

## Chapter 9

There were still two hours remaining before sunrise and Isaul, a member of White Team, was operating as the point man for the eighteen man SCU formation as it approached the Designated Rally Point. The Rally Point was more commonly known as a DRP for short and it was located approximately 1500 meters southeast of the Mobile Relay Station. The location for the DRP was selected based off of information on the digital maps that indicated it would be a good spot for shelter and it was well hidden. Isaul was slotted as the 'Auto Blasterman' for White Team and as he approached the designated point for the DRP he noticed that the natural vegetation was thicker than normal. There were also several smooth rock outcroppings that would provide good natural cover as well as concealment from unfriendly eyes.

Isaul halted the formation by raising his right hand and then made a downward "patting" motion to indicate for the entire formation to take cover and provide security. He then slowly and carefully moved forward alone into the location specified for the DRP. He would scout out the area and insure it was safe and suitable for the intended use by SCU-11.

They had been on the move for nearly nine hours now. They left from their patrol base several hours before sunset the previous afternoon and had moved through the night. This departure time was chosen by Larun and Master Jarek in an effort to bring them to their DRP during the darkest hours of the night, helping to cover their movement. It was also the time of night when enemy patrols would be

the least attentive. The chosen route of movement was longer and different than the one Green Team had used on their initial reconnaissance trip. The SCU teams trained never to travel the same route twice and they never traveled in straight lines between points.

Additionally, in an effort to conserve the battery life of the Stealth Generators and to try and keep them cooled and prepared for the final assault, SCU-11 had elected to move with the SG's deactivated. The path had been slow and all their movement was deliberate, which had worn down the team and made them a bit fatigued by the time they arrived at the DRP. Even when fatigued, they still maintained their vigilance as they knew there would be enemy patrols out and searching in the surrounding forest providing security to the Mobile Relay Unit.

Master Jarek's plan was to hide and secure the team's extra equipment at the DRP and then to remain at that location throughout the approaching day. They would then begin their final insertion the following evening as the suns went down. The main assault was planned for early the following morning before dawn. The final 1500 meter insertion from the DRP to the objective would be necessarily slow. They knew they had to infiltrate through what would be a heavily patrolled area. The plan was that while resting through the day, they would pull 75% security, three on alert and one resting from each team. This would allow the men to rest and recover as best they could before the final infiltration began.

A few minutes after SCU-11 had come to a halt, Isaul re-emerged from the rocks to give the signal to the rest of the commandos to come forward. Each of the tired bodies of

SCU-11 quietly stood and filed into the DRP to begin their preparations for the assault.

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Later that day, in the early afternoon when the suns were high in the sky, all of the plans had been finalized for the coming operation. The entire SCU-11 had assumed a camouflaged defensive position within the rocks and vegetation and they were doing their best to gather some rest wherever and whenever possible. Though in reality, most of the SCU operators were just quietly waiting for the day to pass and the operation to begin.

Master Jarek and Padawan Mosok were together in the center of the perimeter staring out past the perimeter keeping an eye out for any activity in the forest. Suddenly Master Jarek broke the silence and whispered to Mosok.

“Padawan, the battle this evening will not be as easy as the last one. I want you to mind your training and stick close to Larun and his team.”

Mosok turned his head toward his master with a quizzical look on his face.

“But master, is not my proper place by your side?”

Jarek smiled at his Padawan “I appreciate your devotion and desire to be near me... but for this operation, I need to assign you to Green Team. Stick with them and do everything Sgt. Larun tells you. He is your master for tonight.”

There was something in the tone of his Master’s voice that made Mosok doubt his instructions. But the old Jedi Master had taught Mosok early in his training and had

reaffirmed it often, that he is not to question his Master's instructions. Fortunately, or unfortunately, Mosok had an inquisitive mind and he had too many questions to just let this opportunity pass.

“Master, what else are you not telling me?”

Normally Master Jarek would not allow for such direct questioning of his motives, but this time, things were different with his Padawan and he felt that a different approach was warranted. He smiled and placed his hand on Mosok's shoulder and whispered his reply in a kind fatherly tone.

“Mosok, you need to trust me. The Force has blessed you with gifts that are powerful on the inside...” Jarek poked Mosok's head with his forefinger “it is what is up here that makes you powerful. Do not let anyone ever tell you that you are not qualified or good enough to be a Jedi. You may not ever serve on a Jedi Council or your name may not be recorded in the annals of Jedi Lore, but you have an important role to play in the Galaxy. I have foreseen it.”

The look on Mosok's face became even more confused and it was enough to cause Jarek to laugh quietly.

“Do not worry Mosok, you will discover your talents as well as your fate over time. Do not worry about it now. Concentrate instead on what I have taught you. You have been a good Padawan. Tonight will be a good test of just how far your training has come.”

The tone of Master Jarek's voice signaled the conversation was over and they once again focused their attention outside of their DRP. They continued to remain motionless and quiet as they scanned the surrounding woods, just waiting for the day to pass.

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Mosok was moving among all four of the team leaders, ensuring that each team was prepared to move out. Earlier in the day, all the team leaders, auto blastermen, and snipers had attached sound suppressors to their respective blaster rifles. These sound suppressors were attachments that fit over the length of the forward barrel of their rifles that drastically reduced the audible noise from the rifles when a blaster bolt was fired. The sound was reduced to just a slight muffled sound that could easily be mistaken for a grunt from a forest animal. The downside to the suppressors was that they added weight to the rifles and it reduced the effective range and power of the rifles. To suppress the sound, it required that there be a reduction of energy provided to the blasters core generator. This resulted in the rifles having a reduced effective range and significantly less armor penetration. But when on a covert operation where avoiding detection was critical, the suppressors were a vital part of the SCU armory.

The heavy weapon specialists normally carried their MX-20A repeating plasma cannons, but for this operation, the MX-20s had been swapped out in favor of repeating armor penetrating rocket launchers. The reason they had swapped out weapons was because the repeating plasma cannons were not capable of attaching a sound suppressor. It was also common to use the rocket propelled missiles within the SCU for taking out large armor protected vehicles and other hard targets such as bunkers. The four heavy weapon specialists in SCU-11 were tasked with taking out

the Mobile Relay Unit once the assault had begun and there was no quicker or safer way to do that than with anti-tank rocket launchers. The rocket launchers were a bit more bulky than their MX-20A's, but they were surprisingly lighter weight so it would not slow the team's movement. The heavy weapon specialists also had their standard issue blaster pistols for personal protection if the need arose for self defense. But on this operation, their primary task was destroying the relay station. The rest of SCU-11 would be responsible for their security and dealing with enemy soldiers.

Master Jarek looked around at the members of his unit and was very pleased. All of the preparations were complete and the men were as rested as they were going to get. He looked over at Larun and gave a slight nod. Larun in turn gave a hand gesture to the Green Team pointman, Vistom, and he began to move forward slowly, Vistom would be leading the whole of SCU-11 out of the DRP and toward their objective, the Relay Station.

Two hours after their infiltration began, and with SCU-11 located about 800 meters from their final objective, they ran into their first enemy patrol. The entire unit had their Stealth Generators enabled and were moving at a very slow and deliberate pace. This caution made it easy to detect the enemy patrol before they came too close. SCU operators knew what was contrary to what most citizens of the Galaxy believed, the first reaction when trying to remain undetected is not to seek cover and hide. Instead, it was to freeze and not move at all. Every SCU operator knew that this was the case whether they were using SG's or not. While the SG's made the team much more difficult to detect, it did not make

them 'invisible' and any sort of movement was one of the quickest ways to draw the attention of seeking eyes. The SG's also did not mask noise, and the best way to remain quiet was not to move.

The entire team remained motionless as the squad of Sith Troopers passed harmlessly by 50 meters in front of the SCU formation. Once the patrol was out of sight, Vistom again began moving toward the objective, ever so slowly.

It took another two hours of painfully slow movement for the unit to cover another 600 meters. To the relief of everyone, this movement was accomplished without encountering any additional enemy patrols. Unfortunately, the team knew that the closer they got to the objective, the more dangerous it would become. Vistom and Green Team were still leading the larger formation as they approached the known detection sensors that were discovered the last time Green Team was at this same location. Larun gave the signal for the SCU formation to break up and separate to their respective assigned positions. Green Team would be in the center of the assault element with Blue Team on the right and White Team on the left. Black Team was held back behind the formation as a rear security element and they would also operate as a mobile reserve if needed.

As the teams slowly separated and moved toward their assigned locations, Master Jarek signaled with his hand that Mosok was to follow Larun and the rest of Green Team. Mosok acknowledged the command with a simple nod of his head and fell into the rear of Green Team's formation as they moved forward. Master Jarek remained with the Black Team as they began to look for and assume a defensive posture facing to the rear.

Suddenly Master Jarek sensed the alarm and froze as the red emergency halt indicator lit up in the visors of all of the other SCU members. Systyun, team leader of Blue Team, had signaled the halt. As the Blue Team was moving off to the right about 40 meters, they had discovered a defensive fighting position manned by two visible sith troopers keeping watch. With the teams so close to the objective, the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) was clear and well known. The enemy was barring the movement of Blue Team into their assigned position, as such they could not take the time or risk of moving around the enemy position, they had to eliminate it. Since they were still in clandestine mode, it would need to be done quietly.

Just seconds after Systyun had signaled for the halt, Jankin Stark, Blue Team's Auto Blasterman, veered to the right and Systyun himself went to the left of the hole. Both of the SCU operators were moving slow but deliberate and they quickly covered ground quietly and approached to within 10 meters of the dug in defensive position. While Systyun took a knee to cover him, Jankin broke into a trot and quickly let off two barely audible shots directly into the chest of the trooper closest to him while Systyun stayed kneeling and fired a well aimed shot into the forehead of the other trooper on the left. About the time the two bodies were slipping to the bottom of their defensive position, Jankin reached the edge of the hole he looked over and noticed a sleeping Sith soldier at the bottom of the dug in hole. He quickly put two additional shots into the chest of the sleeping soldier at the bottom of the ditch. It may have been cruel to shoot a sleeping soldier, but at this stage of the operation, avoiding detection was required at all costs. Even in the still

of the night, the suppressed rifle blasts were not audible more than a few meters away.

Barely 30 seconds after the red indicator appeared in the visors of all the team members, it switched back to green and the rest of the teams began moving forward again. The common tactical thinking among SCU forces was that by quickly eliminating threats, the SCU reduced the likelihood of a Force user sensing anguish, pain, or fear from the soldiers that they knew and typically commanded. Master Jarek could only hope that it worked as planned in this case.

Jarek watched and sensed each of the teams, Green, White, Blue and Black inch forward into their respective final positions. He then took the opportunity to look around and then nodded to himself and eased away, slipping quietly into the darkness of the night forest.

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He knew it was the early hours of the morning, but still Sendu Farns, an elite Sensor and Imaging Operator (SIO) of the Sith army, could not sleep. His inability to sleep was not due to a lack of comfort, though he could never seem to get comfortable when sleeping in a field expedient shelter in a combat zone. But it was something nagging at the back of his mind from earlier in the day. What exactly this nagging was he could not tell. That afternoon he had been reviewing the sensor reports from the past several days and nothing really abnormal stood out. All of the reports had looked good and was exactly what he expected.

Sendu recalled that the additional sensitivity levels he dialed into the life form detection algorithm was causing

many more lifeforms than normal to show up on the scans, but he expected that. It was something else that did not seem right from one particular array of sensors. The reading had been from a few days previous and it just seemed to nag him.

After laying on his cot for a long period of time, It became obvious to Sendu that he was not going to be getting much sleep this night. He sat up and stretched his muscles. He was thinking that maybe a quick scan of those charts again would reveal something he had missed earlier in the day.

Placing his feet on the ground and leaning over to his data monitors, Sendu quickly looked at the real time sensor screens located near his cot. He wanted to see the current readings and after examining them for a minute he determined that everything appeared normal. The life form reading counts were lower than they had been earlier, and they were grouped together. But that was to be expected in the middle of the night as it was natural for things to calm down and species to congregate during the slow times of the day and night.

Pulling the charts from off the table and still sitting on his cot, he turned up the synthetic lighting in the shelter and began going over the charts one by one.

After 30 minutes of intensely studying the charts, fatigue finally began to overtake his unsettled mind and his eyes became heavy with sleep. Throwing the charts back up on the table, Sendu looked again at the active sensor screens and again saw nothing. It was the same splotchy pattern of micro life forms. The splotchy patterns had moved slightly, but were still visible on the screen. It seemed kind of

funny to him that the empty spots on the screen where there was no life forms, were spread out in a semi-uniform line. Sendu thought nature was funny that way sometimes.

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All four of the SCU-11 teams were in place and their respective leaders had signaled they were ready. It was precisely 1 hour before dawn and the large mobile relay station was visible to each of them. The 30 second countdown to initiation had begun and the number was displayed and counting down in each of the operators helmets. The feeling of anticipation was present in each of them, but they each were familiar with it and dealt with it as a part of the normality of special operations missions. More so, they were all anxious to get this operation going.

20 seconds.

Mosok was the least experienced of the group on dealing with the tense stresses of an operation like this. The infiltration phase itself was enough to drain him physically and mentally, but he was not about to let his Master down and the adrenalin had given him an extra boost of alertness and he was ready.

10 seconds.

Oddly enough, it was Master Jarek that was the most unsettled. He knew a shift in his and his padawan's destiny was going to happen on this operation. But the funny thing about the the Force was that when dealing with the future, it was all a matter of interpretation and uncertainty. The Force had lead him and his Padawan to this spot on this night for a specific reason. It was time to see what that reason was....

0 Seconds.

The go light illuminated simultaneously in all 16 visors and beeped in the ear of the two Jedi. The attack had begun.