

LASTChancePUBLICATIONS

白 武 装 者 知 じ ぬ 者 々

written

by

Dave Clark a.k.a Dust

Copyright © 2005 David Clark June 2005

片 断 一 部 目 録

知 じ ぬ 者 々



エ ン 第 一 話

In Episode 7...

"I will be an attacker, the best attacker ever. I just need an opportunity to prove myself, an opportunity to show them the great attacker I can be."

Headwire's path seems clear to him as his opportunity presents itself

"The last Artifact has been recovered, we go to battle"....

The Four sat in the briefing room with the seven other mercenaries that made up OSN's hired defensive force. They were seated along three rows of benches, which faced the front of the room, where a podium and hologram projection table were positioned. To either side of the podium sat ex-military advisors and intelligence officers that were employed by OSN directly. Behind them were four more rows of benches upon which sat OSN miners of various ranks, here on behalf of their mining teams.

The door on the right side of the room opened and Mercenary General McGregor entered the briefing room with three of his staff. Mercenary Generals were recruited by Mining Corps that could not afford to keep a permanent General employed or, as in this case, by those that simply could not spare the Generals they had on permanent contracts. McGregor himself had been hired one month after JBC had landed on the planet and immediately began preparing for the current eventuality. He took to the podium and addressed his troops.

"At ten-zero and one yesterday the Janerian-Border Mining Corporation, our neighbouring rivals, recovered an Artifact from the planet's core, the third Artifact to be found. Approximately ninety minutes ago they recovered another, the fourth and last remaining Artifact on the planet. As you know we have previously found two and were searching for these Artifacts to complete our dominance of the planet's resources."

"Under the universal laws governing frontier mining on a Class-G planet such as this is both JBC and ourselves must now engage in a re-spawn Battle to decide who dominates the planet's resources. Dr. Hoffman will now explain the result of four Artifacts being registered by one Corporation." McGregor gestured to an elderly looking man who had taken a seat just behind the General.

Headwire leaned across to Chance "Is this necessary, he thinks we're new to this show?"

"OSN guidelines tend to call for all of this before a battle and McGregor has always been one to do things by the books. Anyway I see a lot of miners here too; this is more for their benefit than ours. Just try not to look too bored" Chance replied.

Headwire nodded as he lent against the back of the bench and put his arms behind his head, Chance almost believed that if there weren't people sitting on the benches in front of him Head would have put his feet up too.

"Uerukamu." Doctor Hoffman began with a greeting in the old tongue; two languages had proved strong enough to unite man as he reached into space and a crossing of the languages was quite common and almost everyone in the frontiers could speak and understand both.

The Doctor continued, "Throughout this and many other frontier planets runs a great deal of geomagnetic energy, Seishou, in the air, water and land. This is a new energy source for man and as yet the machines developed by human scientists have only been able to harness twenty percent of this power from planets found to have it. There was though, a race that built devices that could harness one hundred percent of a planet's Seishou, these devices are the Artifacts that our Mining Corps search for."

"Although we do not have the same technology they used to unify the Artifacts strength we have engineered a machine that can use the Artifacts to harness the planet's power directly, the Artifact Node. When an Artifact is registered in the node it begins to attract Seishou from the air and land around it, this is increased with every Artifact registered. When all four are registered the combined power of the Artifacts is realised and all the geomagnetic Seishou on and in the planet becomes attracted solely to the node, providing power in amazing quantities. Through the node we can extract and harness this power and distribute it throughout the galaxy and beyond.

"The final and most important point to be made here is that whoever registers all four Artifacts captures all the geomagnetic energy on the planet with no exception, meaning that no other Mining Corp can obtain or use any power and over a period of twenty four hours depending on proximity the geomagnetic energy they use to power their base will also be removed towards the Artifacts, in short nothing outside of the victorious mining Corps base can use or in any way harness Seishou." The doctor finished and returned to his seat, being replaced by the General.

"Thank you Doctor Hoffman. Obviously it is paramount that we win this battle but preparations are being made to close down the base and leave the planet should we lose, I do not intend for that to happen gentlemen. Now I

will explain the battlefield that has been created by us and JBC under Frontier Mining Law one zero three, point two, point four.”

Headwire closed his eyes and muttered quietly to himself “Please don’t explain the law, please don’t explain the law..”

“I shall forego the details of this law unless anyone has any objections.” The General said and glanced around the room. Headwire sat up and scanned the room too, attempting to glare at anyone that may raise their hand in objection.

“Very well I shall continue”

“Yes!” Headwire whispered, bringing a smile to the lips of Chance and Silver next to him.

The General activated the hologram projection table to his side and a transparent 3D laser image appeared just above the table’s surface. The image rotating before the Mercs was one of a desert battlefield with large open paths running between and enclosed by large rocky peaks, this landscape was very familiar as they had patrolled it almost daily since arriving on the planet. Nick-named The Garden by most of the men it had a base for each force, OSN’s and JBC’s, one at each end of the battlefield. A path ran directly from the front of one base to the other up and over a slight hill, in between two giant mountainous rocks, which separated the battlefield into two halves. Paths also ran to the left and right of these rocky hills, leading to the front of each team’s base.

The Corporations had constructed this battlefield when JBC had landed, the same time as they constructed the boundaries. Once the area had been decided on both Corps erected a base for themselves and built two geomagnetic energy Generators and one Deploy point following the standard B-2 Architectural templates that all Corps were issued with. Under Frontier law these Generators and deploy-points were not on-line and as such would need to be hacked by either team’s troops. These were guide lines that had been set up swiftly after the Re-Spawn Wars and were brought in to stop the terrible destruction and “waste of human life” that was caused by the Frontier Mining Corporations in the first years of exploration, which is sometimes referred to as the ten year war as battles between Corps over planets and Seishou never ceased. Since the laws were introduced and effectively enforced frontier mining has benefited dramatically and all the corporations seem more than happy with the current arrangement.

“Right as you can see, the strategically important areas are here and here.” The general highlighted the Deploy-points that lay outside each base and then the energy generators; one was positioned at the front of each team’s base and one on each side of the rocky hills that separated them.

“The Generators will need to be brought on-line swiftly because they provide a limited amount of geomagnetic energy each and it is this energy that we will need to power our base defences, our Artifact node, our vehicles and even our boost jets. The more Generators we hold the less they hold, a victory through energy domination is our goal today.”

“We are unfortunately going into this battle one man short due to an earlier accident in the mess hall; we are without the midfield Ranger Asta.”

Silver leant into Chance “Eleven against twelve”. McGregor continued.

“The tactical line up is as follows, Brock and Dahmer on defence, I want a tight one men, all the standard set ups. Techs, Cage and Dio, with Jago will be responsible for our nearside Deploy-point and right side Generator. Captain Chance will lead his team of four to the left, capturing and defending the two Generators on that side. Captain Dante and his partner Knight are our attacking Rangers, give back up to Cage and Dio on the right to begin with then when I give the order you will begin your attacks on their base. It is your primary goal to capture their Artifacts and return them to our Node, do not get caught up in midfield battles once you have begun your attacks.” The General continued his tactical briefing for ten more minutes, outlining strategies and routes of attack and defence. When he was finished he opened the floor to questions, Headwire’s hand immediately went up.

“General, why not push on to their nearside deploy, from the left side we can capture it and get a constant attack on their base” he asked.

"The midfield's primary goals are Generators, if and only if these are secure then decisions can be made about deploys" the General replied. "A message to Captains and team leaders, while I have detailed your orders I expect you to be able to operate with a degree of initiative. Should an opportunity present itself decide on your best course of action, but I do expect you to relay all decisions to me and my staff here at HQ."

"Right gentlemen let's do this one by the numbers, nice and easy. This is what we get paid for" the General finished and dismissed the men.

Silver turned to Chance "After telling us how to suck eggs he ends by acknowledging that this is what we do for a living."

"As I recall, you don't care much for McGregor do you?" asked Chance

"He's too cautious" replied Silver

"There's safety in being cautious" replied Chance

"But there is danger in being over cautious" Kaio added. The Four stood up from their seats.

"Gonna go speak to McGregor, see if I can get Raptor transport for this one, I'll see you guys in the prep room" Chance said, then he made his exit from the briefing room.

. . .

The Mercs had all been issued their suits and equipment and were putting on their armour when Chance arrived with his equipment. He walked past Jago and Cage, Dio and Dante and Knight and over to where his three partners were and began getting suited up.

"Get us some wheels Capt?" Silver asked as he fitted his boost pack.

"Yes, me and you will take that Silv. Head and Kaio spawn at the front of the base; take the near Gen then proceed on foot up the hill."

"Roger" Kaio replied

"Race ya, Kaio" said Headwire with a smile.

Dante and Knight had finished suiting up and they wandered over to the group.

"So Kaio, think you can take Crying out when you meet him in mid?" he asked as he sat on the bench next to the guys.

"Whose Crying" Headwire immediately asked looking at both Dante and Kaio.

"Crying is the Ranger you met this morning Head" Kaio answered, Headwire's face turned to surprise.

"You knew who he was? Well who is he, how do you know of him?" he asked everyone.

Chance answered, "Crying, used to be a member of The Nadaki Six, a Special Forces team for the Kanier frontier planets, made up of two Gunners, three Techs and one Ranger, Crying. The team were already very famous and successful before Crying was joined to them, they were beloved heroes of their planets and defeated many criminal organisations. The Ranger suit and position had only recently been introduced into battle and as such Crying was brought in to strengthen the team. Rangers have evolved a lot since then but at this time the Ranger was simply the squad's medic and sniper. Together the new six completed many more missions and defeated even more threats to their planets freedom for some years."

"Then, the story goes that the team were on an anti-terrorism mission to stop a group releasing a terrible new virus into the atmosphere of one of their planets, potentially killing everyone living on it. Something went wrong and the team were exposed to the virus becoming contaminated, everyone that is except for Crying. He was in a rear guard position at the time giving sniper support. The five team members had only minutes to live but Crying, being the medic had been supplied with the antidotes." Chance paused considering his words "He didn't administer them and they died."

"What! Why?" said Headwire

"He had been paid off by enemies of the five to kill them all. That's not the whole story, I've heard that not all the five died so easily from the virus and put up a fight. He had to murder them himself" answered Dante

"I can't believe it, that bastard. What happened to him afterwards?" asked Headwire genuinely appalled

"There was a public outcry. The government put out a huge contract on him, as did some private parties, so he went into exile for many years. It would seem he has returned to Mercenary work now. His name back then is unknown, he changed it to Crying after these events." Chance said.

"How do you know it's him?" asked Headwire

"The red cloth on his left arm" Kaio answered

"Apparently he wears it as a mocking tribute to his dead team-mates" said Chance

"Seems a bit stupid for a hunted man to identify himself like that" Headwire suggested.

"He likes the reputation is my guess" replied Dante.

"Well I'll make sure I run into him on the battlefield today. Get some payback for them and the shit he put me through today." Headwire said with anger.

"He is dangerous Headwire" said Knight as joined his partner.

"So am I, mate" replied Headwire with a wide smile.

"He practices Seikakunashi, if I'm not mistaken" offered Dante.

"Hey, even if he does" Silver entered the conversation "he's not one of only two recognised Masters of the second form of combat. Unlike our man, Kaio, am I right or what?" Silver asked his partner, who finished locking his pistol holster to his thigh and looked up.

"He is trained in the old style of Ranger combat, not what we do today, an older form of Saikaku na shi. He sets up kill zones, a place where he can trap the enemy then he waits until they enter his sights. He will not engage in a battle unless he has an advantage." Headwire was left simply to contemplate this and his encounter with the Ranger that morning. He couldn't help wondering if Crying had known their spawn-points were off-line.

"Anyone else out there we need to worry about Chance?" asked Dante

"Hmmm, well JBC did have one of the best attacking Ranger partnerships up until awhile ago but I heard they recently left, which is a blessing 'coz they are formidable..." The conversation was interrupted by an announcement that all Mercenaries must proceed to the re-spawn room and connect to the mainframe.

IN EPISODE 9 of 8 WAYS TO LOSE...

"Counting down, Battle commences in 10..9..8..7.."