

Galaxycats
Episode 1 "Light in the Darkness"

1. Space- Panthera

We see a turquoise and white planet. Superimpose:

"Planet Panthera, Sector Year 4531."

Two years ago, the F'lar army took over the government of the Fessan people and declared war on the Pantherans, leaders of the Sector Alliance. Despite their initial resistance, the constant attacks on their home world are taking their toll, and many important city-states are beginning to fall under F'lar domination."

Camera starts zooming in on the planet. Cut to:

2. Landri village, Panthera

A town square, with a large fountain in the middle. Camera zooms in on the square.

Pantheran people (they look like humans) walk in and out of shops, but we are interested in a fifteen-year old boy, Paul, standing by the fountain. His twin sister, Vanilla, runs up to him.

PAUL

Where have you been, Vanilla? I was waiting ages.

VANILLA

Paul it says on the news that the F'lar have been spotted in this region. There's a chance they could attack here!

PAUL

Oh, come on, Vanilla, you can't believe they'd ever come to a little village like this one.

Ironically enough, even as he says that, the sound of an engine is heard, and a F'lar ship descends from the sky- smaller fighters begin spilling out and attacking the village. Amidst the flames and confusion, many are killed, including Paul. As the F'lar ships break off and move on, only Vanilla is left alive, clutching the dead body of her brother.

Scene fades. Title and credits run.

3. City Streets, Rienne

Superimpose-

"Fifteen years later. The F'lar now control a significant segment of Panthera. The hopes of the Pantheran people lie with Galaxycats, a military institution set up to combat the F'lar and end a war that has been raging for over a decade."

The words fade.

A Suntiger class skimmer is chasing a convoy down the city streets. It fires on the convoy, destroying the trucks. Suddenly, a Falcon behind the Suntiger fires on it. The Falcon turns onto the main thoroughfare and it chases the Suntiger.

4. Int. Suntiger

Vanilla, now a grown woman, is piloting.

VANILLA

Oh, come on, like you're going to get anywhere flying like that.

5. City Streets, Rienne

Vanilla outmanoeuvres the enemy ship and destroys it, before flying back to the Galaxycats base.

6. Captain Sheba's Office, Galaxycats, Rienne

Vanilla is being lectured to by her commanding officer, Captain Sheba.

SHEBA

Commander Vanilla, this is the third time this octan I've had to call you in here for going on an unauthorised patrol- I expect better behaviour from a brand new recruit, let alone my own first officer!

VANILLA

Since I am your first officer, I should have enough authority to schedule a few minor attacks, surely? And you have to admit that every one of my missions has been entirely successful.

SHEBA

Commander, what you are doing is not only undermining my authority, but endangering your own life and that of the teams who depend on you to do your assigned tasks, not whatever takes your fancy!

VANILLA

Captain, if you'll look at my record, you'll see that this is what I do best. I would go out there alone and put myself in danger than have to worry about inferior pilots under my command.

SHEBA

A curious mixture of arrogance and nobility, is that what you're trying to sell me? I've no doubt it's true, but I think there's more to it than that- you're trying to get yourself killed, aren't you? If that's the case, then listen to me- maverick pilots with no regard for their own lives are the last thing I need at this command. Keep this up and I'll see you grounded and thrown out of Galaxycats!

VANILLA

Like it or not, I have been doing a good job here; ground me, and you'll lose the best pilot you have.

Vanilla walks out.

7. F'lar Command Briefing Room, Rienne

F'lar commander Krelston is conferring with his subordinates, including a Pantheran scientist named Malteazer.

KRELSTON

I know you have all been concerned with the losses we have incurred at the hands of the Galaxycats of late; however, it is with no small amount of pride that I am finally able to unveil to you the weapon that will turn the tide. Doctor Malteazer, as director of the project, would you care to elaborate?

MALTEAZER

We're all well aware that the key to controlling any ground based territory is highly dependent on attack-class skimmers, and that of late, F'lar and Galaxycat skimmer technologies have been on a par with each other. In an effort to break this stalemate, various F'lar research teams have been working on a new type of alloy, keridanium, which will increase the structural integrity of our skimmers by 20% over current models. Since my colleague Dr Rabia Idale and myself were key to this project, it has been decided that the prototype Kerida-class skimmers will be deployed here in Rienne.

KRELSTON

A schedule for the Kerida patrols is already being drawn up; Skimmer Division, your people will be granted access to the prototypes to familiarise yourselves with them in preparation for the first strikes. You are dismissed.

8. Galaxycats Control Room, Rienne

Sheba and her command staff are there, including Lieutenant Aquilegia and Ensign Marval.

AQUILEGIA

Captain, we're receiving an unauthorised transmission- the identity signature says it's from someone called Lighthawk.

SHEBA

Please put it through to my office, Lieutenant.

Sheba leaves, and goes through to

9. Sheba's Office, Galaxycats, Rienne

Sheba receives the communication; it is from Malteazer.

SHEBA

I thought we weren't scheduled to contact each other again for another octan.

MALTEAZER

I'm afraid there's no time for procedure now, Captain. That new development I briefed you about before- the F'lar are now in a position to test it.

SHEBA

Is there anything we can do? Perhaps you could send us enough information to come up with a countermeasure.

MALTEAZER

Captain, there really is no time for that- I know you wanted to wait a little longer, but the only way you'll be able to survive this is by bringing me to Galaxycats.

SHEBA

You're requesting an extraction?

MALTEAZER

I never wanted this double-life in the first place, but between that and remaining loyal to the F'lar, I didn't have much choice. But now there's nothing more I can do as a F'lar- there's no more reason to keep me here.

Pause.

SHEBA

Very well, then- what exactly will you need?

MALTEAZER

I can steal a skimmer from the F'lar and pilot it easily enough, but once they come after me, I'll need backup if I'm ever going to make it to you in one piece.

SHEBA

Leave it to me- I have just the pilot for the job.

10. Galaxycats Briefing Room, Rienne

Sheba, Vanilla, Chief Engineer Willow, Doctor Opal, Lieutenant Commander Sandy, Aquilegia, Lieutenant Tassel, Lieutenant Jupiter and Lieutenant Sapphire are there.

OPAL

Captain, what's this about? I don't usually get called to briefings at such short notice.

SHEBA

This may seem like rather an odd gathering, but each of you needs to hear this.

Over the past few years, I have been in contact with a double agent within the F'lar, a scientist named Doctor Malteazer.

VANILLA

You can't be serious- Malteazer's a well-known collaborator; her name comes up in contact with practically every F'lar scientific development!

SHEBA

That may be something of an exaggeration, Commander, but suffice to say that however it appears, Malteazer has been providing us with information for quite some time now. Unfortunately, the situation has recently changed, and the doctor has now requested an extraction. Her plan is to leave F'lar Command by skimmer tonight- Vanilla, Sapphire, Jupiter, you will form a support wing to keep the F'lar off her back.

VANILLA

I vote we let them blow her up and be done with it.

SHEBA

That's enough of your attitude, Commander. If you can't bring Malteazer back here safely, don't bother returning yourself.

11. City Streets, Rienne

Vanilla, Sapphire and Jupiter leave the Galaxycats hangar.

12. Hangar Bay, F'lar Command

Malteazer enters the hangar bay. Two guards approach her, but she takes them both down. As she makes for the skimmers, however, Krelston steps out of the shadows.

KRELSTON

Going somewhere, Doctor?

MALTEAZER

How did you...?

KRELSTON

I'm not some bumbling fool, Doctor- I have my sources. You should actually feel honoured that I chose to deal with this personally rather than just having you shot as soon as I found out about this little indiscretion.

MALTEAZER

You might as well shoot me- it's the only way you'll stop me leaving.

KRELSTON

Oh, I'm sure I can find a way can coerce you- just like I always have.

MALTEAZER

You...

Malteazer goes to tackle Krelston, but he draws a shock stick and uses it on her. Just as it seems that Krelston has subdued Malteazer, she grabs his arm and stares into his eyes. It is unclear what she does, but he goes vacant long enough for Malteazer to get in a skimmer and take off. On returning to his senses, Krelston activates a wrist communicator.

KRELSTON

Falcon squads, deploy- retrieve Doctor Malteazer!

13. City Streets, Rienne

Malteazer's skimmer approaches Vanilla's wing; a squadron of Falcons is chasing after her.

14. Int. Vanilla's Skimmer

COMPUTER

Incoming transmission.

Malteazer appears onscreen.

MALTEAZER

If you've been sent here to help me, now's the time to pitch in.

VANILLA

Did you have to bring us such a large welcoming party?

Vanilla contacts Sapphire and Jupiter.

Sapphire, escort the doctor back to Galaxycats. Jupiter, you and I will provide covering fire.

15. City Streets, Rienne

Sapphire and Malteazer head away from the battle; Vanilla and Jupiter try to delay the Falcons, but whilst Vanilla is able to evade enemy fire, Jupiter's skimmer is destroyed.

16. Int. Vanilla's Skimmer

VANILLA

Jupiter! Gods damn it, you'll pay for this, F'lar.

17. Sheba's Office, Rienne

Sheba and Malteazer are there; Vanilla enters.

VANILLA

Hey, Captain, mind telling me what makes this c'ren so special that one of my men lost his life trying to save her?

MALTEAZER

Captain, Commander, I am truly sorry that you lost an officer out there. It seems that Krelston already knew what I was going to do, and had made advance preparations.

VANILLA

A likely story- I bet you and Krelston cooked up that little trap between you, didn't you? You've probably been sent here as a spy!

MALTEAZER

Commander, I hardly expect you to trust me at this stage, but believe me when I say that I hate the F'lar as much as you do.

VANILLA

Forgive me for being sceptical, but I don't see much evidence of that right now.

SHEBA

Regardless of what you think, Vanilla, I have been in contact with Malteazer for some years, and I for one have every reason to trust her. Our more pressing concern should be finding out how Krelston came to be so well-prepared- we may well have a traitor among our own staff.

VANILLA

Oh sure, let's trust the F'lar scientist who just randomly shows up here and start suspecting our own people.

SHEBA

I've had my suspicions for a while now, Vanilla, and even if you don't believe me, I suggest you keep an eye out. Malteazer, for your own safety, I'll be assigning you a security detail for the time being.

MALTEAZER

Understood.

18. Russet's Bar, Rienne

The place is practically empty; Vanilla sips water at the bar whilst bartender Russet attempts to strike up conversation.

RUSSET

Shouldn't you be on duty, Commander?

VANILLA

I had to get away from that place for a while.

Vanilla sighs.

The F'lar invaded our world, now we're fighting to get rid of them...so when did everything get so complex?

RUSSET

The world's always been complex, Commander- just because you chose to see it in black and white doesn't make it any less so.

VANILLA

Oh great, now I'm getting lectured by a bartender.

RUSSET

All part of the service.

19. Galaxycats Briefing Room, Rienne

Sheba, Vanilla, Malteazer, Willow and Sandy are there.

SANDY

Bit of a sparse briefing room tonight.

Sheba ignores this comment.

SHEBA

I've called you here today so that Doctor Malteazer can share information on the F'lar's latest development- Doctor, if you would care to elaborate?

MALTEAZER

The project in question centres around an alloy their top scientists have been developing. Known as keridanium, it is lighter and tougher than the current materials used in skimmer building, and will give their craft a distinct advantage in battle.

VANILLA

And I suppose your input helped to make this stuff.

MALTEAZER

I didn't have a great deal of choice in the matter.

SHEBA

Commander, that's beside the point. Please continue, Doctor.

MALTEAZER

Before I left the F'lar, I 'liberated' some of their research, including more specific details about keridanium. This has already been turned over to Galaxycats, but a more pressing threat remains; Krelston already has a number of keridanium skimmers under his command, and will be ready to use them in battle any day now.

VANILLA

Let them come; I could pilot a truck and still out fly the F'lar!

SHEBA

And what about the people under your command? Your skills may well be enough, but I'm sure you haven't forgotten what happened to Lieutenant Jupiter.

SANDY

Captain, even if we know about this threat, is there really anything we can do at such short notice?

SHEBA

Our best hope is a pre-emptive strike at the F'lar facility where the Kerida skimmers are being tested. Commander Vanilla, you'll be in charge of this strike; take whatever pilots you need.

MALTEAZER

Captain, I should go along too; although I've no doubt Krelston will have changed the security protocols since my defection, my familiarity with F'lar systems could be crucial to the mission.

VANILLA

This is a high risk mission, Doctor- I need people who can actually fly.

MALTEAZER

I may not be up to your level, Commander, but I know how to handle a skimmer.

SHEBA

I'm afraid Vanilla has a point, Doctor- I very much doubt that you've had the chance to familiarise yourself with our style of skimmer interface.

Vanilla smiles.

However, your expertise would undoubtedly be useful on this mission. Vanilla, Malteazer will accompany you in your skimmer.

VANILLA

I've told you before, Captain, I'm a solo flier- having her along will only distract me.

SHEBA

Deal with it.

20. Galaxycats Hangar, Rienne

Vanilla and Malteazer are walking towards their craft.

MALTEAZER

Commander, you've made it plain that you don't think much of me, and quite frankly, I couldn't care less. I would ask, however, that we try to put our differences aside whilst on this mission.

VANILLA

Just because I've got the guts to speak my mind doesn't mean that I can't be professional. I'd think twice before trying anything if I were you, though.

MALTEAZER

Although I'd hardly expect an officer as unimportant as you to be aware of it, I've been risking my life for the same cause as you for many years now- I just had the intelligence to work undercover instead of mindlessly blasting everything in my path.

VANILLA

If not for a mindless person like me, this base wouldn't be here, and you'd still be licking Krelston's backside. Then again, maybe that's the kind of thing you liked to do-

Malteazer slaps Vanilla; Vanilla just smiles. Sapphire, Jeffrey, Rusleem and various other pilots arrive.

Ready, everyone? Then let's do this.

21. City Streets, Rienne

A squad of Galaxy cats skimmers takes off and divides into three groups.

22. Int. Vanilla's Skimmer

VANILLA

You'd better be able to remotely hack the F'lar computers, or else we're all going to get blasted.

MALTEAZER

You do your job, and I'll do mine.

Malteazer brings up a computer interface and begins work.

23. City Streets, Rienne

One of the Galaxy cat groups runs into the one thing they least wanted to see- a Kerida task force.

24. Int. Vanilla's Skimmer

COMPUTER

Incoming transmission.

Jeffrey appears onscreen.

JEFFREY

Commander, it's the Keridas! They're already using them!

The screen flashes white.

COMPUTER

Contact lost.

VANILLA

Damn it! We trusted you again and look what happened.

MALTEAZER

This isn't my fault!

VANILLA

Then tell me how to fight those things.

MALTEAZER

You can't- they're faster and stronger than you. Our best bet is to retreat.

VANILLA

Like hell I'm going to.

Vanilla sends a communication to the remaining Galaxy cat skimmers.

Okay, everyone, it looks like the Keridas have done us the favour of coming to us.

As of this moment, we're abandoning the base attack and engaging them instead.

Sapphire appears onscreen.

SAPPHIRE

Commander, facing a force like that is suicide. We should get back to base.

MALTEAZER

Listen to your lieutenant- she talks sense at least.

VANILLA

If you want to get out of here, then go. I'll face those b'reks alone if I have to.

25. City Streets, Rienne

Vanilla and the Galaxy cat forces engage the Keridas- it is an uneven match, and few Galaxy cats survive.

26. Galaxy cats Hangar, Rienne

Vanilla's depleted force returns. As Vanilla and Malteazer climb out of their skimmer, Sheba comes over.

SHEBA

What the hell just happened out there, Commander?

VANILLA

Once again, it looks like they knew we were coming- thanks to a certain someone.

MALTEAZER

How many times do I have to tell you that this isn't due to me?

SHEBA

I believe you, Malteazer, but at any rate, that's beside the point. Commander Vanilla, many lives have been lost tonight because you chose not to withdraw earlier. That is not the action of a person I can trust to do a good job as my first officer.

VANILLA

Captain, I...it was an error in judgement...

SHEBA

You are suspended from duty until further notice. Doctor Malteazer, it is more imperative than ever that we find a way to combat these Kerida fighters- I trust we have your assistance in that.

MALTEAZER

I will do what I can, Captain.

27. Vanilla's Quarters

Vanilla is there; the doorchime sounds and Willow enters.

VANILLA

Shouldn't you be busy retooling engines or something?

WILLOW

Vanilla, I heard about what happened earlier- I just wanted to see how you were doing.

VANILLA

Oh really? You shouldn't have bothered, I mean, what could possibly be wrong? I'm totally fine with the fact that Sheba is now relying on a F'lar traitor over her own first officer, I'm delighted that every time I fly my skimmer the F'lar are waiting to attack me, and I'm positively ecstatic that I just managed to get my own squadron massacred!

WILLOW

Vanilla, in all the years I've known you, you've always acted like you have something to prove. Maybe it's about time you get that chip off your shoulder.

VANILLA

Or maybe it's about time I admitted that I'm never going to fit in at Galaxycats and just got the hell out of here.

WILLOW

You're not still going on about that, are you? Vanilla, you've already made it to the rank of commander, so you must be doing something right.

VANILLA

I'm sure Captain Sheba would disagree.

WILLOW

Then what exactly are you going to do?

VANILLA

I thought I might join the Nightriders.

WILLOW

You have to be joking. They're little better than terrorists, and poorly armed ones at that.

VANILLA

Maybe so, but they're out there fighting the F'lar without being tied down to a bunch of pointless rules and regulations.

WILLOW

Vanilla, think about what you're saying-

VANILLA

I've already thought about it. My decision's as good as made.

28. Galaxycats Control Room, Rienne

Sheba, Aquilegia, Marval, Tassel and others are there.

AQUILEGIA

Captain, sensors have just flagged an unauthorised skimmer launch in progress.

According to the access codes, it's Commander Vanilla.

SHEBA

I thought Vanilla had been locked out of the central computer. Make sure she doesn't leave the hangar.

AQUILEGIA

Too late, Captain. Should we send out pilots after her?

SHEBA

We're far too understaffed to chase after Vanilla right now.

Willow enters.

Is there something you need, Commander Willow?

WILLOW

She actually did it, didn't she?

SHEBA

I assume we're talking about Vanilla here. If you have any information as to what in hell she thinks she's doing, now would be a good time to share it.

WILLOW

She...she's gone to join the Nightriders.

Sheba curses.

29. City Streets, Rienne

Vanilla's skimmer speeds through the streets and reaches the Nightriders base.

30. Int. Vanilla's skimmer

COMPUTER

Incoming transmission.

A female Velassian appears onscreen.

VELASSIAN

Galaxycat skimmer, stand down or we will fire on you.

VANILLA

I see Nightriders haven't lost any of their famed hospitality. I'm not here to cause trouble- I've come to sign up to your cause.

VELASSIAN

We don't need self-righteous Galaxycat c'rens here- go find somewhere else to play.

VANILLA

Oh come on- an organisation like yours can't afford to be picky. I bet you couldn't find a skimmer or a pilot to match me- and besides, I'm as fed up with Galaxycats as you are.

The Velassian thinks for a moment, and then smiles mockingly.

VELASSIAN

Heh, I guess we might have some use for you after all. Just don't expect us to go easy on because you're used to living the soft life.

VANILLA

I'd be disappointed if you did. I take it I have clearance to land.

VELASSIAN

Go right ahead.

31. Nightriders Hangar, Rienne

The hangar is something of a makeshift effort. The female Velassian from the previous scene greets Vanilla.

VELASSIAN

So you've decided to join us in hell after all, Galaxycat.

VANILLA

The name's Vanilla, Nightrider.

VELASSIAN

I'm Kirix. Nice skimmer you got there- wouldn't be surprised if someone took a fancy to it and decided to acquire it for themselves.

VANILLA

Let them try- they'll get a nasty shock if they do.

KIRIX

Heh, maybe you aren't so bad after all. Come on, let me show you around this dump.

32. Corridors, Nightriders, Rienne

Kirix takes Vanilla around the Nightriders building and points out the facilities, all of which are very basic.

33. Nightriders Meeting Hall, Rienne

Many disreputable looking people are gathered around. Kirix pushes through them, and pulls Vanilla up onto a makeshift stage.

KIRIX

Hey everyone, we got ourselves a new recruit- a former Galaxycat, no less. Let's give her our warmest welcome.

The crowd breaks out into mock applause and laughter. Vanilla looks distinctly uneasy.

34. Krelston's Office, F'lar Command, Rienne

Krelston is talking to his deputy, Mirakova.

MIRAKOVA

Sir, I have the data from the latest Kerida attacks. It's just as the scientists promised- Galaxycats really can't stand up to something like this.

KRELSTON

Now that we finally have the upper hand, it's about time we put an end to this conflict as quickly as possible. And with Rienne in our grasp, this entire region is as good as ours.

MIRAKOVA

The Rienne Galaxycats surely cannot last much longer- not when our spy is doing such a good job.

KRELSTON

Ah yes, that reminds me- it's about time for her scheduled check-in.

Even as he speaks, Krelston's communicator bleeps. He accepts the transmission, and Sapphire appears on his computer screen.

Ah, Lieutenant Sapphire- your timing is as good as ever.

SAPPHIRE

Thank you, sir.

KRELSTON

So, Lieutenant, what have you got for me today? Your intelligence has been particularly useful of late, and I'd hate to see your winning streak dry up.

SAPPHIRE

Sir, an interesting development has come up- Commander Vanilla has left Galaxycats to join Nightriders.

KRELSTON

That ineffectual terrorist group? Hmm, this could prove useful. Thank you, Lieutenant- payment will be deposited in the usual account.

SAPPHIRE

Uh sir, before you sign off, there's something you should know. I think Captain Sheba is starting to suspect that her team has been compromised. She's certainly being somewhat less open than before.

KRELSTON

Then I suggest you be careful, Lieutenant. Krelston out.

Krelston terminates the communication.

MIRAKOVA

You must be careful of that operative. She overestimates her own importance, and that could make her dangerous.

KRELSTON

As long as she remains so easily influenced by money, Sapphire is nothing to worry about. Rather, we should consider this new opportunity- the capture of a Galaxycat commander and the intelligence we could extract from her.

MIRAKOVA

I will start making arrangements for Vanilla's retrieval.

35. Nightriders Hangar, Rienne

Kirix, Vanilla and two other pilots are there.

KIRIX

Well then, Vanilla, I hope you're ready to impress us with your superior flying skills.

VANILLA

I'd be more concerned with how your pilots are going to keep up with me.

Vanilla walks over to her skimmer, which has now been painted black.

Hey, what the hell did you do to my skimmer?

KIRIX

It doesn't look so much like a Galaxycat model anymore- means less trouble all around. I assume the colour won't affect how well you can fly it?

The other pilots snigger. Vanilla shoots them an annoyed glance before climbing into her craft.

36. City Streets, Rienne

Vanilla and the other two Nightriders launch. They head for a F'lar communications outpost and commence their attack. A squad of Falcons mobilises to stop them- the two nameless Nightrider pilots are blown apart as they attempt to retreat. Vanilla has no choice but to return to base.

37. Nightriders Hangar, Rienne

Vanilla gets out of her skimmer. Kirix is waiting.

KIRIX

Looks like you made it back in one piece- not too shabby.

VANILLA

Two of your people died, and that's all you can say?

KIRIX

It's an acceptable loss if we can strike a blow against the F'lar.

VANILLA

A blow? You call targeting puny communications outposts a proper blow? Then again, I suppose you're not up to much, are you?

KIRIX

You seem to forget yourself, Commander. You were the one who wanted to join us- that puts the burden on you to accept our ways. Life is cheap around here- that's just the way it is.

VANILLA

I can't believe you- you're so damned short-sighted. Do you really think you can win with an attitude like that?

KIRIX

Winning, losing...since we're never going to come out on top, does it really matter? We don't fight for some noble goal like you- we fight because we don't know how to do anything else.

38. Sheba's Office, Rienne

Sheba is waiting; Willow enters.

SHEBA

Ah, Commander Willow, I'm sorry to pull you away from skimmer repair, but there is something I need to discuss with you.

WILLOW

What can I do for you, Captain?

SHEBA

I'm sure you've noticed that our missions seem to have been cursed with a run of bad luck lately-

WILLOW

And I suppose you think it isn't just bad luck.

SHEBA

You catch on quickly. Much as I hate to think of it, all the evidence suggests that we have a mole inside Galaxycats.

WILLOW

With all due respect, Captain, was it really wise to bring that F'lar here?

SHEBA

It may seem unfounded to you, but I trust Doctor Malteazer. Don't forget that I was in contact with her for some time prior to her extraction.

WILLOW

I'm not sure that I can put my faith in Malteazer so easily, but I will accept your word- which means that the traitor is one of our people.

SHEBA

I don't like the prospect of that any more than you do, but we can't afford to let this leak continue unabated. That's why I'd like you to investigate this problem for me.

WILLOW

Captain, I have no intention of refusing a direct order from you, but why come to me with this? I'm swamped with work as it is, and surely Sandy could manage any computer hacking that needs to be done.

SHEBA

Based on the evidence, I believe the traitor to be amongst either my pilots or command staff. I'm sorry to pull you away from your engineering tasks, but you are the only person I can turn to for this.

WILLOW

Understood, Captain; I'll do what I can.

39. Nightriders Hangar, Rienne

Vanilla and Kirix are there.

VANILLA

Why are you sending me out again? Do I even have an assigned mission?

KIRIX

Your mission is to destroy as many F'lar skimmers as you can.

VANILLA

And what will that achieve? Without a clear goal, I might as well just blow my own skimmer up as go out and take a few pot shots at the F'lar.

KIRIX

You wanted to fight the F'lar, didn't you? Well, I'm sorry, but this is the best we can do for you.

Pause.

VANILLA

Fine- I'll go out there, but don't expect me to fight- I just need to blow off some steam. And when I get back, there are going to be some changes around here.

Vanilla gets into her skimmer.

40. City Streets, Rienne

Vanilla's skimmer launches from the Nightrider hangar. She heads out towards the Fringes, but is ambushed by a Kerida squadron. Vanilla tries to flee, but is unable to do so.

41. Int. Vanilla's Skimmer

Vanilla is receiving a transmission from a Fessan.

FESSAN

Commander Vanilla, you are now in the custody of the F'lar. Please do not attempt to resist.

42. City Streets, Rienne

The Kerida skimmers lock tractor beams on Vanilla's skimmer, and tow it away to the FC.

43. Hangar, F'lar Command, Rienne

Vanilla is stripped of all weapons and placed in a set of magnetic proximity restraints, linked to a pair of guards. She is led out of the hangar.

44. Krelston's Office, Rienne

Krelston is there. Vanilla is brought in by the guards and forcibly seated.

KRELSTON

Ah, the infamous Commander Vanilla. At long last we meet.

VANILLA

So, Krelston, you finally got lucky.

KRELSTON

Oh, I assure you it was not a case of mere luck. A dear friend of mine told me where to find you- and let's just say the Nightriders were easily swayed by the promise of a few credits.

VANILLA

Those b'reks, they sold me out!

KRELSTON

Now, now, Vanilla, there's no need to get so worked up over a simple business transaction- especially not when you're about to help me with another.

VANILLA

You'll have to put me through seven kinds of hell before I'd even think about co-operating with you.

KRELSTON

An interesting request, and one which I'd normally be only too happy to oblige. Unfortunately, Vanilla, much as my pilots hate you, in the grand scheme of things, you just aren't that important.

VANILLA

Why go to all the trouble of capturing me, then?

KRELSTON

Simply because I must have something to trade for what I really want. You'll see what I mean soon enough.

45. Computing Lab, Galaxycats, Rienne

Willow is in a private booth, checking records. All signs point to just the one officer.

WILLOW

This- this can't be right.

Someone else enters the lab and approaches Willow. For a moment, it isn't entirely clear who the newcomer is, until she begins speaking.

SAPPHIRE

Found something interesting, Commander?

WILLOW

I think we both know what I found, Lieutenant. Now if you'd care to come with me.
Sapphire draws a shock stick.

SAPPHIRE

Oh, I don't think we'll be going anywhere.

46. Galaxycats Control Room, Rienne

Sheba, Aquilegia, Ensign Ferrero, Marval and Tassel are on duty.

AQUILEGIA

Captain, I'm receiving a communication directly from F'lar Command.

SHEBA

This should be interesting. Onscreen.

Krelston appears onscreen. Vanilla is visible in the background.

AQUILEGIA

Vanilla!

KRELSTON

Good day, Captain Sheba. It seems I have found something you lost.

SHEBA

Yes, it would seem so. I assume there is a price for getting her back.

Krelston smiles.

KRELSTON

I've always enjoyed talking with you, Captain Sheba. It's refreshing to communicate with someone of equal intellect.

SHEBA

I can't help feeling that you overestimate your own intellect, General.

Krelston laughs.

KRELSTON

Anyway, to business. What I would like in exchange for your first officer is something that I myself lost quite recently- Doctor Malteazer.

SHEBA

You lost Malteazer a long time ago.

KRELSTON

Perhaps- or perhaps you know less about Malteazer than you think. Either way, I'll give you a little time to think about it. Shall we say a radia's time for my next contact?

SHEBA

Before we settle on anything, at least let me talk to Vanilla.

Krelston beckons to the guards, and Vanilla is brought closer to the communicator.

I seem to remember telling you not to be so reckless.

VANILLA

And I seem to remember quitting Galaxycats. Don't get me wrong, I couldn't care less what happens to that F'lar- but don't give this guy what he wants.

KRELSTON

All right, I think that's enough. Be sure to have your decision ready for me by the time I call back.

The communication ends.

AQUILEGIA

Captain, what are we going to do?

SHEBA

For now, you're going to ask Doctor Malteazer to come to my office.

47. Computing Lab, Galaxycats, Rienne

Willow is struggling against Sapphire.

SAPPHIRE

I bet you're thinking that you just need to stall me long enough for security to come and rescue you. Unfortunately for you, I've already taken care of that.

Sapphire manages to overpower Willow and render her unconscious with the shock stick.

48. Sheba's Office, Rienne

Sheba and Malteazer are there. Sheba has just explained the situation.

SHEBA

...Krelston hasn't threatened any violence towards Vanilla if we don't comply to the trade, but I've no doubt it's a card he's willing to play if necessary.

MALTEAZER

Captain, if you want to hand me over to the F'lar, then I will understand. Your first priority should be towards your crew.

SHEBA

Doctor, I don't want you to think for one moment that I called you here to force you into agreeing to this trade. I'd be more interested in hearing your advice on the situation.

MALTEAZER

Captain, I think you and I both know that there is no constructive advice I can give. The only way I can help you is to go back.

SHEBA

But with your knowledge of the F'lar, we're in a prime position to mount a rescue.

MALTEAZER

A rescue would most likely involve my infiltrating F'lar Command; since they want me to walk right in, I might as well take up their invitation.

Pause.

Captain, you already know that my conclusion is the only sensible course of action. Trust me, I'll get Vanilla out of there.

Sheba sighs.

SHEBA

Very well, I'll agree to the exchange.

49. Hangar Bay, Galaxycats, Rienne

Sapphire has made it down to the hangar bay unnoticed, supporting an unconscious Willow. She puts Willow in a skimmer, and climbs in.

SAPPHIRE

Time to go.

Sapphire launches her skimmer.

50. Galaxycats Control Room, Rienne

As before, only now Malteazer is also present.

AQUILEGIA

Incoming communication from the F'lar.

SHEBA

Here we go.

Krelston appears onscreen.

KRELSTON

So, Captain, have you made the right choice? Or will I need to give you a few more incentives?

SHEBA

I agree to the terms of your exchange.

KRELSTON

Excellent. Bring no more than three skimmers to the northern plains just outside the city. We will make our exchange there.

Krelston terminates the communication.

SHEBA

Malteazer, can we trust him to keep his word on this?

MALTEAZER

Krelston's a cruel man, but he's not stupid. If he's set the rules for this game, he'll play by them.

51. Northern Plains, Rienne

The F'lar and GalaxyCat delegations arrive in skimmers. Mirakova, Vanilla+F'lar guards emerge from the F'lar skimmers, Sheba, Malteazer and Ferrero from another.

SHEBA

What, didn't Krelston have the guts to come in person?

MIRAKOVA

He hardly needs to waste his time on something like this. Now, let's get this exchange over with.

Vanilla is released, and the exchange begins. As Vanilla and Malteazer walk past each other, Vanilla has to get in the last word.

VANILLA

Don't think I'll be thanking you for this any time soon, F'lar.

MALTEAZER

You must be in need of a serious ego check if you think that my actions are at all motivated by you.

VANILLA

Yeah, you're right- this is just going home for you, isn't it?

MIRAKOVA

Come on, hurry it up.

The exchange is completed- both sides get in their skimmers and go their separate ways.

52. Krelston's Office, Rienne

Krelston is there. Mirakova and her guard lead Malteazer in.

KRELSTON

Thank you, Mirakova, you may leave.

MIRAKOVA

Are you sure you want to be alone with her, sir?

KRELSTON

Are you having difficulty interpreting my orders, Mirakova? Perhaps you need a physical exam to diagnose your defective hearing?

MIRAKOVA

No, sir.

Mirakova and the guards leave. Krelston's manner instantly changes, as he aims for charming and only manages slimy.

KRELSTON

Ah, Malteazer, so good to see you again. Did you enjoy your little trip to GalaxyCats?

MALTEAZER

It wasn't a little trip, it was a defection.

KRELSTON

Ah yes, of course...you know, I understand that you are under a lot of pressure, Malteazer. I can forgive you these little indiscretions.

MALTEAZER

Indiscretion? You don't understand- I've been betraying the F'lar for years!

Krelston laughs.

KRELSTON

Now, now, Malteazer, I believe you are the one who doesn't understand. At heart, you are a F'lar- and you are mine. I made you what you are.

Krelston approaches Malteazer, and runs a finger down her cheek. She flinches.

You're still afraid of me, aren't you? Good.

MALTEAZER

Wha...what do you want from me? I won't work on any of your projects again!

KRELSTON

I will not deny that you have been of inestimable use to me as a scientist, but that is not what I need you for now. I need a weapon, and for that I must unlock what was sealed away long ago.

Krelston's communicator bleeps. He moves to answer it.

What is it now? I'm busy.

F'LAR

Sir, we've been contacted by a Galaxycat skimmer who knows the codes. Should we let her dock?

KRELSTON

Sapphire...yes, let her land, but keep her in the hangar bay. Oh, and tell the guards to stop hanging around outside and take Doctor Malteazer to the interrogation room.

53. Sheba's Office, Rienne

Sheba and Vanilla are there.

VANILLA

So, I guess everything is pretty much back to normal now.

SHEBA

Normal? Is that what you call joining a terrorist group and then having to be rescued from the F'lar? Not to mention the fact that we lost Doctor Malteazer.

VANILLA

So we lost one F'lar- big deal.

SHEBA

I have to say that Malteazer has been a damn sight more helpful to me in the last few days than you have been in the last few monai. Don't think you can just walk away from your last little stunt; the Nightriders are a terrorist group, and you aided them.

VANILLA

Fine, pull me off duty, do whatever you have to do.

SHEBA

No witty defiance?

VANILLA

It's not easy for me to say this but- I've done some stupid things. It wouldn't be right if I didn't pay the price for that sooner or later.

SHEBA

I'm not sure why it happened, but you seem to have grown up a little. You may come up to my expectations yet.

54. Hangar Bay, F'lar Command

Krelston meets Sapphire, who is in the company of two guards. Willow is still in the skimmer, but is visible through the open cockpit.

KRELSTON

Lieutenant Sapphire, I assume there is a good reason that you are here- and with a guest, too.

SAPPHIRE

Sir, I- I'm sorry. She found out what I was doing; all I could think of was getting out of there.

KRELSTON

What a sloppy way to deal with the problem. If she was getting close to you, you should have set a trap for her.

SAPPHIRE

Sir, I realise I made a mistake, but I can still be useful to you! Just give me another chance!

KRELSTON

I don't give liabilities like you multiple opportunities to fail me. Corporal, take this Galaxycat and her companion and have them readied for the processing facility. I understand that there are several projects that require test subjects.

The guards take Willow and Sapphire away.

SAPPHIRE

Wait, sir, don't do this! I can give you essential information about Galaxycats! Please, spare me!

Krelston ignores Sapphire's pleas.

55. Interrogation Room, F'lar Command

Malteazer is drugged and strapped into a chair; two guards and a Fessan, Dr. Pallera, are there. Krelston enters.

PALLERA

What is it you want done with this one, sir? The usual?

KRELSTON

Leave this one to me, Pallera, I've dealt with her before.

PALLERA

As you wish.

Krelston attaches some kind of neural device to Malteazer's head and begins to adjust the settings. He moves back over to Malteazer.

KRELSTON

How are you feeling, Malteazer?

Malteazer groans.

Now, now, this won't be too hard. My device is stimulating the locked area of your mind. Soon you will awaken to your true self again.

Malteazer suddenly becomes alert and starts struggling.

MALTEAZER

No, no, you mustn't do this! Let me out of here!

Malteazer screams. Krelston alters the settings of his device again and she falls silent, but her manner has changed as if a new personality has emerged.

So, we meet again, old man.

KRELSTON

Doctor Malteazer?

MALTEAZER

Not quite. I am the one you were seeking to awaken.

KRELSTON

Then I am pleased to meet you.

MALTEAZER

Do not waste time with small talk. I already know what you want to use me for.

KRELSTON

Then I assume you will be willing to cooperate? With your aid, I can end this conflict quickly, and with a minimum of casualties on both sides.

Malteazer laughs, a dry and empty chuckle.

MALTEAZER

If there's one thing I hate, it's small-minded people like you. You talk as if you cared about casualties, or ending the conflict, when all you really want is to make sure your own interests are protected. Your petty thoughts and desires disgust me.

KRELSTON

Then perhaps you can-

MALTEAZER

Don't even finish that sentence. I have already seen into every corner of your pathetic mind, and there is nothing there that interests me.

Krelston moves back to the device for more tinkering. He activates some kind of pain setting.

KRELSTON

Since I am so petty and small, I had better start dealing with you in the appropriate way.

Malteazer starts cursing at Krelston. As the pain level increases, she mentally reacts somehow, and the device starts sparking, before a blinding white flash occurs.

56. Brig, F'lar Command

Sapphire is imprisoned, two guards approach.

GUARD #1

Hey, I thought you said that other Pantheran was the last one. The prison truck's already left but we've got one more left.

GUARD #2

There wasn't any room on the last truck. We'll get this one examined and tagged and then she can go first thing in the morning.

One of the guards opens Sapphire's cell, but even as he does so, the power goes down. Seizing her chance, Sapphire tackles Guard #2 in the confusion, and goes for his gun. She aims it at Guard #1. He seems unconcerned.

GUARD #1

Go ahead and try to fire it- our guns are keyed to our individual DNA.

Sapphire bludgeons him with the gun, knocking him out.

SAPPHIRE

Thanks for letting me know.

She runs off.

57. Interrogation Room, F'lar Command

KRELSTON'S POV. Alarms are sounding. He opens his eyes and the room gradually comes into focus. Malteazer is standing over him.

NORMAL VIEW. Palleria and the guards.

KRELSTON

Malteazer...

MALTEAZER

Goodbye.

Malteazer uses some kind of psychic power to give Krelston a brain haemorrhage. Blood runs out of his ears and nose, and he meets an ignominious end. Malteazer aims a kick at his body, before striding out of the room.

58. Reactor Room, F'lar Command

The alarms are still going. Mirakova talks to an engineer as others work furiously at panels.

MIRAKOVA

What is going on?

ENGINEER

Somehow a power surge has caused an imbalance in the central power core.

There's no way this should have been able to happen.

MIRAKOVA

Well, clearly it has happened. The question is- can you correct for the problem?

ENGINEER

Sir, at this stage, it isn't a case of correcting for the problem- all we can do is try to hold it together long enough to evacuate everyone.

MIRAKOVA

If we stay in the city, Galaxycats will only harass us. We'll have to withdraw to Pardela.

Mirakova calls to an aide.

MIRAKOVA

Has there been any contact from General Krelston?

AIDE

No one can get through to him, sir.

MIRAKOVA

There's no time for this. Issue the evacuation order- I'll go and find him myself.

59. Ext F'lar Command

Numerous skimmers leave the FC.

60. Galaxycats Control Room, Rienne

Sheba, Vanilla, Aquilegia, Marval, Tassel and one other officer are there.

AQUILEGIA

I'm detecting a mass movement of skimmers from F'lar Command.

SHEBA

An attack?

AQUILEGIA

They're towards the Fringes; if anything, I'd say this looks like an evacuation.

VANILLA

We should go out and harass them.

SHEBA

You're in enough trouble already, Vanilla; don't try my patience with idiotic suggestions.

VANILLA

What should we do, then?

SHEBA

There's very little we can do except wait and see what happens next.

61. Reactor Room, F'lar Command

A handful of engineers are still working.

ENGINEER #2

Sir, it's reached the critical point- there's nothing more we can do!

ENGINEER

Okay, let's get out of here-

Before anyone can move, the reactor overloads. The room flashes white.

62. Interrogation Room, F'lar Command

Mirakova enters, and sees Krelston's body. She goes over to it, and tries to rouse him.

MIRAKOVA

Sir!

The room is engulfed in a flash of white light.

63. Roof of Building, Rienne

Malteazer stands and watches the destruction of the FC.

64. Ruins of F'lar Command- some time later

Several Galaxycat skimmers touch down just outside the ruins. A team led by Sheba and Vanilla gets out of the skimmers; Ferrero is among the team members.

SHEBA

Okay, let's split up into two groups. We're searching for survivors, but if you come across anything you can use, feel free to pick it up.

VANILLA

Acknowledged, Captain.

We follow Vanilla's team (includes Ferrero) as they poke through the ruins. In the remains of a research lab, they find an interesting device.

FERRERO

Commander, is this worth picking up?

VANILLA

Provided it isn't going to blow up in our faces, we might as well.

Another Galaxycat with a scanner calls to Vanilla.

GALAXYCAT

Sir, I'm picking up life-signs just beyond this wall!

Vanilla draws her gun.

VANILLA

Be careful, everyone; I doubt any stray F'lar will appreciate our efforts.

Vanilla and her team advance, only to discover the mysterious life-form is a half-dazed Malteazer, who is slumped against a wall.

You again!

Vanilla shakes Malteazer lightly in an attempt to rouse her. Malteazer becomes slightly more focused.

MALTEAZER

Vanilla? Where...where am I?

VANILLA

You're sitting in the ruins of the FC- and looking remarkably unharmed considering that this place has just blown up.

MALTEAZER

Blown up? What happened?

VANILLA

Well, I was actually hoping you could shed some light on that. I mean, an explosion on this kind of scale isn't something you could just fail to notice.

MALTEAZER

I'm sorry, but the last thing I remember was Krelston wanting to interrogate me. It's all a blank after that.

VANILLA

How convenient for you.

MALTEAZER

I'm sorry I can't be more accommodating.

VANILLA

Very funny. If it was up to me, I'd just leave you here, but I suppose I'd better keep the captain happy.

Vanilla reluctantly helps Malteazer to her feet, but the two separate as soon as conveniently possible.

Cut to Sheba's group. They have found very little of interest.

SHEBA

All right, looks like there's nothing here. Let's get back to the skimmers.

Sheba's team returns to the skimmers, but as they approach, Sheba sees Sapphire attempting to steal one of them.

Lieutenant Sapphire!

Instead of running away, Sapphire draws a knife and tackles Sheba.

SAPPHIRE

One move from any of your and your precious captain dies!

The team look uncertain and confused, unaware that Sapphire is not the ally they assumed her to be.

SHEBA

So, you were the traitor. How did you end up here?

SAPPHIRE

Oh, you know how things sometimes just happen. I suppose I'm quite lucky really, unlike poor Commander Willow.

SHEBA

What did you do to her?

SAPPHIRE

Oh come now, Captain, do you really think this is the best place to talk? We'll have time for a chat on our little skimmer ride.

A member of Sheba's team edges forward.

SHEBA

Stand down, Ensign.

ENSIGN

But, sir...

SHEBA

Much as I hate to leave the city at this time, I'm afraid this is a situation that I need to personally resolve. Tell Commander Vanilla that she's in charge until I get back- and instruct her not to come after me.

SAPPHIRE

Enough of that, let's go.

Sapphire and Sheba get into the skimmer and take off.

Cut to Vanilla's team as they return to the skimmers.

VANILLA

Where's the captain?

ENSIGN

Commander, she's been taken hostage!

VANILLA

What happened? Did you guys run into a F'lar?

ENSIGN

It wasn't a F'lar...it was Lieutenant Sapphire.

VANILLA

So the captain was right...well, whatever the case, we need to go after them.

ENSIGN

Uh, the captain specifically said we weren't to do that.

VANILLA

That kind of order is just asking to be disobeyed! Which way did they go?

MALTEAZER

How did someone like you even reach the rank of commander?

VANILLA

What did you say, F'lar?

MALTEAZER

You heard me. Every time your captain gives you an order, all you can seem to think about is disobeying it.

VANILLA

A member of my squadron has betrayed Galaxycats and kidnapped my commanding officer- what do you expect me to do?

MALTEAZER

Blindly chasing after them is most likely to make the situation worse. You should have a little faith in Captain Sheba.

FERRERO

Commander, what should we do?

Vanilla turns away to think for a moment. Finally, she sighs.

VANILLA

The damned F'lar is right. Let's gather up what we've found here and return to Galaxycats.

65. Sheba's Office, Rienne

Vanilla and Sandy are there.

SANDY

We've completed a search of Sapphire's quarters. I can't say the evidence is conclusive, but it doesn't look good.

VANILLA

I see.

SANDY

Commander, this isn't easy for any of us. We all trusted Sapphire.

VANILLA

All those times we went out to fight together, and I never once suspected...how could the captain see something was wrong when I was so blind?

Pause.

SANDY

Commander, there's one more thing. No one's heard anything from Commander Willow since yesterday.

VANILLA

According to the report from Sheba's team, Sapphire mentioned Willow's name. I'm afraid we have to assume the worst.

SANDY

Should we hold a wake?

VANILLA

Let's wait until the captain gets back- just in case.

SANDY

I thought that once we liberated Rienne from the F'lar, everything would seem better- but it just feels like we've got ourselves into an even bigger mess.

VANILLA

It'll work out, Commander; I won't let the damned F'lar take everything away from us.

Pause.

SANDY

Uh, I'd better be going, Commander.

Vanilla nods and Sandy leaves. Vanilla picks up a datapad and idly starts reading it.

VANILLA

Sheba, why did you leave me in charge? After all the times I messed up...

Malteazer enters, holding the device that Vanilla's team found in the ruins.

Was there something else you needed, Sandy...oh it's you. Haven't you ever heard of a doorchime?

MALTEAZER

I understand you picked this up in the ruins of the F'lar Command.

VANILLA

In case it has escaped your notice, I am now the commanding officer of this facility. Lucky as we were to have the F'lar blow themselves up for whatever reason, I still have more pressing matters to attend to than you and your little device.

MALTEAZER

This 'little device' is a personal teleport. I am sure you'll agree that the technological advance it represents could decide the course of the war- one way or another.

VANILLA

If that is the case, then why did you fail to mention this before? Wasn't keridanium the big threat you were warning us all about?

MALTEAZER

Keridanium was- and still is- an issue of concern, but it is no longer the only one. When I left the F'lar, I believed that the teleportation project had been scrapped, but based on my analysis of this device, advances have been made that make it viable. And you can bet that if the F'lar think there's even the slightest chance of it working, they'll assign their best scientists to the project.

VANILLA

So what is it you want? If it's just a lab where you can stay out of my way whilst you tinker with that thing, then I'm all too happy to give it to you.

MALTEAZER

Whilst I would like to do just that, there is one more thing we should discuss.

VANILLA

I think it should be clear by now that I have absolutely nothing to say to you.

MALTEAZER

On the contrary, I think you'll find that, right now, I am the only person that you can talk to.

Pause; Vanilla looks sceptical.

Think about it- you're effectively the captain now. You have to lead this crew, putting aside your own doubts and fears to become a strong figure for them. Can you hope to manage that?

VANILLA

Who are you, of all people, to lecture me about being in command? I've spent my career in Galaxycats- you're just some F'lar lackey.

MALTEAZER

Insult me all you want, but it won't change anything. The gap between a commander and a captain is nothing less than the gap between a Pantheran and a god. I very much doubt you can manage on your own.

VANILLA

And your point is...?

MALTEAZER

Don't get me wrong- I couldn't care less about you. I do, however, care about what Galaxycats and Captain Sheba are fighting for, and the last thing I want is for you to mess it up.

VANILLA

So, what, you want to be my guardian angel?

MALTEAZER

Hardly. I just want you to listen to me, to consider my opinion before you do anything too hot-headed.

VANILLA

I'm sorry not to oblige your egoistic little fantasies, but there's only room for one captain here, and that position is taken. Why don't you run along to your little lab and work on that oh-so-important teleportation device of yours?

Malteazer gets up.

MALTEAZER

Fine, I'll be going now- but like it or not, you're going to find that you need me.

Vanilla snorts as Malteazer leaves.

66. Ruins of F'lar Command, Rienne

Zoom in to

67. Underground Bunker, FC, Rienne

A number of small worker robots (toolbots) are clustered around a humanoid shape on a medical bed. They appear to be adding mechanical components to the shape. Finally, they complete their work and move backwards

TOOLBOTS

Restoration complete; all systems online.

VIEW FROM ABOVE. The figure on the bed is revealed to be Mirakova, now transformed into a cyborg. She wakes up.

MIRAKOVA

I must complete my duty.

TO BE CONTINUED...