

TWILIGHT IMPERIUM™



CM
ON

FIRMAMENT



SNEAK PREVIEW

TWILIGHT IMPERIUM™

FIRMAMENT

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**TWILIGHT IMPERIUM:
FIRMAMENT**



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CHAPTER ONE

- GRALLA -

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STORY SO FAR...

It is twilight.

The great Galactic Imperium of the Lazax, which ruled all peoples and all known space for millennia, has long fallen in wars and calamity.

In the ruins of civilization, the Great Powers of the Old Empire... among them the Letnev, the Hacan, the Jol-Nar, the Winnu, the humans of Sol... begin to rebuild.

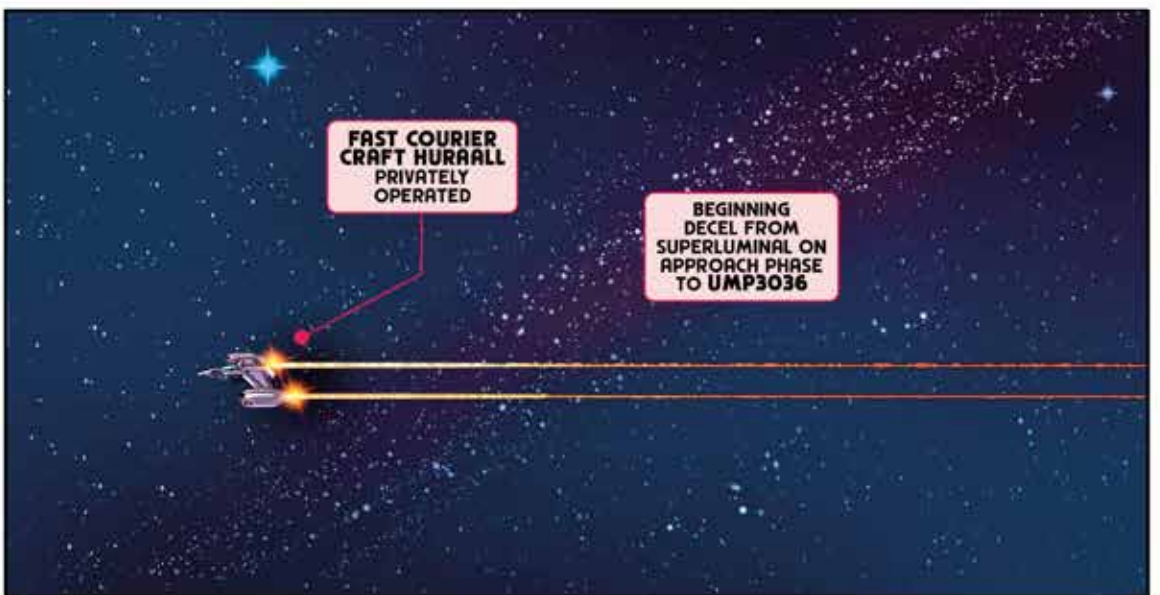
Their goal is to reclaim their territories, to dominate the fledgling Galactic Council, and to become the new masters of the Imperium-that-was.

The Imperium burned thirty centuries ago.

It is twilight...

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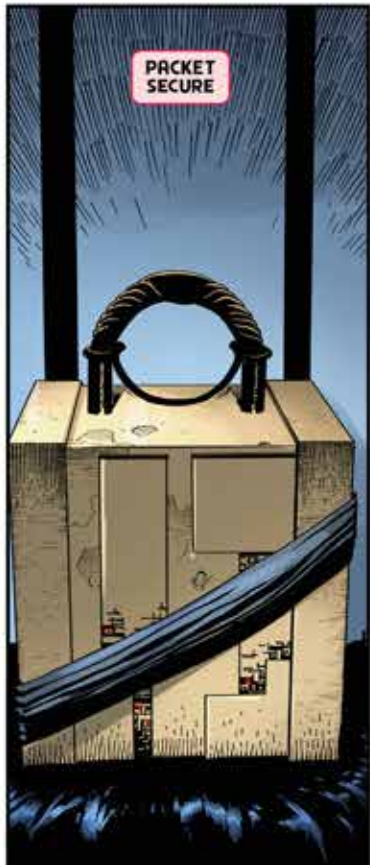
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GRALLA
(SPECIES: HACAN)
OWNER-OPERATOR
DATA MERCHANT/
DATA COURIER

**CONTRACT: SECURE
PACKET DELIVERY
TO UMP3036
(UN-MAPPED
PLANETARY 3036)**

**HURALL
MASS-DRIVE
SYSTEMS LOCKED
TO SUB-LIGHT
DECEL**



**PACKET
SECURE**



**SENSOR GRID:
ACTIVE
CONTACT**



HNH.

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I NEVER SAID IT WAS A TARGET, JAKES.

YEAH, BUT WE ALL KNOW IT WILL BE, RIGHT, CAPTAIN?

3036? WHAT'S THERE?

SZUCK ALL, CAPTAIN. ORBITAL DEBRIS FIELDS. A RUIN-ROCK.



MUST BE *SOMETHING*, T'SLAY. SOMEONE'S GONE TO THE TROUBLE AND EXPENSE OF SENDING A PACKET BOAT THERE.

AND A PACKET BOAT SAYS SMALL, PORTABLE CARGO. WHICH MEANS HIGH VALUE.

BOAT COULD BE LOST, BOSS.



HACAN DON'T GET LOST WHEN THERE'S A PAYDAY AT THE FAR END.

DO WE HAVE A GO ORDER, SIR?

WE'RE LOCKED ON. THE BROTHER IS LOCKED ON.



I WANT IT INTACT OR THERE'S NO SZUCKING POINT, T'SLAY.

COORDINATED POUNCE ON YOUR WORD.

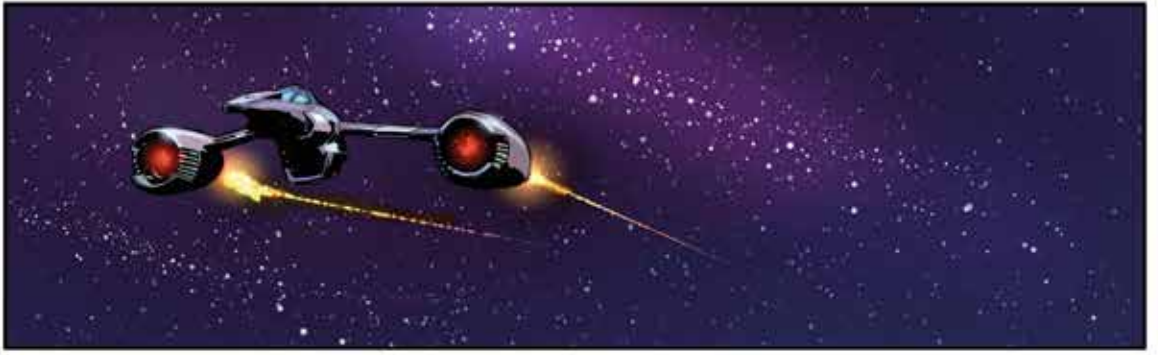
NATURALLY, BOSS.



GO.

MENTAK! ORDER IS GO!

GO, AYE, SIR!



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SECOND MENTAK
GUNBOAT
DETECTED

HARD
EVASIVE

OH, SHE'S
RUNNING!

ATTEMPTING
EVASIVE BREAK.
SHEARING CLEAR OF
THE BROTHER'S
CAPTURE FIELDS.

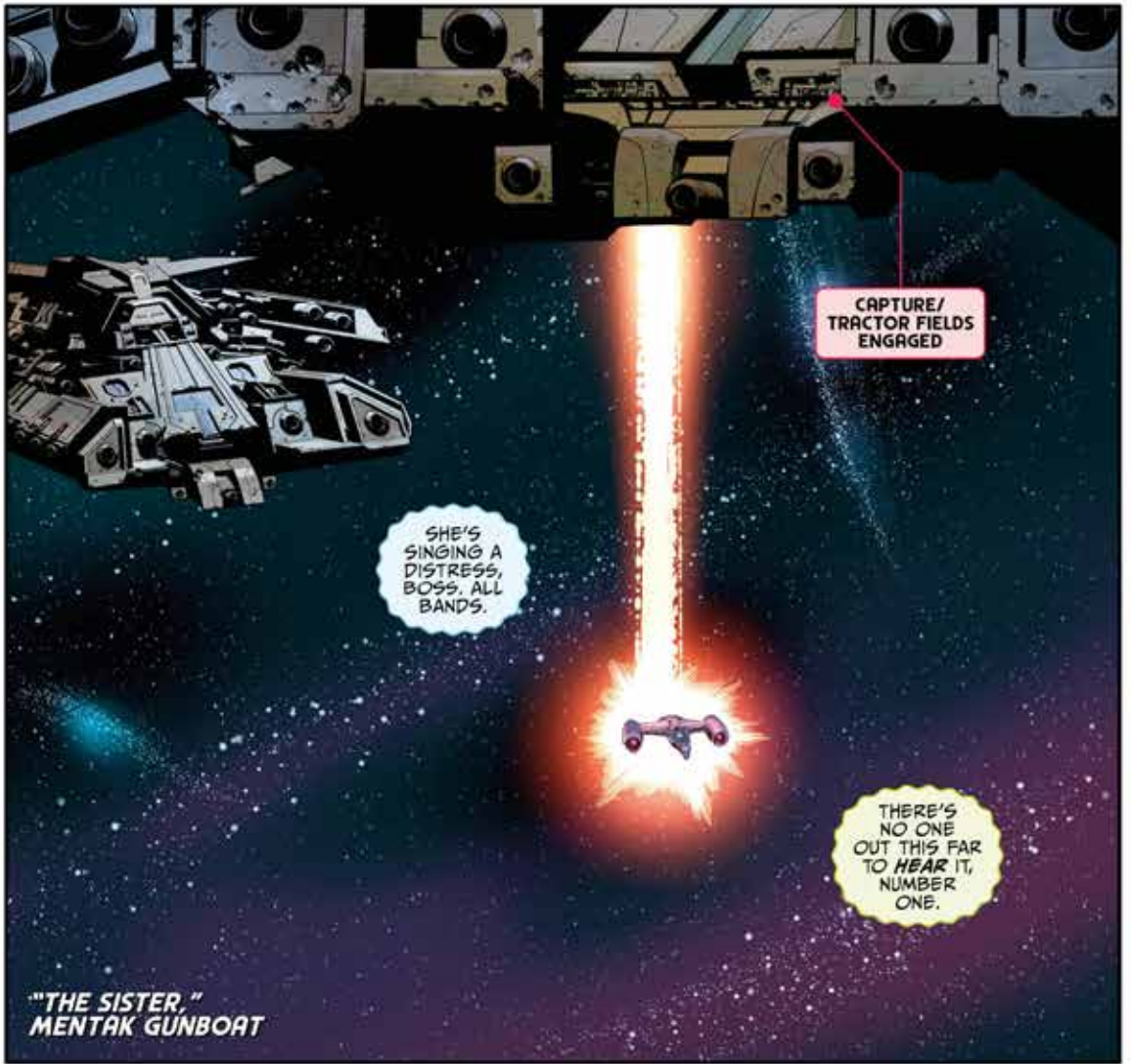
YEAH, TOO
SLOW. SHE'S STILL
ON HARD DECEL, SO
THAT BOAT'S GOING
TO BE ABOUT AS
RESPONSIVE AS A
DEAD XXCHA.

COME ABOUT!
CLOSE THE TRAP!
SPREAD CAPTURE
FIELDS!

SZUCK.

TEK

"VESSEL-IN-DISTRESS"
UNIVERSAL
BEACON
ACTIVATED



CAPTURE/
TRACTOR FIELDS
ENGAGED

SHE'S
SINGING A
DISTRESS,
BOSS, ALL
BANDS.

THERE'S
NO ONE
OUT THIS FAR
TO HEAR IT,
NUMBER
ONE.

**"THE SISTER,"
MENTAK GUNBOAT**



FAST COURIER
CRAFT HURALL
FIELD-LIFTED TO
CARRIER DECK
DRIVES DEAD

OTHER
TROPHY-CAPTURES
ON CARRIER DECK:

SOL FAST COURIER, LETNEV
PACKET BOAT, JOL-NAR
PROBE DROGUE,
SOL DEEP-RANGE SURVEY
SCOUT, SAAR FAST COURIER

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SO...
NAME?

MENTAK
COALITION
GUNBOATS:
"THE SISTER,"
"THE BROTHER"
KNOWN AS
"THE SIBLINGS"



GRALLA.



JUST
"GRALLA"?

OKAY, "JUST
GRALLA"... WHAT
ARE YOU
CARRYING?



MY
BUSINESS.



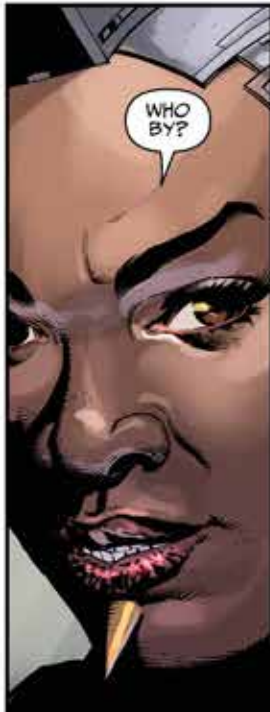
OH NO,
GIRL. OURS
NOW.

WE FOUND
A LOCKBOX
ON YOUR BOAT. IN
FACT, THAT'S ALL
THE CARGO WE
FOUND.

WHAT'S
IN IT?



NO IDEA.
JUST PAID TO
DELIVER.



WHO
BY?



DIDN'T
GIVE A NAME.
DIDN'T ASK
FOR ONE.



HMMM.
YOU KNOW, I
ACTUALLY ADMIRE
THIS TOUGH-ASS ACT,
I REALLY DO.

VERY STOIC.
VERY HACAN.

PROBLEM IS, WE'VE
GOT WHAT'S CLEARLY A
HIGH-VALUE LOCKBOX
THAT WE CAN'T GET INTO,
SO HERE'S WHAT'S
GOING TO HAPPEN...

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...MY FIRST OFFICER IS GOING TO START ASKING THE QUESTIONS.

HI.

NOW, T'SLAY, HE'S NAALU, AS YOU CAN SEE. AND YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS...

PSI-PATH.



RIGHT!

SO... ANYTHING YOU WANNA SAY, "JUST GRALLA," BEFORE I LET HIM PSUICE YOUR MIND OPEN?

COZ WE KNOW HOW MUCH FUN THAT IS.

I AM A COURIER, LICENSED, IN-SYSTEMS AND RIM.



I AM DELIVERING PACKET CARGO. NO NAMES. NO CONTENT MANIFEST.

YOU ARE ILLEGALLY DETAINING A DATA MERCHANT ON COMMERCIAL BUSINESS.



YOU TALK LIKE THERE'S SOME GREATER AUTHORITY GONNA COME AND SMACK OUR ASSES.

THERE ISN'T.

THERE'S NO IMPERIUM ANYMORE.

EVEN THE GALACTIC COUNCIL IS NOTHING. TOOTHLESS.

AND, BY YOUR LOGIC, YOU'RE IMPEDING OUR COMMERCIAL BUSINESS HERE. THE ACQUISITION OF PROPERTY AND CARGO. WE'RE--



PIRATES.

SPECULATORS. WE'RE--

MONGREL EX-CON MENTAK BASTARDS.



THE UNWANTED REJECTS AND LOSERS OF EVERY RACE BOUND TOGETHER AS CRIMINAL SZUCK-SCUM NOBODIES.

PSUICE HER.

OH, I WILL NOW.

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SNEAK PREVIEW



SOP? INNCH# ANYTHING?

SHE'S RESILIENT, BOSS.

I DON'T CARE IF ~~SLPP~~ SHE'S THE SZUCKING GOD-QUEEN OF PHEDOOK. WHAT SHE SAY?

NOTHING WORTHWHILE. I SAY WE OFF HER AND DUMP THE CORPSE.

OR...



...SOMEONE ON 3036 IS EXPECTING A DELIVERY.

THEY MIGHT PAY WELL FOR ITS SAFE ARRIVAL.

THEY MIGHT OPEN THE BOX FOR US.

THEY MIGHT HAVE OTHER RESOURCES WORTH... ACQUIRING.



WE HAVE THE COORDINATES. I SAY WE MAKE THE DELIVERY. AND KEEP THE HACAN ON ICE IN CASE SHE'S OF FURTHER USE.

I DUNNO...

I'LL DO IT, BOSS. RUN THE DELIVERY IN HER BOAT. THE BROTHER CAN SHADOW ME.

THE SISTER CAN HANG BACK, GRIDS UP, AS COVER.



OKAY. DO THAT.

JAKES? DON'T SZUCK IT UP.



YOU GOOD WITH THIS?

SURE. SIGNAL THE BROTHER TO A LOW ORBIT OVERWATCH, AND TELL THEM TO DROP A COMBAT TEAM ON MY HEELS.

TIGHT AND CLEAN. NO SCREW-UPS. MAKE THAT CRYSTAL TO THEM.



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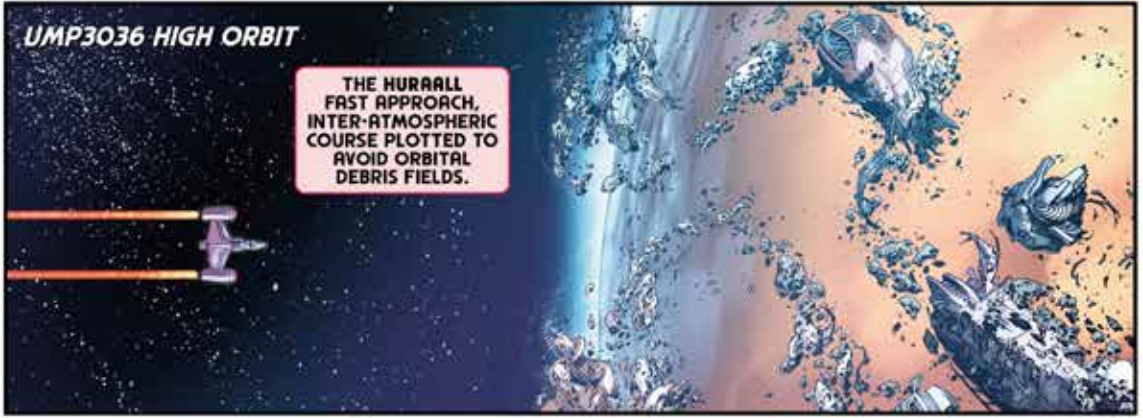
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UMP3036 HIGH ORBIT

THE HURALL
FAST APPROACH,
INTER-ATMOSPHERIC
COURSE PLOTTED TO
AVOID ORBITAL
DEBRIS FIELDS.



CARRY-
HOPPER TO
BROTHER. YOU
GOT EYES
ON ME?

COPY THAT,
CLEAN PAINT.
MOVING IN CLOSE,
THREE UNITS
OUT.

SCRAMBLE
THAT **DROP**
TEAM. I'M ON
FINAL.



COPY THAT.
TEAM DEPLOYING.
HOLDING TOP
COVER, TWO
UNITS OUT.

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UMP3036 HIGH ORBIT

THE HURRALL
FAST APPROACH,
INTER-ATMOSPHERIC
COURSE PLOTTED TO
AVOID ORBITAL
DEBRIS FIELDS.

FIND OUT WHAT
HAPPENS NEXT!

CARRY-
HOPPER TO
BOTH
ON

COPY THAT,
CLEAN PAINT,
MOVING IN CLOSE,
THREE UNITS
OUT.

SCRAMBLE
THAT DROP
TEAM. I'M ON
FINAL.

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A STORY TO TELL**