

## **The Chronicle of Ul'Star – found on The Smuggler's Fortune BBS-RPG**

### ***Special Delivery***

Ul'Star dodges loader droids as the rest of his cargo is loaded aboard the Quantum Fireball, since he took on a couple more "Free-Trade" missions in the time it took Kendra to finish with Rodinae. Once she returned back up with a semi-disgusted look on her face, he knew it was time to get the hell of this planet. She'll not want to be near anyone but Kell for the rest of the voyage.

"Well I will see that this cargo gets to wherever it is supposed to, within it's normal time-frame, as well. You know how to get a hold of me, it hasn't changed since your Hutt days. Is there anything special that I should do with the special package?" asks Ul'Star as Tarn motions that the last crate is on board.

Be'Annar shakes his head as a very happy-looking Ithorian dodges a droid as he emerges from the compound. "Nothing particular, just deliver it to it's destination, and collect your fee. Well once again, it's been good doing business with you."

Ul'Star nods and waves as he climbs into his Skipray and closes the hatch, his repulsors already charging; the mechanical whine raising in note until it's almost inaudible. As the creaking of the Fireball's cargo hatch lifting shatters the relative silence of the Ithorian jungle, the massive ship powers up to begin lift-off. While Tarn makes a quick sensor-check making sure none of the planetary sensors are looking their way, Kell eases the ship off of it's landing struts and onto repulsors. Once Tarn waves the "all-clear", the two ships float up on their repulsors and as they both fire up their engines, the Skipray's wing rotates into combat position.

As Kendra inputs the hyperspace co-ordinates they were given, the 24 Novaldex "Event Horizon" engines push the Quantum Fireball into orbit. Ul'Star flies over-watch, waiting for them to signal that it's time to jump to Hyperspace. Once he sees the proper signal, he rotates his wing back into landing-position and extends his landing gear, landing on the top-deck of the Fireball, ready for hyperspace.

Setting his timer for 3 weeks, he turns it on as the stars around him stretch into the ever-familiar starlines and the docked ships flicker with pseudo-motion and then disappear with a silent bang. Getting up and walking back to the sensor-station in his ship, Ul'Star goes over the passive sensor logs as he thinks over how he's going to bring this delivery to his intended 'victim'. Voicing his opinions to his Astromech, he goes over the facts....

"One, she was a Smuggler about a year-and-a-half ago. Two, she was a sometime-ally of the Rebellion, and later the New Republic. Three, she was trusted with relatively important information, which she divulged under interrogation. Four, she was 'given' to the interrogator, which means she must have been relatively attractive, either that or that Imperial must have been one twisted dude. Five, she was compelled to forget her non-Imperial past, and had new memories implanted. Six, NRI captured her when they retook the imperial world where she had been living, and identified her as the missing smuggler..."

"Well, isn't this lass in a pickle?" asked Ul'Star as the Astromech beeped querulously at

him. "No, not literally in a pickle...you need a bit more work, yet. I'll let Tarn look at you in a week or so. I mean she's in quite a situation: not remembering who she is, her remaining smuggler-friends wondering what the hell happened to her, NRI wondering why she doesn't remember betraying their operatives...Quite a pickle. If I weren't such a professional, I'd wonder who her benefactor is, and why they were so eager to help her out."

Tapping a finger on the datapad he was recording this information into he shrugs and then hits on an idea as he goes over the sensor logs from the last encounter with the Imperials. Grinning widely, he opens a radio-link with the Fireball and (quite unsurprisingly) gets Tarn.

"What's up, BC? Think of a snag or something?"

"Nope, just thinking about our little assignment. This is one toyed-with woman. And I bet you this isn't the half of it. I'm guessing that Kell is reassuring Kendra in their quarters?" quipped Ul'Star.

Tarn chuckles, nodding, despite that it wasn't a holo-transmission. "Yea, I'm guessing. Thorn's in the cargo bay, training like always, so it's just me and the droids, and even the astromech got bored and went over and put himself into standby. Three weeks straight hyperspace? Nothing like a long haul. Bring a book-chip?"

"Yea, one of the files you sliced out of the Imperial computer the last time we hit a major base. Something about the phantom Grand Admiral. Some hot-shot named Thrawn, who went off to the Undiscovered Sectors before the Death Star was destroyed. Should be interesting, I'm not too sure why someone this good would go out to the boonies, but there it is. How about you?"

"Advanced Droid programming... I thought about programming your astromech with a language chip, and a vocoder, actually. The beeps are somewhat understandable, but not really, but basic is a hard language to code!" exclaimed Tarn.

"I know what you mean. I think we should take a break in about a week so I can grab some more rations for the trip from the stores. Oh, and to get those sensor-drones back from you... I think I have an idea..."

Ul'Star putters around the cabin of his 4-man assault ship as the days fly by. Taking care not to burn himself he feverishly sets to copying one piece of very interesting equipment. As the atmosphere scrubbers scramble to keep up with the toxic fumes of Rosin Smoke, he solders and welds components together in a cobbled manner to form a rudimentary sensor mask.

For the un-initiated, a sensor mask is a highly-illegal bit of tech that convinces less-powerful sensor suited that the ships contained in the field is actually not what it really is. The more unbelievable the sensor mask is, the more susceptible to failure it is. However if the user masks his ship as something similar, normally the mask holds up to everything but visual inspection.

The finished product is a shambles of sensor relays, memory chips, power supplies, and many logic circuits, but when it's done, it's about the same size as an Astromech, without the

wheels and legs. Smiling at his work he takes a seat back in the cockpit and munches on a ration bar. He had no idea where in the galaxy he was going, save a general idea...a sector out on the middle-rim. There, he was supposed to give something to an Imperial/Republic double agent (or something like that), and then he was gonna come away with some more cred.

As the radio beeped in the cockpit, he opened the channel back on the sensor station. "BC, go ahead..."

"Kell here, just wanted to remind you that we're getting ready to drop out in a bit. You wanted those supplies?"

"Yep.. I'll have everything ready over here. I've got something for you to install in your sensors too...just in case and all" replied UI'Star.

"Alright, we'll be dropping out in about 5 minutes, so stand ready, Kell out."

### ***An (Un)Welcome Diversion***

UI'Star clicked the radio twice and then went about strapping down his electrical monstrosity so it wouldn't get damaged. Slipping into the pilot's seat as the hyperspace beeped about a mass-shadow in front of them, he grimaced and wondered what it was....but there wasn't enough time for that. As the starlines suddenly flared to infinite length, his hands were already flying to the weapons and shields and the instant the world had stopped it's pseudo-motion, his power-signature jumped exponentially.

On the bridge of the Maharaja, Vigo Josten Kalandhar waited to see what his trap would manage to catch today. As he paced back and forth over the crew-pit he waited bordly. One does not become a Vigo within Black Sun without being incredibly successful as well as incredibly powerful. While Kalandhar didn't have the success yet, his Interdictor Cruiser gave him the power.

"Tally HO!" hollered a crewer as at the far end of the gravity-cone a ship fell out of hyperspace. Barely visible with the naked eye, the bridge screens immediately enlarged it to display a wedge-shaped freighter with a large fighter perched atop it. "I don't believe it, it's the FTA! Orders Sir?"

"Launch squadrons and move the Maharaja into range.. that turncoat is mine." Not believing his luck, Kalandhar has in his hands the one traitor to ever leave Black Sun, and survive. If nothing else would appease the head of the organisation, it would be the sensor evidence of the death of Bernard Carnoy. "Destroy them all, they won't be carrying anything valuable."

A man with a price on his head is usually concerned for his safety. A man with a large bounty is usually worried about Boba Fett showing up on his doorstep. Unless, of course, this man was Bernard Carnoy. The bounty Black Sun had placed on his head was so large, they didn't even post it to the Guild nor to anyone else. That was because the embarrassment would be too large. Questions would be circulating through the black-market about why Black Sun wanted that guy so much, information would be leaked, and secrets would be exposed. While Black Sun

was still one of the more powerful syndicates, despite the loss of Xizor to Vader's jealousy, they did still have their weak points. The contents of Bernard Carnoy's grey matter were some of them. They would sacrifice entire systems to get him back, and now the lowest-ranking Vigo of the entire group had stumbled upon him by pure accident.

"Launch the picket fighters, and call in the strike cruisers, the commandant will be very pleased. Open a link to all the pilots...." commanded that very Vigo, Josten Kalandhar. Once the communications officer nodded at him, he spoke to all of his ships, and hopefully to Carnoy himself. "Attention all ships, the pilot of that Starfighter is a traitor to the organisation, and I will personally grant a 20 000 credit stipend to the pilot or gunner who brings him down. He is not to escape under any circumstances!"

Back in his Skipray, Ul'Star was very non-plussed. "What great luck...Someone who knows enough about Black Sun, and apparently how much they hate me, recognised me and is now trying to kill me. Unless that IS Black Sun, but when did they get into piracy?" Opening the radio he calls over "Looks like the shit just hit the fan...sorry guys, make a break for it when you can. I'll follow after you if I get the chance."

Breaking formation, swinging his wing into combat formation and activating his combat-droid he clicked on a loud, angry music-file. As all his preparations came on-line he slammed the throttle full-forward and released the safety on the turret, which spun of it's own accord and targeted the nearest fighter, a fellow Skipray.

"Glad you made it back, Commander, they promoted me to your seat; and I'm going to get that bounty. Too bad your conscience had to get in the way" blurted the radio. The voice on the other end was Ul'Star's second-in-command back in the days before he left, back when they were the best private mercenary pilot-squadron outside Rogue Squadron.

Snarling back, Ul'Star reached for a special button on his comm-console and pressed it, saying "Fat Chance, Arnack. I've gotten better, you're still using my attack-patterns. Oh, and you get to die first." As he spoke, carried over a secondary channel, a computer virus attacked his systems, and as the lights turned out in the other Skipray's cockpit the droid-turret pumped it full of lasers. Punching through the failing shields, the light-turbolaser made short work of the Skipray's cockpit, and as Ul'Star dodged the expanding fireball, more lasers headed his way.

Back on the Quantum Fireball, the entire ship was abuzz. As Kell engaged the shields and powered the weapons, Tarn rushed for the quad-lasers. Kendra, as startled as she was, triggered the remote-start of her ship and headed straight for the cargo bay. Thorn was already pre-fighting his A-wing as she entered and once they both sealed their hatches the cargo-bay explosively decompressed, filling the space beneath the freighter with a burst of chaff... and two souped-up starfighters.

With a flare of two Novaldex "Event Horizons", the jet-black A-Wing leapt into the fray, twin-lasers blazing and tracker-jammer doing it's thing. Keeping right on his wing, Kendra's triangular-shaped ship showed it's previous owner's profession as a bevy of hidden lasers shot from it's sleek, mirrored surface. The Fireball, on the other hand, betrayed it's 'innocent' lines and erupted with laser and ion fire from two dorsal pop-up quad-lasers on the aft corners, a ventrally-mounted pop-down heavy ion-turret in the centre, and the port-side hard-mounted tri-laser.

While the trio of combat starships fired off parting shots into the enemy squadron on their way to deal with the Interdictor Cruiser that was preventing their escape into hyperspace, UI'Star was single-handedly tangling with no less than 5 (albeit poorer-armed) sister Skiprays. Once the trio reached the Maharaja's laser-range she opened up her turbolaser batteries on them, and to keep from getting hit, they scattered to little avail. A handful of horrid, chop-job fighters spilled from the Maharaja's hangar and attempted to get the Fireball off the Cruiser's case, but were generally ineffective, and died quickly to Tarn's fire-linked dual quad-laser turrets. Imagine if you would, an X-wing with a TIE-fighter's solar panels, or a TIE-fighter with an X-wing's S-foils. That type of chop-job was exactly what they were facing, and those ships are called "Uglies" in pirate-lingo. Generally useless against experienced pilots, but a way of fielding superior firepower on the cheap.

As Kendra, Kell and Thorn were dealing with the "Uglies" and the Maharaja, UI'Star was engaging the rest of the Skiprays. Destroying another one with a combination of Ion Cannons and Turbolaser fire, he couldn't help but take a few hits from his assailants. However, UI'Star's shields were holding thanks to their upgraded generator.

Unfortunately, all of their luck was about to change as his companions reached the Maharaja. A flicker of pseudo-motion and a sensor-spike heralded the arrival of bad news....two Nebulon-B frigates, which disgorged their own squadron of "Uglies" and began firing on the Fireball and her escorts. Things were going from bad to worse, very quickly, but since the Fireball was merely on it's way to get out of there, it didn't matter much.

Once they neared the Interdictor, all three ships dived in for nap-of-the-ship flight and shot off one concussion missile each at the same spot in the shields. The momentary lapse in the shields as the local grid restabilised gave all three ships the necessary window to get under the Cruiser's shields, making the Nebulon-B's useless, along with their "Ugly" starfighters. Turning the Fireball on her 'head' Kell pointed the majority of his weaponry at the deck of the ship, while the Droid-controlled Ion turret fired pot-shots at both the "Uglies" and their mother Frigates. Still dodging moderate turbolaser fire, as some of the battery commanders would accept friendly-fire damage at the cost of the attackers, Kendra and Thorn flew interference for Kell while dropping missiles and laser-blasts on the unshielded hull of the cruiser, random gouts of flame rising where they pierced her hull.

Ignoring the blaring alarms and the squeals of his Astromech droid, UI'Star weathered some Ionisation shots, thankful that he had Ion-shielding installed after one particularly nasty battle. Noting his comrades were out of this particular dog-fight for the time being, he engaged a secret weapon. Flipping another switch, the air-waves and the sensor displays of the ships within half a kilometre flashed to static, leaving targeting sensors, location sensors and ship-to-ship communications utterly useless. Knowing that there was a limited amount of time before they burnt through his jamming, he locked his light turbolaser forward and cancelled the droid, preferring to do this the old-fashioned way.

Firing some added manoeuvring thrusters, UI'Star grunted as his ship violently changed direction, a minor groan coming from his ship as the forward inertia tried to rip the ship apart. As one of his former comrades' ship flew past his crosshairs he triggered the light turbolasers and raked them all along the side of the ship, from engine to cockpit. As the ship erupted into flames,

UI'Star attempted a micro-jump through the expanding gas-cloud.

More, louder alarms shrieked as his hyperdrive strained to cut through the gravitic interference of the Interdiction Field coming from the Maharaja. Manually cutting them off mere seconds before they would have burnt themselves out completely, UI'Star "teleports" through the debris field with relatively little damage, and the fire coming from what used to be his aft missed him entirely. Focusing his shields behind him, rotating his wing into atmospheric-configuration and releasing the droid-turret again, UI'Star rockets away on full-thrust to get out of the Interdiction field as fast as he could. Luckily, with the Maharaja approaching the field would be getting more intense, but narrower, and quicker to evade.

Scoring a hit on a turbolaser battery each, Thorn and Kendra made their life a bit easier, as a crewer on the Maharaja's bridge called out "Sir! We have a power-spike coming from the freighter. Looks like a core-overload. I think we scored a hit!"

Cursing as the Fireball streaked up the dorsal spine towards the superstructure, Vigo Josten Kalandhar was fuming mad. He had heard the FTA had gotten out of many a tight-scrape before, but he was positive that no one could evade an Interdictor Cruiser with her Hyperdrive-crippling gravity-waves. Yet here was the living legend, proving him wrong. "What good is that if she blows up under our shields! Drop our shields and have the Escorts send their fighters after them. And increase the shielding on the Gravity Generators, Grashnakar is getting rather accurate with his fire." he shouted as Kendra's ship elicited another gout of flame perilously close to one of the four large bulges that protruded from the cruiser's otherwise "Star Destroyer"-shaped hull. What Kalandhar didn't know was that the Bounty Hunter Grashnakar no longer lived, and therefore no longer piloted that sleek, mirrored ship.

As the hum inside the Fireball reached an unbearable level, Kell suddenly flipped the ship again, pointing the nose of the ship directly at the superstructure. As Tarn began targeting the superstructure with Proton Torpedoes, Kalandhar watched the deadly dance of the dogfight and suddenly noticed a small hatch opening on the front of the freighter, and then an ominous glow.

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The cut-off triangular shape of the freighter's nose had suddenly grown a hole, but not one from battle damage. Instead it was a very clean-cut hole, where a retractable panel had just been. However he didn't have time to think about what it could possibly mean because the next instant the hidden hatch was filled with a deadly glow.

To outside observers, who didn't get to see the hatch opening, they were all quite surprised as a lance of red light shot forth from the Quantum Fireball's nose. However this lance must have been more than just a flashlight, because the ship nearly stopped in it's tracks and the centre of the Maharaja's superstructure (most notably her bridge) blossomed in a plume of a hull-breach.

As the power-surge generated by the Quantum Fireball's Turbolaser Cannon caused most of the ships internal systems to flicker momentarily, Kell threw the ship into a vertical climb, not wanting to be anywhere near her when the secondary explosions began. As the ship increased it's pitch rapidly, two bluish-orange projectiles sped from an aft twin-torpedo launcher. The two proton torpedoes arched up and headed straight for the superstructure. Moments before impact

they split apart, impacting the outer-ends of the superstructure.

While the superstructure burned with three holes in it, and his comrades escaping into hyperspace, UI'Star was busy dogfighting with a number of Skipray Blastboats. Turning to re-enter the dogfight with sensor jammers operating at maximum capacity, he swung his wing back into combat formation. Luckily for him, with the sensor jamming his opponents were having immense difficulty hitting him, but the flip-side to that was that he had no sensors either. To his advantage was his dogfighting skills in this very ship. While the Skipray was not a nimble ship off the factory floor, many modifications made this near freighter-scale ship as nimble as a Z-95. As the reinforced shields took a glancing missile hit, UI'Star grazed an enemy with his Ion Cannons and by the looks of the blue lightning coursing over the outside of that ship, it was out of the fight for a while, heading on a straight-line course out of the dogfight.

Constantly checking his Hyperdrive's gravity detectors for the end of this damnable Interdiction field he suddenly cut off his participation in the dogfight, dialled in a new setting on his Sensor Mask and cut off his jammers. As the confusion of the combat suddenly intensified as a gaggle of 5 ships, all painted the same, and the sensor signature they were looking for gone, the Skiprays all fell into formation, with UI'Star following up behind them.

"What the....? Where did he go? I was going to buy a new ship with that twenty-grand" complained one voice, while another was frantically complaining "My ears are still ringing... what was all that jamming??? I'm gonna kill that sonofabitch!"

Adding to the confusion, UI'Star opened his 'special' commlink (one equipped with a voice mask) and called out "By Zarqon! Look at the Maharaja! She's burning!" As the battle-group noticed their mothership's belaboured condition they all cursed the FTA and turned in formation to go assess the damage. Following along blithely, UI'Star kept up his disguise. Looking down with surprise, he was receiving an encrypted hail from his wingman.

"Hey, Arnack, I though BC scragged you right out? Why aren't you leading us back? Or are you testing Klettur?"

Grimacing, UI'Star hailed back, using the same encryption, his finger on the virus-transmission button (see, this thing only worked one way). As he did this, he noticed the interdiction field weakening, the damage-control teams must have turned off the generators so they could raise the protective shielding. Replying to the hail, he spoke icily.

"He did...I'm not Arnack. Nice to have fought you, you might have gone far in this unit...but no one survives crossing me." Nearly close enough to see the look of surprise on the other pilot's face turn suddenly to horror, the lights on that ship also cut out, the commlink returning only static as the virus wormed it's way through the Skipray's systems. As the afflicted Skipray started shutting down, UI'Star rotated his wing, turned his turret and turbo-lazed the stunned ship before engaging his hyperdrive and jumping out of the area, getting ready to go rendezvous with the rest of his crew.

### ***Back on the Job***

Kell, Tarn, Kendra and Thorn waited apprehensively at the hastily-defined rendezvous

point, fingers on their weapons systems, awaiting something popping out of hyperspace that wasn't their comrade BC. As Kell's sensors registered the power-spike that indicated a ship exiting Hyperspace, they all tensed a moment and were only slightly relieved when UI'Star's Skipray coalesced from infinite length with a silent bang.

"Made it out alright, I'll do some over-watch while you two dock. That Interdictor is not doing well, but hopefully they're going to be busy looking after her rather than after us. I'll get those supplies later, like about 30 light-years from here." UI'Star uttered over the Comm as he spun around, shields focused forward and weapons still fully-charged.

As the two starfighters flew into the cargo hold UI'Star started making random micro-jumps all over the place, filling the area with a myriad of confusing vectors that would make it incredibly difficult to trace their actual path. Once he was done, and the ships loaded, they both docked and zapped off for about 20 minutes before dropping out again so they could exchange goods and supplies.

Once UI'Star loaded a half-a-dozen sensor drones onto his ship and off-loaded his home-made sensor mask the two ships took off again for Kimilan, despite that no one on the ships knew exactly where they were going, save for a set of co-ordinates. Looking back to his cargo again, he wondered what the exact contents were, and why they were so important to this one person.