

LASTChancePUBLICATIONS

# 白 武 器 士 知 道 你 們

written

by

Dave Clark a.k.a Dust

Copyright © 2005 David Clark June 2005

點 火 的 時 候

知 道 你 們



episode 19

In Episode 18...

*"What do you think about just taking a break from all that formal shit for awhile, just cruising around while we find a good contract?"*

The Four decide to take it easy for awhile, giving Kaio a chance to instruct his young second further in the arts of being a Ranger

*"The mind is your best weapon, train it, learn to control it through focus and you can achieve anything..."*

Two months have passed and The Four have been travelling through space onboard their small but comfortable vessel. Captain Chance has begun searching for employment for his mercenary team recently but has found that the majority of contracts are permanent rather than one planet contracts, his job has been made harder by malicious accounts of Headwire's performance and thus The Four's, on their last contract for OSN, spread in most cases by the Merc Tech Cage.

In the two months that have passed Kaio and Headwire have trained almost constantly in martial arts and meditating and this has brought about a closer bond than Ranger training ever did. The two of them spend long hours together meditating on the observation deck followed by training and more meditating, if Headwire's concentration allows. There has also been talk between The Four of Headwire practicing as an attacking Ranger at Kaio's recommendation and Headwire's own insistence, should a contract offer itself that way.

Chance and Silver have recently heard of a mercenary recruitment expo on a nearby planet and have travelled there to seek a contract.



Chance and Silver passed through the crowds that filled the recruitment halls. It felt to Silver like they had been waiting for hours just to get the two hundred yards it was to the exit. The two Mercs had spoken to the majority of Merc Generals and Mining Corp reps that had attended the expo, avoiding the ones that either Chance, Silver or both had a disliking of due to past experience.

"That Rannen is a jerk" shouted Chance over the crowds

"Agreed" came the reply from Silver as he pushed through the milling Mercs and other gatherers.

"Fancy offering to take the Four of us on but only pay for the service of two." This was the problem Chance was having at the moment. It seemed no Corp was in need of a four man team, the majority wanted one or two Mercs simply to fill gaps.

"Perhaps the times are changing Silv. Might have trouble finding a contract for all four of us after all" Chance said, but Silver couldn't reply if he had wanted to. He had inadvertently stumbled into a group of young military recruits who seemed very pleased to meet him.

"You're Silver aren't you?" One of the recruits asked, no more than sixteen years old, the whole group reached no higher than Silver's waist.

"From The Four?" asked another. "The famous Merc team that managed to claim a whole planet for DW Corp without backup."

"Na lads you got the wrong guy" Silver answered as he tried to push past them, but the young men's questions had started to draw a crowd of recruits that had come to the convention.

"You're a warrior aren't you? You're not genetically enhanced or anything I heard. Just given a Gunner suit and sent into battle." On recruit asked, the question spurring all the recruits to begin asking questions. Silver realised he had no hope of escape and he looked over at Chance with a pleading look. Chance saw and made his way over to the crowd.

"Lieutenant Grandé!" He shouted towards Silver over the head of the recruits as he began to push through them. "Lieutenant Grandé!" Chance offered a firm salute "There you are." The recruits looked up at Chance then at Silver. "Sir" Chance continued "I need you to return immediately to the ship sir, there's been a terrible accident with one of the crew and we need you to oversee the fitting of the new engines personally." The recruits looked up at Silver, waiting for him to confirm he wasn't the Lieutenant that this man was looking for.

Silver swiftly replied "Right you are Sergeant."

"Recruits, let the lieutenant about his duties" Chance added as the kids began to move aside unsure if they had got the wrong man or not. With a little bit more effort and some more shouts from Chance and replies from Silver he managed to break free and the two men began to disappear into the crowd.

"Lieutenant Grandé? Wasn't he that fat idiot we served under in sector fourteen?" asked Silver sarcastically.

"Yea" Chanced said laughing "Give me some credit mate, that was off the top of my head" The men laughed as they finally made it out of the exit. They stopped briefly while they decided on the best route to take back to the ship when they heard a voice calling from just beyond the crowds.

"Chance!" they heard

"Oh great more recruits after a war story." said Chance

"Hey, you should be pleased, your *one* fan has caught up with you" Silver joked.

"Come on let's get out of here" Chance said as they turned and walked straight into the man calling for them.

"Sorry mate" said Chance

"Doing a runner on me ya were?" The man replied as he stepped back. The man had a thick accent about him and although he spoke well it was clear that he was not speaking his native language. As soon as Chance saw his face he immediately recognised the man.

"Pro!" He said in surprise "Sorry about that, thought you were more bloody recruits. How have you been mate" he continued as they shook hands.

"Ha! Yes those recruits can be annoying. I've been well thanks mate, and Silver good to see you to." And he extended his hand to Silver.

"Pro-pain, it's been a long time" Silver said as he accepted the gesture.

"It has, well how about a drink to catch up? I've got some time before I fly out."

"You got signed up then?" Chance enquired

"Oh yea, there's a Corp offering a nice little deal. I'll tell you about it over a cold one." He said as he led the men away from the convention Hall.



The three men sat at a corner table with a round of drinks in a crowded drinking hole in the middle of the City and did their best to talk above the noise.

"So what have you been up to Pro, since we last worked with you?" asked Chance

"Well me and Dust, you remember Dust. We've been taking the odd bit of work here and there. Last big contract was for S-Corp if you know em, over in the Halogen system. Had to clear out two other Corps, was a hectic year. Then after that Dust headed to this system to make some connections, while I took care of some stuff back on Rinhelmus."

"Oh yea? So you're here to meet up with Dust? He's lined you up with that contract you mentioned?"

"Well yes and no mate. Dust had managed to hook up with Twelve Miners Corp."

"Twelve-M? Wow that's no small feat" said Chance surprised. Silver and Chance had known Dust for almost as long as they had known Pro-Pain. He was a pretty useful Tech but Chance had never thought

him much more than that. Pro-Pain on the other hand was a first class attacking Ranger and had been so long before they had met. He could see Pro perhaps getting a contract with one of the largest Mining Corps in this quadrant of the universe but not Dust, perhaps he was wrong.

"Yea Dust has done well there huh? He's training up as a Ranger too you know, becoming a dual class Merc. Apparently they are short of permanent attackers too so I'm heading that way to hook up with them and try out."

"I'm sure you'll get signed up straight away mate" said Silver "So you going for a permanent contract then?"

"Yea, seems to be the way things are going at the moment you might have noticed. The big Corps are starting to put Mercs on those kind of contracts rather than the old one planet one contract set up."

"Hmm, yea we have begun to notice a shift towards that... So what's this contract you were talking about earlier then?" asked Chance.

"Right, P.O.T are offering a one battle contract for their base on Ildryan-II, the Class-G planet in Sector IV. Their recruiting Mercs in a rush because the battle lines have been drawn."

"What? The Artis' have been found?" asked Silver

"Yea, would you believe this? The Artis' were found and like I said the lines were drawn. Then six of P.O.T's ten on-contract Mercs get sick, real sick apparently, they reckon food poisoning or something. Either way their rivals on the planet, Shimazu-Hanran Corp Ltd, blimey try saying that when your drunk." He laughed

"Yea, S.H.C.L is a bit easier" said Chance

"So SHCL" Pro said with a smile "Have granted them time to recruit replacements before they begin the battle."

"That's a little unusual" said Chance

"Yea, obviously P.O.T don't have enough time to bring in more of their permanents" said Silver "How long have they given them?"

"I'm not sure to be honest but P.O.T are recruiting in a hurry for what they say should be a very quick battle. Looks that way to me too, they have three of the Arti's and S.H. only have one. A quick little earner I reckon, should give me the money I need to get over to my try out with Twelve-M."

"S.H have a strong Merc squad to draw on though Pro. They've got a very strong attack and a stronger defence." Said Chance

"Not on this planet they don't matey. Apparently they didn't send the big names over that way and since they only have one Arti looks like they aren't gonna bother trying to keep the planet."

"Fair enough"

"They were still short when I spoke to 'em. I'm sure they wouldn't say no to The Four, so you guys want in?"

"What do you think Silv?"

"Sounds good to me mate, a little run around and some nice easy money."

"Yea I agree, Pro do you know if they need another attacker? The young Headwire wants to try his luck up front this might be a nice opportunity for him. One Arti to get out, so not much pressure and one of the best attacking Rangers as his partner."

"Who's that then?" asked Pro sincerely

"Ha, Pro you haven't changed. I meant you" Chance said with a smile

"Oh right" He laughs "Well cheers but I'm not that good really. Anyway they had recruited an attacker before me, a young lad I don't know his name though."

"Oh well, the kid will just have to play mid again. Thanks Pro we'll finish up here and go speak to P.O.T."

The three men finished a few more drinks talking about old times, previous contracts they had been on together and R&R laughs they had had. Then Pro-Pain gave them directions to the P.O.T recruitment stand and they said their goodbyes, Pro saying he would meet them on the planet base.



Chance and Silver made their way back to their ship and into the main room, where Headwire was sitting crossed legged in a meditative position. Upon hearing the men enter he jumped up and sat on the couch.

"How did it go guys, you get us a contract?" He asked as he turned to face them. Silver walked past Chance and took a seat opposite Headwire.

"Yea signed us up for some more Artifact work Head, where's Kaio?" Chance asked as he walked up to the back of the long chair to the side of where Headwire sat.

"Somewhere on the top deck" Head said dismissively "So am I gonna get a shot at attacking Chance?"

"Sorry Head, they had already recruited their full quota of Attackers." Headwire's expression dropped at the news. Kaio came walking down the stairs into the room "Just in time Kaio, I was just telling Headwire about our new contract."

"And you'll never guess who we ran into while we were out there" said Silver as Kaio came over and sat on the other end of the couch next to him.

"Who?" asked Headwire before Kaio could offer up the same question.

"Pro-Pain" Silver answered

"Pro-Pain?" said Kaio surprised "How is he? Was Dust also with him?"

"He's doing well, Dust wasn't with him he's sorting out recruitment with Twelve-M at the moment would you believe." said Chance

"Who's Pro-Pain? Who's Dust? Who are Twelve-M" Headwire was getting a little anxious hearing all of these names that certainly seemed important to his partners. The other three laughed at his anxiety, Chance walked from his standing position and sat into a relaxed position on the same bench as Headwire.

"Pro-Pain is an old Merc friend of ours, we've served together many times over the past six years. He's been a Merc longer then even Silver and me and he is the fastest Arti Runner around, huh Kaio?"

"Without a doubt" was the reply.

"Dust is his partner, a midfield Tech of reasonable skill, but a very good bloke I have to say. He's training as a Ranger according to Pro, Kaio"

"Dual classing" said Kaio impressed.

"And Twelve-M Headwire" started Silver "Are one of the biggest Mining Corps in the business. The M stands for Miners; apparently they were one of the first frontier Mining Corporations, just a group of twelve miners and their families that came from one of the colonial planets to seek their fortune. Did quite well for themselves considering they now can boast something like two thousand planets currently being mined by their employees."

"So it's big news if you get a contract with them?" Headwire asked

"Well a planet contract with them might not be so impressive but a permanent Merc contract with them is certainly something to respect. Big Corps like them can afford to recruit the best Mercs around and keep them in contractual service for many years, putting them to work on a planet in nearly any Solar System. That contract is where the real money is, if you don't mind taking orders from the same Generals your whole career" answered Silver.

"Well why aren't we doing that?" Head queried "The Four have one of the best reputations out there; we could certainly get signed up by one of the big Corps."

"Hmm, well permanent contracts do seem to be the way the market is going at the moment" replied Chance. He had had many offers for The Four in the past but had never liked the idea of always being given orders, not since him and Silver left the Planetary Defence Force. With the planet contracts he accepted he would normally get room to negotiate a good deal and some leverage on how he controlled his team out on the field. Under a permanent contract a Merc General would be assigned to each battle and all the Mercs would be under his direct command. Chance's rank of Captain would stand for nothing, save an occasional Sir at the end of conversations. Most of all though Chance loved the freedom of space and the knowledge that once the mission was complete him and the team could head anywhere they chose.

"So what are the contract details Capt?" Kaio asked, drawing Chance away from his thoughts.

"Right well, it's a pretty standard operation, but not your standard situation. A battle is already arranged as all four Arti's on this class-G planet have been recovered. Three to P.O.T, that's our contract and one, is with S.H.C.L."

"Hmm, S.H they usually have strong permanent contract Mercs. How come P.O.T are recruiting at this late stage?" Kaio said

"Well that's the non-standard part of this contract. Six of their Mercs have gone down with food poisoning apparently and S.H have given them some time to recruit. Now S.H have apparently only got planet contracted Mercs down there so we shouldn't be seeing the likes of Slow or Tyrant, but i'm not convinced to be honest."

"About what?" enquired Headwire

"You reckon S.H.C.L are gonna be using the time to bring in some permanent contractors" Kaio said as an answer then a question.

"Seems likely" Chance replied.

In episode 20 of  
**6 WAYS TO LOSE...**

The Four arrive at their new base and meet some familiar faces before their next Arti battle begins and the young Headwire meets a young Arti runner with a few surprises for him...

*"I'm gonna be the greatest attacker ever!..."*