked at Fillion’s holstered gun and the back at Fillion’s face. “Check the pod,” Fillion ordered the soldiers, who quickly ran back into the bunker. Fillion returned his attention to the survivor in front of him. “What is your rank?” he asked in an attempt to get the man to talk.

“I am a sub-lieutenant of the New Republic,” the man answered.

“*New Republic?*” Fillion asked with intrigue. “Looks the galaxy has changed a lot since we left it.”

“I am a sub-lieutenant of the New Republic,” the sub-lieutenant repeated. Fillion realized he wasn’t going to get any information from the man, but before he could do anything else, one of the soldiers returned from the bunker. “Did you find anything we could use?” Fillion asked the man as he approached him.

“Their technology is advanced,” the soldier explained, “but we uncovered a distress signal that appears to belong to the captain. It looks to be about a hundred clicks east of us.” Fillion swallowed hard once more. The captain was within the Nationalist’s territory.

Echon felt strange. His sight flickered in and out, time felt like it moved slower than usual, and there was a warm sensation on his forehead. Echon lifted his hand to his head and tried to shake the feeling away. He tried to grab a hold of his surroundings. He was still in the cramped escape pod along with Evan, Aurea and Celeste. He took his hand off his head and looked at it; blood engulfed his entire hand. He took hold of the still unbuckled straps that were meant to protect him and he pulled himself back into his seat. He looked around once more and noticed Evan starting to undo his straps.

“You ... okay?” Echon barely heard Celeste say. He turned to her and saw her bright green eyes staring back at him. Echon opened his mouth to say something, but found himself unable to produce any sort of word with it. Evan walked over to him and stared into Echon’s eyes as well. He placed his finger in front of Echon’s eyes and moved it left and right, and despite all his effort, Echon was unable to focus Evan’s finger.

“He’s got a concussion,” Evan said to Celeste as he put his finger down. As he stood back up, Echon spotted Aurea. He stood up, only to fall to the ground. Celeste grabbed his arm and helped him back up. She moved him back into his seat and walked over to Aurea.

“Are you okay?” she asked Aurea, who only nodded her head in response. Celeste walked towards the computer console and entered the code in to transmit the emergency beacon. Unlike days in the past where everyone including your enemy could receive your emergency transmission, Imperial Intelligence had designed a special transmission code that allowed only other Imperial vessels to receive the emergency transmission. After she sent the transmission, she grabbed the med-kit from the shelf above the computer, went back to Echon’s side and began to tend to the wound on his head. Evan looked to Celeste.

“We can still complete this,” he said, “we should-”

“I don’t want to hear it,” Celeste said coldly to him. “We should have turned left when *I* had ordered it.” Evan turned away, discouraged.

“I was only following orders,” Evan said as he tried to explain the situation.

“I’m not,” Celeste barked at him she spun around and stared him down, anger emanating from her eyes. “You tried to kill me.”

“I never intended to harm you,” he said. “The sedative was only meant to knock you out,” he said. “I had no idea that it wouldn’t work on you.”

“You should have remembered that we were trained to withstand that sedative’s effects,” she replied.

“Listen, it was Isard’s orders, I was already taking a big risk not killing you.”

“So you were to kill me after all?” Celeste rhetorically asked.

“I couldn’t bring myself to do it, I ...” Evan stopped himself from finishing. Celeste turned away in disgust. She knew what he wanted to say. “If I could ever make it up to you, I would,” Evan said as he went to place his hand on her shoulder, but she pulled away from him as soon as she felt his fingers graze the fabric of her uniform.

“If you want to make it up to me so badly, go get yourself killed,” she said. Evan looked down at the ground, defeated. The pod remained quiet for a few moments.

“Where are we?” Aurea asked, breaking the silence.

“Hell,” Echon muttered.

“Voltar,” Celeste answered as she ignored Echon’s statement. As she finished tending to his wound, Aurea lifted her head and looked around.

“Someone’s coming,” Aurea then said. “A bunch of them, outside.” Celeste gave a confused look to Echon.

“Strange, I don’t hear a thing,” she said to Aurea in an attempt to calm her down. Evan walked to the door to check on it, but right as he got near it, the door was blown open, and a hand reached in and pulled Evan out of the escape pod. Two men appeared in the doorway, armed with archaic-looking rifles and dressed head to toe in forest camouflage. One of the men walked forward and grabbed Celeste by the arm and dragged her out, while the other man pulled out a knife and cut Aurea out of her seat. Another man ran in after the other two had left and grabbed Echon. Echon attempted to punch the man, but his arm felt like jelly to him. Unable to resist, Echon was dragged out into the fresh open air and thrown into the line of captives, grabbed by his shoulders, lifted to his feet and held up.

Celeste looked about the soldiers in a state of panic and wondered what was about to happen. Suddenly the soldiers formed a line and stood straight up in the air. They then brought their right hand forward in a fist and made a “v” with their middle and index finger. They finished their motion by placing the “v” across their chest, and landed upon their heart. A blonde-haired man walked by the row of soldiers and eyed down the captives, his blue eyes pierced the very air around them. He stopped at the end of the row where Echon, Aurea, Celeste and Evan stood. He squinted his eyes and his eyebrows scrunched together. “Who is the commander of this group?” he asked the captives. Celeste swallowed hard, scared that he would single her out in a heartbeat. She looked at Evan out of the corner of her eye. His eyes were closed and he was breathing heavily and his skin was paler than usual which made him look like he was deathly afraid of what was going around them. He swallowed hard and opened his eyes.

“I am captain Ial of the *Frayed Hunter*,” he said as he cleared a lump in his throat. He didn’t care what it cost, he wanted, no, *needed* to make up for what he did to Celeste. The blonde-haired man walked up to him and stared him eye to eye.

“You’re not the captain,” the blonde-haired man said.

“I am captain Ial, and this is my crew,” Evan said as he snuck his hand into his pocket. He may have used the sedative on Celeste, but he still had the syringe of poison left. The blonde-haired man reached into his pocket, pulled out a recording device and pressed a button. The device made a whirling sound before a voice began to play.

“This is captain Ial of the *Frayed Hunter*,” the recorder said in Celeste’s voice. He pressed the button again to turn it off. The blonde-haired man looked to Celeste. Evan took a deep breath and removed the syringe from his pocket. He only had one shot, so he needed to make this right. Evan swung the syringe as hard as he could towards the blonde-haired man’s neck with loud scream. Before the needle could connect, a loud bang cracked the air and Evan felt something go through his chest. He fell to the ground and struggled to breathe. He looked at

his chest and saw blood stained his uniform. He looked back up and saw the blond-haired man standing above him with a soldier by his side as smoke left the barrel of his rifle.

The blonde-haired man smiled as he drew a pistol-like weapon from his holster. It was archaic in design and was coated in polished silver. Evan's eyes watered up as he knew the inevitable was about to happen. The blonde-haired man aimed the weapon at Evan's forehead and pulled the trigger without hesitation. A slug fired from the barrel of the pistol, struck Evan in the head and finished him off. His head dropped to the ground, lifeless. Celeste knelt down and looked at him in shock. There was a hole in the middle of his forehead that quickly flooded with blood. His eyes retained a lifeless stare, moist with his last tears. She put a hand over her mouth and held back the vomit that wished to come up.

"Captain Ial, I presume?" he asked her. She closed her eyes. She knew that if she didn't do anything now, more people would only get killed. She stood back up and faced the blonde-haired man.

"I'm captain Ial of the *Frayed Hunter*," She said. The blonde-haired smiled once more and grabbed her by the arm.

"I am Zak La'Rocha," he introduced, "high general of the Volta military." He looked at Evan's lifeless body. "You should keep your men in check captain," he said. Without another word, La'Rocha walked away from the group as the soldiers surrounded the captives.

"Take the prisoners to Caucasus for processing," one of the soldiers said. The others grabbed the remaining captives and began to funnel them into a large transport vehicle. The soldier grabbed his radio and pressed a button to talk. "HQ, this is Republic recovery team one, we have numerous Republic captives, transporting captives to Caucasus."