

Galaxycats
Episode 7 "Turn or Burn"

We see scenes from Episode 6, the Velassians, Sheyana, the S'h'raya, Malteazer in the lab, the meeting hall.

RIALTA (V.O.)

Following an incident in Lavarre, it was decided that Captain Sheba should lead a team on a mission to return the displaced Velassians living on Panthera to their original home. With the cooperation of the Velassian government, it was expected that the trip would not run into any major problems. As it turned out, however, Velassia housed a threat that no one could have prepared for- the S'h'raya, a race of alien invaders from an unknown galaxy.

Thanks to the efforts of Doctor Malteazer in particular, the S'h'raya threat has been neutralised, but elsewhere the war against the F'lar must press on, with the Alliance choosing to make a particularly bold move that will either secure the Haynars as our allies, or remove them from the war entirely.

Scene fades. Title and credits run.

1. Sheba's Office, Rienne

Rialta sits at the desk, Vanilla opposite.

VANILLA

Destruction? You can't seriously be telling me that the Alliance has the will or even the means to commit genocide?

RIALTA

Commander, this war has dragged on for far too long. If we don't start taking bold moves, how many more will die in the ensuing years?

VANILLA

Well, let's just assume for one grad that I'm at all happy with that- what are the details of this mission, and where would I fit in?

RIALTA

As I'm sure you're aware, the Haynars are effectively second class citizens in the F'lar; kept in check through fear, they serve their masters and act as little more than cannon fodder and enforced labour. A situation like that is inherently unstable, and it is our belief, that if handled correctly, we can instigate an uprising and eventually gain the Haynars as our own allies. Your job would be to make contact with the anti-F'lar elements on the Haynar continent of Menskar and organise the foundations of such an uprising; if, however, at any point your mission seems set to fail, you would be in a prime position to disable Menskar's defences, enabling the Alliance to make a tactical strike.

VANILLA

A sound enough plan, I suppose, but why come to me with this? I'm just a soldier, not one of your fancy operatives.

RIALTA

Yes, Vanilla, you are a soldier, and that's why we need you for this. Your front line experience is just the kind of thing that the Haynars will respect and identify with- but more than that, this is a high risk mission, and at the end of the day, you are expendable. The instant you and your team go into Menskar, you'll be on your own- there won't be any rescue truck waiting to pick you up.

VANILLA

If I didn't know better, I'd swear that you were trying to insult and threaten me- in which case you're going about it in entirely the wrong way. Everything you just said could equally apply to any number of missions I've gone on in the past, and it's not about to phase me now.

Rialta smiles; Vanilla is reacting exactly as predicted.

RIALTA

I take it that means you'll be accepting this mission, then?

VANILLA

I'm not happy with raining destruction down on Menskar if the mission fails, but that's exactly why I have to go- because there are precious few others I'd trust not to screw up in there. I do have one condition, though- I get to pick my own team.

RIALTA

It doesn't matter to me who you take; all the government and I care about is that you achieve your objective.

2. Galaxycats Briefing Room, Rienne

Vanilla, Tassel, Opal and Sahara (female Pantheran) are there.

OPAL

Start an uprising on Menskar? I don't want to overly question your decisions, Commander, but are you sure that this isn't something we should leave to other people?

VANILLA

Rialta has her reasons for wanting to send me on this mission, and I have my reasons for agreeing to it. Captain Sheba gave me dispensation to pick the team members I needed, and I believe the three of you will do the best job. Of course, given the nature of this assignment, I won't order any of you to come- and it won't reflect badly on you should you choose to refuse it.

TASSEL

You must know that when you put it that way, none of us would consider backing out.

VANILLA

Good to hear it. We'll be departing for Lan-Kan in the morning- all the equipment we need should be available there, but if there's anything else you think might come in handy, now's the time to get it ready.

Dismissed.

Tassel and Sahara leave. Opal remains.

Is there something else I can help you with, Doctor?

OPAL

I just can't help feeling that there's more going on here than meets the eye. There's been surprisingly little fallout with regards to Kralor...

VANILLA

Guess you're too old not to see through the workings of the game, eh, Doctor?

OPAL

I'm not sure whether I should take that as an insult or a compliment.

VANILLA

Take it however you wish, but yes, I'm sure picking me for this mission conforms to one of Rialta's manipulations- and to be honest, I couldn't care less. That kind of manoeuvring isn't my style- I've committed myself to fighting the enemy that's in front of me, and if someone hands me a mission that could bring this war to an end, then by the gods I'm going to take it.

OPAL

A worthy goal indeed- as long as there are always people willing to watch your back.

3. Spaceport, Panthera

We see Vanilla and her team arrive at the spaceport and board a shuttle.

4. Space- Starship Kiriana

The shuttle docks at the ship..

5. Docking Bay, Kiriana

Captain Ravel greets Vanilla, Sahara, Opal and Tassel.

RAVEL

I didn't think I'd be seeing you again, Commander Vanilla.

VANILLA

Me neither- are you the only ship we have?

RAVEL

You ground-bound are all the same- completely unaware of the battle that's taking place in space. My ship is one of the few that can afford to be diverted away from the front lines in order to ferry people back and forth on their pleasure cruises to Lan-Kan and the like.

VANILLA

Does this look like a pleasure cruise to you?

RAVEL

Oh, I didn't mean you, Commander, but we do get all sorts hitching a ride on here- some of them don't even seem to know there's a war on.

VANILLA

And so what if they don't? If they can live a normal life in the midst of all this, then I'm happy for them; happy that even one person can live in peace because of what we're doing.

Pause.

RAVEL

I'll show you to your quarters now.

6. Space- Lan-Kan

Kiriana is in orbit. The planet below (Lan-Kan) has one predominantly yellow continent (Rihkar), one white snow-covered continent (Menskar), and a blue sea.

7. Lan-Kanian coast

A beautiful, clean sea laps at a white beach. The beach rises gently up to a yellow grassed area. Small cottages can be seen in the distance. Creamy-white paths lead to various areas. Glow-posts line the paths. Exotic Lan-Kanians dressed in bright clothes walk past, at a carefree pace.

Vanilla, Opal, Sahara and Tassel walk towards a glass building bearing the Galaxy cats insignia. They enter.

8. Galaxy cats outpost, Lan-Kan

Light and airy, with a more relaxed feel than any Pantheran Galaxy cats base would have. A Lan-Kanian officer, Konti, greets Vanilla's party as they enter.

KONTI

Welcome to Lan-Kan, Commander.

VANILLA

I trust you know why we we're here.

KONTI

Indeed we do, and it is an...ambitious plan to say the least. There are those of us here who feel that to toy with Menskar is to disrupt the delicate balance of the planet.

TASSEL

I suppose by that you mean that you Lan-Kanians have gotten used to your idyllic life. Do you even notice that our enemies are right next door?

KONTI

Lieutenant, many of us have dedicated our lives to defending this continent from the Haynars. We understand the balance of power better than anyone else.

VANILLA

Nothing worth gaining is without risk.

Pause.

KONTI

Well, anyway, I've been ordered to assist you so who am I to argue? The equipment is ready for you in the hangar bay, although I assume you'll want to rest first-

VANILLA

No, we'd better get going as soon as possible.

KONTI

Very well, then, follow me.

Konti heads off; Tassel and Sahara follow, but Opal taps Vanilla on the shoulder and keeps her behind.

VANILLA

Doctor, this is hardly the time for a private chat.

OPAL

Commander, with all due respect, are you trying to pick an argument with everyone we meet?

VANILLA

I'm sorry that I can't be as agreeable as you'd like, but I'm only voicing my opinions, Doctor.

KONTI

Is something wrong, Commander?

VANILLA

Not at all.

Vanilla goes to catch up with the group; Opal follows.

9. Space, Velassia

Establishing shot.

10.Meeting Room, S'h'raya Research Lab, Yarzel City

Malteazer, Zalet and Haxel are there. A map of the surrounding region is displayed.

HAXEL

According to our scans and the security force's reports, S'h'raya activity across this entire continent is all but eradicated. We owe you a great debt of thanks, Malteazer.

MALTEAZER

I've compiled all my research into on comprehensive database; hopefully it won't be needed again, but there's no sense in erasing such valuable data.

ZALET

We'll retain your findings, of course, but I anticipate that my team will soon be assigned to another project. Naturally you'd be welcome to stay on and assist us, Doctor; in fact, there'd probably be few difficulties in letting you pursue your own research.

MALTEAZER

Your offer is a generous one, Doctor Zalet, but I don't intend to impose on you for much longer.

HAXEL

You're hardly imposing- if not for you, we might not even be here.

MALTEAZER

I'm appreciative of your kind words, but I was just one contributor out of many. Now, if you'll excuse me, I really need to get some fresh air.

Malteazer gets up and leaves.

11.Borderlands, Velassia

A lowglider flies across the rocky borderlands.

12.Borderlands, Overlooking Ravine, Velassia

The lowglider is parked a short way away. Malteazer sits on a rocky outcropping overlooking the edge. An image of a second, subtly different Malteazer appears before her.

MALTEAZER

You...!

DARK MALTEAZER

Did you really think you could keep me sealed up forever? Your grip was bound to weaken sooner or later; all I had to do was wait- wait until you realised that you needed me again.

MALTEAZER

I don't need anything from you! Why can't you leave me alone?

DARK MALTEAZER

Oh come now, we both know better than that. You created me to protect you, to face the world that you were too weak to handle. You might even say that I was an improvement on the original.

MALTEAZER

Maybe that was true in the past, when I was the F'lar, but things have changed now. I have friends and allies in Galaxycats.

Dark Malteazer laughs.

DARK MALTEAZER

Oh come now, do you really think that someone like you can ever have friends? Anyone who gets close to you will only end up hating you, just like Vanilla does now.

MALTEAZER

I miss Vanilla, but even if we can't reconcile, she isn't the only person in my life!

DARK MALTEAZER

Oh yes, of course, I forgot- you have so many friends! In fact, you are so surrounded with people willing to support you that you're out here by yourself talking to me. Come on, Malteazer, it's pointless lying to me and you know it. All your life, you've deliberately made yourself useful to people because you know damn well that there's no other possible reason why they'd want to be around you. They will use you, manipulate you, and in the end, they will all abandon you.

Pause.

MALTEAZER

I...am I just so worthless that in the end, everyone will reject me? Am I going to be alone forever?

DARK MALTEAZER

This world is still too painful for you, isn't it? But don't worry, there's no need to face it anymore; just go to sleep, and leave it to me.

MALTEAZER

But where...what...

DARK MALTEAZER

I will go to him- to the one who is calling me.

13.Space-Panthera

Establishing shot.

14.City Streets, Rienne

A pair of Galaxycats skimmers are on patrol when they run into a squadron of Nightriders.

15.Int. Ferrero's Skimmer

Ferrero opens a communications channel.

FERRERO

Nightrider ships, you are in a restricted area. Please state your purpose.

COMPUTER

The Nightrider ships are powering weapons.

FERRERO

What the hell?

16.City Streets, Rienne

The Nightrider ships fire on the Galaxycat skimmers.

17.Int. Ferrero's Skimmer

FERRERO

Are these guys serious? I guess we have no choice but to engage.

Ferrero opens a communications channel to the other Galaxycat skimmer.

Ensign, target the Nightrider ships; try to disable their skimmers without taking them out.

18.City Streets, Rienne

A brief skirmish begins as Ferrero and Trey try to disable the Nightrider skimmers. One Nightrider skimmer spins out of control, colliding with another and causing an explosion. In retaliation, the remaining Nightriders concentrate their fire on Trey's skimmer. Unable to withstand the barrage, it explodes. The Nightriders split up and flee. Ferrero has no choice but to return to base.

19. Galaxycats Control Room, Rienne

Sheba, Aquilegia, Marval, Sandy and one other are present. Ferrero enters

SHEBA

Ensign Ferrero, report- what the hell happened out there?

FERRERO

To be honest, Captain, I'm not entirely sure myself. I was trying to make contact with the Nightrider squadron, and in return they fired on me and shot down Ensign Trey.

SHEBA

We only just manage to get rid of the F'lar, and now this...what could the Nightriders possible be hoping to achieve?

Sheba moves to face the viewscreen. Ferrero sits down at a tactical console.

Well, I suppose the only way to find out is by asking them- Marval, contact the Nightriders.

Marval does so. After a few moments, a dark-grey skinned Velassian, Venadrax, appears onscreen.

VENADRAX

Ah, Captain Sheba, we've been waiting for your call. Allow me to introduce myself- I am Commander Venadrax.

SHEBA

Let's dispense with the usual civilities, shall we? For reasons as yet unclear to me, one of your squads has just attacked a Galaxycats patrol wing and killed one of my officers. What I want to know is why.

VENADRAX

You may have lost one officer, but we lost two in that little incident. Perhaps you should instruct your people to be a little less trigger happy.

FERRERO

You were the ones who fired first! We were just trying to defend ourselves by disabling your ships.

VENADRAX

Oh really? Well, I suppose it can't be helped if one or two shots were more potent than you had intended- you Galaxycats are so used to killing, after all.

FERRERO

Everything I've done has been to defend my planet! I don't go around randomly causing trouble like you!

SHEBA

Ensign, that's enough. Commander, baiting my officers will achieve nothing- and I'm still waiting for an explanation as to the cause of this whole incident.

VENADRAX

Now you see, that's where things get a bit complicated. You see, what we really wanted from all this was exactly the situation we have now- you contacting us directly so that we could analyse your outgoing communications protocols. That would give us a loophole to hack into your computer systems-

SHEBA

Marval, disengage communications link now!

Marval attempts to do so.

MARVAL

I'm sorry, Captain, the system isn't accepting my commands.

AQUILEGIA

It's not just you, Ensign, we're all being locked out.

VENADRAX

Sorry, Captain, but it looks like everything's gone just as we planned.
The main viewscreen goes blank; other computer systems start going down all over the control room. Emergency lights come on.

SHEBA

What the hell just happened?

AQUILEGIA

It looks like they did just what they told us- somehow they've hacked into our computer network and disabled out primary systems. Everything's down- even our backup generator can't do much more than keep the lights on.

SANDY

The Nightriders have never been on the best of terms with us, but why this attack, and why now?

SHEBA

I think we'd all like an answer to that question, but for now all we can do is deal with the problems in front of us. Sandy, put a team together and get our systems back up and running as soon as possible-

AQUILEGIA

Captain, we've just received an alert from our secondary proximity detectors- a Nightrider force has mobilised and is on its way.

20.Space- Lan-Kan

Establishing shot.

21.Inlet, Lan-Kan

A small bay close to the Galaxycats outpost; two Cutter-class skimmer subs are moored there. Konti leads Vanilla, Tassel, Sahara and Opal to the Cutters.

KONTI

These skimmers are the best chance you have of getting through the defensive barrier that surrounds Menskar. My team will do their part by distracting the F'lar as best we can with a staggered series of aerial attacks; this should give you a window of opportunity to get across to Menskar.

VANILLA

Thank you. Opal, you'd better ride with me- Sahara, you'll pilot the other Cutter with Tassel on weapons.

Tassel, Sahara and Opal nod and board the Cutters. Konti keeps Vanilla back.

KONTI

A moment of your time, Commander.

Konti reaches into his pocket and withdraws a small communications device.

If it comes down to it and you have no choice but to disable the Menskar defences, use this to let us know- we'll initiate our strike right away.

VANILLA

And if we just need extraction?

KONTI

If you don't succeed one way or another- I don't think you're meant to come back.

VANILLA

Great.

Vanilla accepts the remote control, and boards her Cutter.

22.Lan-Kanian Coast

The Cutters launch and head out to sea- above, we can hear the whir of Lan-Kanian aircraft.

23.Askari Sea

A firefight has begun between Lan-Kanian and F'lar forces in the skies above, but now the F'lar have dispatched their own sea forces to deal with Vanilla's party. A battle begins.

24. Int. Vanilla's Cutter

Vanilla is piloting, and it's a bit of a bumpy ride.

OPAL

Are we going to get through this in one piece?

VANILLA

Sorry if this is a little faster paced than you're used to, Doctor, but I'd thank you to have a little more faith in my skills.

Vanilla sends a message to Tassel and Sahara.

I'll keep them distracted- you two make a break for it.

SAHARA

Acknowledged.

25. Askari Sea

Whilst Sahara and Tassel's Cutter heads on towards Menskar, Vanilla's Cutter peels off and engages the F'lar in an intense dogfight on the water. In a daring move, she flies right into them.

26. Int. Vanilla's Cutter

OPAL

I pray to the gods that you know what you're doing!

VANILLA

Now you know how I feel every time I come down to the infirmary.

27. Askari Sea

Camera pulls back as Vanilla fires close-range missiles. All we see is a large explosion, and then Vanilla's Cutter emerges pretty much unharmed. She speeds towards Menskar.

28. Galaxycats Control Room, Rienne

As before.

AQUILEGIA

Backup systems are coming online!

SHEBA

Send out our best pilots to engage the Nightrider fleet!

AQUILEGIA

Aye sir.

She opens a facility-wide communications channel.

All pilots Grade 5 or higher, report to hangar bays.

29. City Streets, Rienne

Skimmers stream out of the Galaxycats Hangar. Camera follows them as they skim through the city, and approach the Nightrider ships. They engage each other. Galaxycats has the upper hand in terms of technology, but the Nightriders are fighting with a strange ferocity.

30. Galaxycats Control Room, Rienne

FERRERO

Our skimmers have engaged the Nightriders.

SHEBA

Put them on audio.

FERRERO

Yes, sir.

PILOT #1 (V.O.)

Marané, there's two on your tail!

MARANÉ (V.O.)

I think I can shake them off.

We hear laser and Marané's skimmer exploding.

PILOT #1 (V.O.)

Marané? Marané?

PILOT #2 (V.O.)

Regroup in Grid 7124.

We hear more laser and more skimmer explosions.

PILOT #3 (V.O.)

My gods, what are they using?

PILOT #2 (V.O.)

Satellite guidance has been jammed. We're flying blind out here!

More lasers.

SHEBA

Can't we send out any more pilots?

FERRERO

All our serviceable skimmers are in use.

Silence; everyone in the control room is clearly worried.

PILOT #1 (V.O.)

We've got them on the run!

FERRERO

Captain, they're retreating!

AQUILEGIA

There's another incoming message from Nightriders.

Venadrax appears onscreen.

VENADRAX

Don't think this is the end, Galaxycats- we're coming for you.

31. Inlet, Menskar

The Galaxycat Cutters make it to their destination, but as they disembark, Haynars are waiting for them. They are dressed in hooded furs against the cold.

TASSEL

Oh great- cornered by the enemy as soon as we get here.

One of the Haynars throws down his weapon and pushes back his hood.

HAYNAR

Greetings Galaxycats, I am Casszan. You are the ones who are here to save us, am I right?

32. Ice Fields, Menskar

The Haynars lead Vanilla's team across the ice to an unused complex.

33. Abandoned Storeroom, F'lar Complex, Menskar

A bare room. Casszan leads Vanilla's team inside.

CASSZAN

I cannot tell you how glad we all are that you have arrived.

VANILLA

Uh, yeah, I appreciate it and all, but what exactly do you think the four of us can accomplish here?

CASSZAN

You were the one who helped Klissza gain control of the Prilan mines, were you not?

VANILLA

Well, I guess-

CASSZAN

Then you are exactly what we need! You must be the one to show our people that there is more to life than being the dogs of the F'lar- that we can once again be proud and free!

VANILLA

If you guys want to rebel, why don't you just do it on your own?

CASSZAN

Many of us have languished too long under the F'lar- they no longer the calling of the warrior spirit. They said we could not bring Galaxycats here, that you would not help us, but I knew otherwise. You are our talisman, our good luck charm, our-

VANILLA

-Figurehead?

CASSZAN

More than that. Vanilla, you are the one who has the blood of Tieran running through your veins- you are the one they speak of in prophecy,

the warrior from the stars. You will be the spark that lights the fire of this rebellion, I am sure of it!

Casszan is interrupted by the beeping of his communicator.

Excuse me- I must go. Please stay here if you value your safety.

Casszan hurriedly leaves.

OPAL

Well, that was- interesting.

TASSEL

What did he mean by the 'blood of Tieran'?

VANILLA

Like I would know- probably some Haynar religious mumbo-jumbo.

SAHARA

So, Commander, what do you think? Can we do this?

TASSEL

I say we don't bother- let's just figure out how to take their defences down and then blast the whole lot out of existence.

VANILLA

And that would make us better than the F'lar how exactly?

TASSEL

It's war- does it really matter who's better or worse? We're here to make sure the Haynars are no longer a threat to us.

VANILLA

I won't be party to a massacre. In case you had forgotten, that's how I lost my own family.

Silence.

34. Warlord Chiniva's Office, Menskar

Chiniva is staring out at the frozen landscape when Casszan enters. She immediately turns.

CHINIVA

Good of you to finally show up, Casszan.

CASSZAN

My apologies.

CHINIVA

And here I thought I had you trained better than that. Are the new units up to scratch yet?

CASSZAN

My Lady, they are just children-

CHINIVA

Nonsense! You Haynars engineered yourselves to become a warrior race- and when you did that, you gave up your rights to childhood, not to mention all the other luxuries we civilised races enjoy.

Casszan bristles at the insult, but says nothing.

What's wrong, my dear? Did I say something to upset you? Perhaps you'd like a little treat.

She gets out a syringe-spray, filled with a thick, purple liquid, syanshara.

Casszan tries to back away.

CASSZAN

Your offer is most generous, but I must decline.

CHINIVA

Oh come now, Casszan, will one more dose really hurt? You're already addicted, aren't you?

She administers the drug to Casszan. He tries to keep his reaction under control, but his body betrays him.

CHINIVA

So, I hear a couple of enemy skimmers tried to make it across the Askari Sea. I assume they weren't too much to handle?

CASSZAN

No, My Lady- we dispatched them.

CHINIVA

Good, because if I find out otherwise, I might get the teensiest bit angry- and I think we all know what happens when I get angry, don't we?

As Chiniva laughs, Casszan forces himself to chuckle weakly.

Well, that was all, really. Please make sure at least three squadrons are outfitted and ready to be sent off-planet within the next three days.

CASSZAN

Yes, My Lady.

Casszan bows and leaves.

35. Abandoned Storehouse, F'lar Complex, Menskar

Casszan returns with another Haynar, Merizara.

VANILLA

Took you long enough.

CASSZAN

My apologies- Warlord Chiniva needed me. This is my deputy, Merizara; between us we are the leaders of the rebellion.

TASSEL

Don't you mean would-be rebellion?

MERIZARA

In all truth, I had no interest in involving outworlders, but if it will silence the doubters and unify us under one cause, then so be it.

VANILLA

We'll need details before we can act, such as how many people you have under your command- and what kind of resistance we can expect.

OPAL

Commander, what are you planning?

VANILLA

An uprising, of course. I don't plan to stick around here forever, taking baby steps towards our goal.

CASSZAN

Yes, an uprising! That's just what we need!

MERIZARA

Casszan- this one move could jeopardise all our work. Should we really let them use our carefully cultivated forces for one foolish strike?

CASSZAN

If we don't do something, our rebellion will die of indifference before it accomplishes anything!

VANILLA

Trust me on this. If there's one thing I know, it's how to kick up a fuss.

CASSZAN

Then I must assemble my people! Merizara, take them to somewhere where they can rest and plan for a few radia.

Merizara sighs.

MERIZARA

Very well. I just hope you have not signed all our death warrants. Here, Galaxycats- you'll need these to get any further into the complex.

Merizara hands them standard-issue Haynar battle suits.

36. F'lar Base, Menskar- Outside

Merizara leads Vanilla and her team to a more populated area, where Haynar squadrons are training or going about various tasks under the supervision of Fessan overseers. When a young Haynar boy stumbles, one of the Fessan uses a plasma whip on him. The Haynar yelps in pain.

FESSAN

Bet you're liking this, aren't you boy? Shall I raise the setting?

Everyone around pretends not to notice what is going on. Merizara mutters a curse under her breath.

TASSEL

I'll show that self-important b'rek!

VANILLA

I'd like to do it myself, but we can't afford to blow our cover here.

MERIZARA

You had better be able to put an end to this.

37. Haynar Quarters, Menskar

Merizara leads Vanilla's party into some Spartan living quarters. They remove their bodysuits as she moves to the computer and inserts a datacard.

MERIZARA

This computer is disconnected from the F'lar mainframe, so you can browse all you want without fear of being detected.

VANILLA

To be honest, the mainframe sounds a lot more interesting.

MERIZARA

All the data you need is here. I'll be back later.

Merizara leaves. Vanilla starts browsing the files on the computer.

TASSEL

Commander, are we really going to help them incite an uprising?

OPAL

I have concerns about this as well.

VANILLA

If Galaxycats wanted to handle this diplomatically, they should have sent an ambassador. Instead, they sent a soldier, so I can only assume that they're prepared to go along with whatever I decide.

OPAL

Commander, are you entirely sure that they sent you because they thought you were the best person for the job?

SAHARA

Doctor, what are you saying? That they want us to fail?

TASSEL

There is one way we can succeed in our mission; hack into the Haynar's defences and just let Galaxycats nuke the place.

VANILLA

I already said I wasn't going to let that happen, Lieutenant. I would rather fail here than be party to genocide.

TASSEL

Yeah, I guess it's better to shoot down people one by one from your skimmer, right, Commander?

VANILLA

Do you have a problem with my defence of Rienne, Lieutenant?

TASSEL

No, just with your double standards.

VANILLA

I do what I have to, when I have to- that doesn't mean I think it's acceptable to win this war by turning the enemy into radioactive waste!

OPAL

Commander, Lieutenant, let's all calm down. We're in unfamiliar territory here, and it isn't going to help our cause to be at each other's throats all the time. Commander, I can't say I agree with your methods, but you are in command of this mission, so I'll follow whatever you decide to do.

38. Galaxycats Briefing Room, Rienne

Sheba is there with her senior staff, including Sandy and Aquilegia.

SHEBA

Everyone, I think we all know that the situation isn't looking good right now. The Nightriders have assumed an aggressive stance against us, and

they've been blocking all movement and communications in and out of the city. We're effectively stranded here.

SANDY

Why are they doing this?

SHEBA

That question is at least as important as how they even have the manpower to carry out an offensive on this scale. I have a feeling we won't like the answer to either of those questions, but for now all we can do is bolster our defences and get all our systems up and running again.

Once that's done, we'll meet back here to discuss options.

ALL

Aye, sir.

SHEBA

Dismissed.

Sheba and the officers get up and leave.

39. Outside Sheba's Office, Rienne

As Sheba gets back, she sees that Marval is outside waiting for her.

SHEBA

Ensign Marval, is there anything I can do for you?

MARVAL

I'd like to talk to you for a moment, Captain.

SHEBA

Fine, come on in.

They both enter

40. Sheba's Office, Rienne

Sheba moves to her desk and sits down. Marval remains standing.

SHEBA

Do sit down, Ensign.

MARVAL

If you don't mind, I'd rather stand.

SHEBA

As you wish. So, what's on your mind?

Marval takes a moment to compose himself.

MARVAL

Captain, I- I've been thinking. We need to find out more about why the Nightriders have launched this offensive.

SHEBA

Thank you, Ensign- I hope it won't hurt your feelings too much to know that I'm already well aware of that. Unfortunately, we're already stretched a little thin- our defences aren't quite what they used to be when the F'lar were right on our doorstep.

MARVAL

Captain, I know you're all busy, but the point is that I'm not- and I think I would be a good candidate to infiltrate Nightriders and find out what they're up to.

SHEBA

Ensign, don't think that I don't respect your skills, but sending you into Nightriders would be suicide right now.

MARVAL

Sir, I specialised in tactical training at the Academy; if anyone has the know-how to pull this off, it's me.

SHEBA

Running simulations at the Academy is no substitute for the real world, Ensign. You've barely graduated as it is- if there wasn't a war on, you wouldn't even have seen as much action as you have. I can't protect you from that, but I can stop from taking unnecessary risks.

MARVAL

I believe it is necessary. We can't make any progress until we know what's going on.

SHEBA

Your concerns have noted; however, this base is not a democracy, and unless I say otherwise, you are to stay put right here. Understood?

MARVAL

Aye, sir.

41. Basement Meeting Room, Menskar

Casszan is there, having gathered together Haynars willing to rebel. Merizara enters, bringing Vanilla, Sahara, Opal and Tassel with her. The crowd mumbles in discontent.

CASSZAN

Silence, everyone! You all said it couldn't be done, but we have contacted Galaxycats and they have answered our call. Commander Vanilla is legendary amongst her people, and now she is here to lead us to victory and freedom! No longer will we be the pawns of the F'lar!

HAYNAR

They may be here, but what can four Pantherans do?

Vanilla holds up a datapad.

VANILLA

This is what we can do. We can be the fulcrum for your entire rebellion- for an uprising that will sweep the F'lar from your continent! Menskar!

Menskar!

HAYNAR AUDIENCE

Menskar! Menskar! Menskar! Menskar! Blood! Blood! Blood! Blood!

The audience takes up the chant, whipped up by Vanilla and Casszan. Camera zooms in on Opal.

OPAL

Vanilla, what are you doing?

42. Space- K'trakan

A Starfighter streak into the atmosphere.

43. F'lar High Command, K'trakan

Warlord Tieran is in conference with two generals when security guards enter, flanking an unfazed Malteazer.

GENERAL

Who is this? Why have you brought a Galaxycat here?

TIERAN

Don't worry, General. I asked for her to come here, didn't I, Malteazer?

MALTEAZER

Indeed you did. Now tell these guards that they don't need to chaperone me.

TIERAN

Everyone, dismissed.

The guards leave, followed by the disgruntled generals. Malteazer approaches Tieran.

You aren't the Malteazer that I met before, are you?

MALTEAZER

Let's just say the two of us are on a timeshare arrangement.

Tieran smiles.

TIERAN

Interesting. You know, I never thought that I'd meet a telepath stronger than myself, but now that you're here, we can end this war quickly.

Malteazer draws herself uncomfortably close to Tieran.

MALTEAZER

I came here because you'd have plenty of interesting things to show me.

I hope I won't be disappointed.

The couple share a long, tantalising look.

44. Control Room, Galaxycats, Rienne

Aquilegia, Ferrero and other officers are there, having worked a long shift. Sheba enters. Marval's place is conspicuously absent.

AQUILEGIA

Captain, we've restored our primary defences. Communications is working on a way to get a distress signal out to the other cities.

FERRERO

Our pilots have been fending off periodic Nightrider attacks ever since the first assault. It's like they're trying to wear us down.

SHEBA

If we can't figure out a counter-strategy, they may well do just that.
Sheba notices that Marval is missing.

Where's Ensign Marval?

AQUILEGIA

He hasn't returned since he went to see you. I assumed you'd assigned him elsewhere.

SHEBA

That little fool- he didn't, did he? Damn it all, I just don't have time for this.

45. Nightriders Base- Exterior, Rienne

Marval has indeed gone to Nightriders and is sneaking around. He finds a way in.

46. Nightriders Base, Rienne

Marval has made way into an empty room with a computer terminal. He tries to log in when a contingent of Nightriders led by male Velassian Venadrax enter.

VENADRAX

Ah, I thought I heard a little klah sneaking around. Did Captain Sheba send you?

As the Velassians train guns on him, Marval steps away from the console.

MARVAL

You're wrong! I- I'm here to join you!

Venadrax smiles.

VENADRAX

Are you now? A likely story, I think, but one that we can arrange to become the truth. Take him away.

The guards seize Marval.

47. Haynar Quarters, Menskar

Vanilla's party is there. Merizara enters, carrying equipment

MERIZARA

We're in position as you asked- everyone awaits the word.

Merizara hands body armour and weapons to the Panthers.

I hope you weren't thinking of sitting this one out.

VANILLA

Never.

They begin to suit up.

48. F'lar Base, Menskar- Outside

Everything looks normal, until, without warning, explosions sound from several of the buildings around the perimeter.

F'LAR GUARD #1

What's going on? Haynars, investigate at once!

Several groups of armed Haynars emerge, running towards the F'lar guards and overwhelming them.

HAYNARS

Menskar! Menskar! Menskar!

49. Control Room, F'lar Headquarters, Menskar

Chiniva is there with several Fessan officers. Images of the uprising are just coming through on the monitor.

CHINIVA

What in the name of all the hells is going on?

FESSAN

It's the Haynars- they've gone mad! We've got a rebellion on our hands!

CHINIVA

That is unacceptable! Execute them all!

FESSAN

Sir, we can't! They outnumber us by far!

CHINIVA

Then lock down this building- whatever you do, don't let them in here!

FESSAN

But sir, we still have Fessan officers outside.

CHINIVA

Aren't I more important than any of them? Do it, soldier!

FESSAN

Aye, sir.

The officer initiates lockdown procedures.

50. Corridor, F'lar Base, Menskar

Casszan and Vanilla are advancing on the F'lar when the lockdown alarms sound.

VANILLA

I take it that isn't a good sound.

CASSZAN

They're locking down the facility- we could be in for a siege situation.

VANILLA

Can your people handle that?

CASSZAN

We're skilled in all types of warfare.

VANILLA

Then we aren't going to give up.

51. Tieran's Office, K'trakan

An expansive and well-appointed office, as befits the most important man in the F'lar. Tieran and Malteazer are there.

MALTEAZER

So tell me, Tieran, how does a lowly Pantheran rise so high in the F'lar?

Tieran taps his head.

TIERAN

With this ability, anything is possible. Still, I can't believe that you were right there in the F'lar all this time, and I never knew.

They are interrupted by an incoming communication.

Yes, what is it?

F'LAR (V.O.)

Sir, we've just received a distress call from Menskar!

TIERAN

What's Chiniva done now?

F'LAR (V.O.)

According to the message, the Haynars have initiated a full blown uprising! Our forces have sealed themselves in, but it's a stalemate situation.

Tieran sighs.

TIERAN

I suppose I'll have to deal with it myself. What say you, Malteazer- do you fancy a trip to Menskar?

MALTEAZER

It's a bit cold for my tastes, but I trust you'll have plenty to show me.

52. Holding Cell, Nightriders

Marval is in captivity. A female Lan-Kanian, Karla, enters. She is carrying a case of something.

KARLA

Didn't do very well for an infiltration mission, did you? Please tell me that Captain Sheba didn't send you.

Marval says nothing.

Oh dear- trying to be the good little soldier, are we? I'm afraid your days of toeing the line at Galaxycats are officially over.

MARVAL

Kill me if you want- you won't get away with it.

KARLA

Now, now- who said anything about killing you? Is everyone at Galaxycats so fatalistic?

Karla opens the case, revealing a vial of orange liquid and a syringe spray.

If anything, I'm here to give you a little present.

MARVAL

That- that can't be...Teriska Orange?

KARLA

A rare drug, I know, but one we recently procured a supply of. Care to try some?

MARVAL

Get that stuff away from me! You know what it does to Lan-Kanians!

KARLA

Indeed I do. Teriska Orange, originally developed by the F'lar to enhance reflexes in front line pilots- addictive to all races, but especially dangerous to Lan-Kanians. Once a Lan-Kanian becomes addicted, their body simply shuts down without a regular dose, but to keep taking is to damage oneself beyond repair.

MARVAL

Did you get that out of a textbook?

KARLA

The One told me. He tells us everything.

MARVAL

Who is the One? Take me to see him!

KARLA

All in good time; first, you and I have a little appointment.

Karla loads the syringe spray, but as she does, her hands start shaking.

No- no I can't.

Suddenly, her voice takes on a different tone.

Yes you can. It is necessary for the cause.

Karla advances on Marval, a puppet in the hands of this unknown force. She enters Marval's cell and grabs him. He tries to struggle, but she holds him with surprising strength,

MARVAL

No, no, please! I'll do anything! I'll tell you anything!

KARLA

This is necessary.

Karla forcefully injects Marval, who screams as the drug floods into his system.

53.Meeting Room, F'lar Base, Menskar- several days later

Vanilla and her team are there. Merizara enters.

VANILLA

Report.

MERIZARA

We haven't made any further progress- the F'lar are holed up tight.

Vanilla sighs.

VANILLA

I should have known this wouldn't be easy.

MERIZARA

Our people are skilled in warfare, but even they are beginning to wonder if this uprising has been worth it. We vastly outnumber the F'lar, yet they

still have the technology to hold us off. Our only hope is for you to convince Galaxycats to come here and help us.

VANILLA

In case you hadn't noticed, the F'lar are jamming our long range communications. I don't know how you expect me to call Galaxycats in these conditions.

Pause.

MERIZARA

Casszan believes in you so much, but I do not think that you are here to save us. I don't think you would even care if we all died.

Merizara turns and leaves.

VANILLA

Merizara, wait- that's not true!

TASSEL

It is, though, isn't it? We should stop playing at this stupid war and plan how to get out of here.

VANILLA

I won't give up on this!

OPAL

Commander, Tassel does have a point. We need to rethink our course of action, or we won't get anywhere.

VANILLA

Those Haynars are counting on me? Do you think I should maybe tell them that Galaxycats doesn't really give a damn about this mission- that they'd be just as happy to see this whole place blown to smithereens?

Vanilla picks up a firearm and exits.

54.F'lar Base, Menskar- Outside

Vanilla trudges out into the snow and heads over to where the Haynars are setting up a plasma cannon. Casszan is there.

CASSZAN

Ah, Commander Vanilla! We've been working on setting this up all day- it might be just what we need to turn the tide.

VANILLA

I sure as hell hope so. Do we have any more of these?

CASSZAN

Not in working order, I'm afraid.

The area is suddenly blacked out by a shadow from above. The roar of a spaceship's engines can be heard.

Is it Galaxycats? Have they come to send us reinforcements?

Vanilla peers up at the sky.

VANILLA

Oh gods...that's a F'lar troop transport!

The transport lands and armoured Fessan warriors pour out.

CASSZAN

All units, forward!

VANILLA

Casszan, what are you doing? You're no match for them!

CASSZAN

Now that it has come to this, we have no place to return to. Isn't it better to die in battle than be executed by them?

VANILLA

We can find a way out of this- take your people back to Riihkar.

CASSZAN

Your people do not want us, do they, Commander?

Vanilla is silent. The Haynars have engaged the Fessan, but they are getting slaughtered.

Please do not forget us, Commander. You carry the burden of our lives now.

Vanilla can only stand and watch in horror as Casszan follows his people into the enemy. Within moments, he too is killed. A group of Fessan approach Vanilla and point their guns at her. She drops her weapon.

FESSAN

Any last words, Galaxycat?

Tieran approaches.

TIERAN

Stand down, Lieutenant.

Vanilla and Tieran face each other across the snow- a reunion neither of them wanted.

VANILLA

It was you- how could you do this?

TIERAN

I didn't do it, Vanilla- you did. You led them to their deaths the moment you came here. You forced me to do what was necessary.

VANILLA

Necessary? Why is any of this necessary? Why are we still fighting this war?

TIERAN

Vanilla, I don't want this to continue any more than you do- but the only I can do to end this is to defeat you.

VANILLA

Then shoot me down here- because as long as I'm alive, I will never give up.

The two face off for a moment, but then Tieran turns away.

TIERAN

Go. Leave now.

Vanilla has no choice but to walk away. Camera zooms in on Tieran.

Why did you have to come back now? I thought I had steeled myself for what must be done, but...

55. Basement Meeting Room, Menskar

Vanilla, Opal, Sahara and Tassel are there.

OPAL

What happened? The Haynars, they were all-

VANILLA

We've failed- we have to get out of here now.

TASSEL

I told you we should have just nuked this place. Now that all the Haynars are dead, what difference would it have made to them?

VANILLA

It would have made all the difference, Lieutenant, because I'm the one who has to carry the burden of our lives. Now, you'd better hope like hell that we can get back to Riihkar, because I very much doubt that Galaxycats is going to give enough of a damn to pick us up.

56. Askari Sea

Vanilla's team return to Riihkar on the Cutters.

57. Observation Room, F'lar Battleship

Malteazer and Tieran look down at Lan-Kan.

MALTEAZER

Don't feel bad, Tieran. You had to do it.

TIERAN

Is that what the real Malteazer would say?

MALTEAZER

Who's to say which one of us is 'real'?

TIERAN

Perhaps. Anyway, we have important projects on K'trakan that we should get back to. Shall we depart?

MALTEAZER

Whatever. I was done here anyway.

The sexual tension between them is intense.

58. Space- Panthera

A spaceship pulls into orbit, and a shuttle descends to the surface.

59. Office, Carria Spaceport

Rialta is waiting. Vanilla enters.

VANILLA

Make this quick, Minister- I'd like to get back to Rienne.

RIALTA

Oh, I don't think you'll be going back there for a while, Commander. You see, Galaxycats has granted my request to engage your services for a while.

VANILLA

What!?

RIALTA

I'm very disappointed in you, Commander. You see, given your record, I really thought that succeeding on this mission would be within your capabilities. What a shame you had to prove me wrong.

VANILLA

What you wanted was nothing short of genocide. I wasn't even going to consider that as an option.

RIALTA

And how many people died because you mishandled the situation, Commander?

VANILLA

I did what I felt was right.

RIALTA

I'm sure that will be plenty of consolation for the Haynars.

VANILLA

Like you care, you manipulative-

RIALTA

Ah, ah, ah, Commander- is that any way to talk to your new boss?

60. Space-K'trakan

Establishing shot.

61. Laboratory, K'trakan

A F'lar scientist and his subordinates gather around a fluid tank.

ASSISTANT

Sir, will it really work? We've tried and failed so many times.

SCIENTIST

This time I'm certain of it. The conditions are optimised, the calculations have been checked and rechecked. Ladies and gentlemen, we are about to attain of the gods.

They activate the fluid tank, which lights up as it discharges some kind of electric shock into its occupant. As the tank drains, it reveals a familiar Pantheran, who chokes as she discharges fluid from her lungs.

Welcome back, Commander Willow.

TO BE CONTINUED...