

Session 06 - Showdown at Storm Tower 25 ASW4 (23 Jun 2001) The heroes participate in a raid on a pirate base. (Branzet) (Choma) (Dreadar) (Sturmwulf) (Reports) (Shannara) (Trini) (Zaky)

Showdown at Storm Tower

Mission Briefing

In the time since the heroes' discovery of the location of pirate warlord Shel Abadan's secret base on Branzet, the Feorri Sector Authority managed to amass a strike force. This strike force would consist of six commando teams assigned to take out shield generators surrounding the central base, a large Nebulon-B class frigate that would be pounding the station from space and coordinating the assault, and several merchant ships fitted for combat, plus their starfighter escorts. Our heroes would comprise Team Cyan, and would accompany Team Mauve on the Century Hawk, a standard YT-1300 ship that had been refitted with a second gun turret for this mission, and piloted by an astromech droid.

The heroes were paid 1000 credits each in advance, and loaned the use of darkvision goggles, all-temperature cloaks, breath masks, encrypted comlinks, a medpac each, and as many atmospheric canisters and filters for their breath masks as they could carry. Furthermore, an ion rifle was assigned to the squad, and a suit of armor for Karl (seeing as he was the only one trained for armor usage). The YT-1300 would put down in a large pit left by an ore ship, drop off Teams Mauve and Cyan, with a skiff, a landspeeder and two speederbikes to take them through a tunnel system toward the enemy base, accompanied by a mining droid provided by the FSA, and a patrol droid purchased by the group. The FSA had acquired and decrypted a classified Imperial survey of Branzet that showed the tunnel network used by Shel Abadan for his pirate base -- and a disused side tunnel that Abadan was apparently not aware of, that could link up to the main network with a bit of drilling through some collapsed rock.

Back to Branzet

As planned, the heroes disembarked, followed by Team Mauve, into the tunnels. They reached a collapsed tunnel section that marked the point where they would break through to the tunnel network, and the mining droid went to work, digging through the barrier, and then digging a second hole for Team Mauve to pass through and head its separate way. The patrol droid was sent into the next chamber to check for dangers, but found none. When it returned, it observed some exposed wiring in a cul-de-sac to the side of the main passage, and Zaky was suspicious that there might be a trap involved, but he found nothing definite, and so it was left for the time being.

The Ambush

Team Cyan subdivided into two sub-teams -- Team A consisting of Jake Dreadar, Karl Sturmwulf and Trini (the Jedi), and Team B consisting of the Pardu brothers (Zaky and Choma) and the Wookiee Scout, Shannara. Using overwatch tactics, the teams moved into the room and took cover, and sent the patrol droid ahead to scout into one of the other chambers.

It was immediately shot down, and then explosives went off in the cul-de-sac to the side of the tunnel, sealing off the heroes' escape route. Battle droids emerged from a side chamber, and as Zaky moved into position to fight, he found that he had just moved into the line of fire for a destroyer droid. A fierce battle ensued, with the original battle droids and the destroyer droid taken out by well-placed grenades, and two more battle droids that popped out of hiding were taken out in a flurry of blaster fire. Only Zaky suffered any serious injury, and the group quickly moved to check the area for any additional enemies.

At this point, the mining droid indicated that it was checking for structural instabilities, and it was asked to check the collapsed tunnel section to see what could be done about opening it up again. It took one of the demolition charges, and even though it was specifically told not to set anything yet, it did so. Jake saw the blinking red light on the charge and was momentarily shocked into inaction, but Karl witnessed the droid's antics and shouted out to shut the charge off. Quick-acting team members dove for cover -- Shannara diving over a rock bridge, and the Pardu brothers leaping into a ravine to cling onto the rocky sides -- but Karl, in a lightning-quick and precise maneuver, managed to shut down the demolition charge, even though the droid had sabotaged its off switch. Once he did this, however, the mining droid turned on him with its plasma drill, but Karl smoothly crammed his blaster muzzle into the droid's open drill hatch and fried its internal circuitry with a well-placed blaster shot.

Betrayal

As Zaky and Choma got back up, it was becoming pretty evident that treachery was afoot here. Trini went into the chamber that the battle droids had first come out of, and discovered a "life station", but decided not to tamper with it. Zaky spent some time puzzling over a "bong" noise he heard when the disabled mining droid was tossed into the ravine, but then checked out the "life station" and found that, in fact, it had been rigged to blow if anyone tried to help themselves to it. Karl decided to break radio silence to check on Team Mauve, and learned that they, too, were under heavy fire, as enemy forces had been lying in wait for them.

The group made an assessment of their equipment they had been given "on loan" from the FSA. They discovered that their air canisters had been sabotaged, though some liberal application of force tape prevented further leakage. The demolition charges were rigged in such a way that the mining droid could easily sabotage them, but this "feature" was fairly easily disabled. The medpacs had slow-acting poisons hidden in them. Fortunately, there was nothing found to be wrong with the darkvision goggles, the all-temperature cloaks, or the armor that Karl wore. Jake decided not to take any chances with the ion rifle, and tossed it into the ravine without bothering to check it out. Shannara suggested that they check the comlinks -- Sure enough, the comlinks had been rigged to allow for others to listen in even when they were turned "off".

Meanwhile, Jake went over to the "life station" area to try to search for any hidden passages. In doing so, he set off the explosive charge rigged into the trap there. Amazingly, he survived, though Trini was knocked into the ravine, and had to be hauled out by the others. (Fortunately, she wasn't holding anything at the time.)

Karl radioed Team Mauve again, and learned that two of their number had been killed, and that they'd discovered that their equipment had been sabotaged as well, though they still had access to the way out, and to the repulsor vehicles. Karl checked on the Century Hawk and found that the astromech droid was still there, but somewhat bewildered -- It indicated that it

had not landed at the initial intended site, because it had found a "better" location, slightly closer to the target, and elected to land there instead. The original site had been hit by bombardment from orbit. According to the droid, the mission was in utter chaos, as the Nebulon-B class frigate and several of the merchant ships had opened fire on the others, and now it seemed as if there was a free-for-all. Karl checked back with Team Mauve and it was worked out that the remainder of their team would work their way back to the ship, while Team Cyan would try to find an alternate escape route.

Detour

Members of Team Cyan worked their way across a rock bridge over the abyss, to a rock-walled chamber on the other side that the destroyer droid had been guarding. The bridge collapsed while Trini was crossing it, but she managed to make it to the other side in time. A rope was used to help Jake Dreadar, the last remaining team member on the other side, to cross. Inside the next chamber, they found that it appeared to have served as some sort of holding chamber, with rusted and ruined remnants of mining implements here and there, and a couple of locked blast doors. Zaky used his sensor pack to scan through a door, and found possible evidence of machinery -- possibly droids -- on the other side.

While the group took positions to get ready to open the door, Karl noticed that there was a slight depression on the ground where he was standing, and decided to investigate. He scooped away the dirt, revealing a primitive turbolift, not quite in working order. They improvised a repair of the lift, using some water to temporarily fill the hydraulic lines, and then got the lift to lower about as far as their grappling lines could reach. When it was evident that the lift was losing fluid fast, Zaky lowered it the rest of the way to the floor far below. With a bit of work, some auto-pitons, and some liquid cable, the group began climbing down the shaft, doing fairly well for the most part -- though Zaky at one point slipped and had to use his grappling gun to keep himself from plummeting the rest of the way to the bottom. At last, the team regrouped at the bottom, and headed out.

Outside, Jake Dreadar was shocked to see a large droid standing at the bottom of the ravine they had crossed earlier. He fired off a blaster shot, which rebounded off of the droid's hull harmlessly. The others moved out to assist him ... then figured out that the droid was, in fact, immobile. They found that this was at the bottom of the ravine, and likely that the noises Zaky had heard earlier was that of droid parts raining off of this large droid's hull.

Abandoned Loading Station

Down the other way, the group encountered a corridor with a couple of functioning security cameras and blast doors -- apparently operating on individual batteries, since the generator for the area was damaged and inoperable. Zaky used his tools and datapad to record a segment of the video footage from the cameras, and then to play it back in a loop, replacing the previous signal so there would be no "ghost images". Then, the group took up positions on each side of one of the blast doors, preparing to toss in a smoke grenade and a frag grenade to deal with any enemies inside, if need be.

As the door opened, a couple of automated turrets spun around. Trini promptly threw in her smoke grenade, but before a frag grenade could be tossed in, Zaky threw in his ion grenade. The grenade went off, disabling the turrets, and then the group went in to investigate. They found that they could not read the labels with darkvision goggles, so a glowrod was used ...

whereupon they discovered that the room was full of demolition charges and detonite -- old enough to be well past the point of stability. They carefully backed out and closed the blast door again.

Next, they checked the other blast door, which opened up into a larger chamber, this one having a couple of defense turrets as well. One of them was taken out with a well-placed blaster barrage, while a grenade took out the second. As they moved in, they found several inoperable ASP labor droids and Trade Federation-era battle droids, a robotic loading arm and cargo platform, and elevated tram tunnels leading off in either direction. Zaky restored limited power to a terminal, and was able to discern that one of the tunnels led to the central base at "Storm Tower" (a Trade Federation ore mining and processing ship), and the other lead outward to a docking platform. At this revelation, the team started getting ideas about making use of this apparently neglected alternate way into Shel Abadan's pirate base.

Zaky went out to take a look at the generator, and actually managed to get it into temporary working order. However, as he did so, the large droid fighter (in walking mode) that they had seen earlier suddenly powered up. As everyone went for weapons, dove for cover, or managed to fire off shots, Zaky frantically shut down the generator -- careful not to do it in such a way as to damage the generator in the process. Fortunately, he managed to do so before the droid could take any action. This time, the team took care to make certain that the security measures were shut off, and Choma was positioned next to the powered terminal just in case they came back on for some reason, and then Zaky brought the generator online again, restoring power to the tram line.

The team headed down the tunnel and found an ore cart, repaired it, and brought it back to the central loading area. There, they off-loaded the ore, then piled in and used it as a conveyance to head toward Storm Tower, to investigate further.

Storm Tower

At the end of the line, they stopped the cart some distance out, and then Zaky went forward to scout for traps. He discovered a magnetic field for holding in atmosphere, but discovered that the air contained within the field was less than acceptable for breathing -- at least, not without a filter. He found a sealed door, and Choma and Trini came up to help open it, by working together through the Force. Testing the bounds of their ability, they managed to wrench it open, revealing a massive chamber beyond: the central reactor and ore-processing chamber, manned by countless battle droids and worker drones.

The team decided not to go charging in to take on such insurmountable odds, but instead carefully backed away, heading back to the loading station. There, they spent some time debating just what to do next. They could use the sled to carry explosives to the processing center, but then they had no way to get out. Shannara suggested that they use the droid fighter to get out, and eventually that idea caught on -- they carefully loaded the unstable explosives from the holding chamber into the cart, and put it into position to head down the tunnel to the processing center, with some demolition charges carefully programmed with two-second timers to go off after they hit the magnetic field.

Harrowing Departure

Zaky rigged up a crude controller for the droid fighter, and got it into the loading chamber, then got it to rest on its repulsors in the tunnel, while everyone piled on, securing themselves with grapples, force tape, and anything else handy to hang on for dear life. This finished, Zaky went over to the cart and started it moving, then hopped off ... and realized that the cart wasn't going quite fast enough. So, he ran to catch up with it, did some quick repairs, then jumped off as the cart full of explosives sped away toward the heart of the base. Zaky jogged back for all he was worth, finding himself much further away from his comrades by this point, and clambered onto the back of the droid fighter, whereupon he used his jury-rigged controls to get themselves heading off, and Karl called up the astromech on the Century Hawk to come in for an emergency evacuation at the coordinates of the docking platform on the other side.

As they were heading out, they found that the cart had already reached its destination and exploded, as a juggernaut of flame was now shooting down the tunnel after them. Zaky got the fighter to speed up, but he was not quite so strongly secured as the rest, and nearly fell off, but Shannara hastily grabbed him, and managed to also hang on to Trini as well.

With a wall of flame rushing up behind them and slowly gaining, the heroes clung onto the droid fighter for dear life, until finally it shot out of the opening and out of the path of the jet of flame, just as the YT-1300 came into view, and Storm Tower began to blossom with secondary explosions. The Century Hawk pulled alongside the droid fighter, and the surviving members of Team Mauve helped the heroes clamber up the boarding ramp and inside, while Zaky skillfully piloted the droid fighter into position to be loaded into the freighter's cargo bay.

Enemy starfighters converged upon the freighter's position, but the droid fighters in the service of Shel Abadan were no longer controlled by the central processor at Storm Tower, and flew madly out of control ... one of them clipping the two TIE Fighters pursuing the Century Hawk and sending them careening off into space. As the Century Hawk broke free of Branzet's gravity, the spectre of several gutted merchant ships and a massive Nebulon-B frigate loomed before them ... but the astromech steered the ship away from the carnage, taking advantage of a very nice distraction that Team Cyan had engineered below on the surface ... and punched the hyperdrive. Pinpoints of starlight elongated into streaks, as our heroes raced away from Branzet.

Regrouping and Planning

Once safe from the disaster on Branzet, our heroes took account of their losses, and pondered what to do next. The members of Team Mauve opted to leave the repulsor vehicles they'd salvaged in the care of our heroes, and to get passage out of Feorri Sector -- since obviously they'd no longer be employed by the Feorri Sector Authority, and they considered it questionable that the New Republic would be able to intervene. Jake Dreadar, grateful for their help, donated five hundred credits as a token contribution toward their effort to get a ride out.

In the days following, the team learned that dreadful times were upon Feorri Sector. Despite his devastating setback on Branzet, Shel Abadan and his co-conspirators had succeeded in enacting a military coup on the sector seat world of Narsus Prime. A number of lesser merchant houses had banded together to overthrow their individually more powerful rivals,

with Shel Abadan's help, and now he had succeeded in bringing the sector back under "Imperial" rule. Fortunately for Zaky and Choma, Shinsa and the cubs had managed to escape with their possessions in her shuttle craft, and had flown off to Geluvil to await word from them there. Some of the others were not so lucky, but at the very least they could be sure that there would be nobody asking them for the "loaner" equipment back (now including the YT-1300 and its astromech backup pilot).

So, our heroes must now decide where they will go to seek refuge from Shel Abadan's reign of terror, and whether they will carry on the fight to overthrow him once and for all!

End Results

For incredible performance in the face of potentially insurmountable odds, each member of the group received a sizeable reward of 1500 experience points. Zaky and Karl were awarded a Force Point each for their heroic parts in the destruction of Storm Tower.

Since there is no longer (for the time being) a Feorri Sector Authority to be paying and supplying the heroes, they can no longer readily find income with their "day jobs" in between adventures, without severe risk of being apprehended by Shel Abadan's forces and effectively removed from play. They also can't count on the FSA to reimburse them for expended ammunition, and to cover medical expenses -- but fortunately none of the heroes left the adventure seriously wounded, and they have the amazing powers of a Jedi Guardian to assist them in recovery if need be.