

SILVER RIVER

Episode 1
"Flexible By Design"

Written by

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BLACK SCREEN:

EPIC ORCHESTRAL MUSIC swells to a crescendo.

INT. SPACE CRUISER - NIGHT

A FIERY EXPLOSION bursts open the door to the bridge of a SPACE CRUISER.

A PIRATE CAPTAIN, mean and gnarly-looking, shields his eyes from the blast as his CREW look on in shock.

Four UNKNOWN FIGURES, shrouded by smoke, leap through the doorway one after another.

PIRATE CAPTAIN
Who the hell are you?

The captain is interrupted as a LASER NET suddenly entangles him in an instant as he is reeled back towards the figures.

As the smoke starts to clear, the pirate crew begin to clearly make out each of the four, three of them training PLASMA PISTOLS squarely at them.

They are LADORRA, a stoic thirty-something human female with orange skin, DAVE WAVE, a lanky Caucasian human teenager, and MR. MISSUS, a glasses-clad opossum standing on two legs.

UNKNOWN MAN (O.S.)
We're every pirate's worst nightmare,
you scoundrels! For those seeking
justice, mercy, and order across the
galaxy, there's only group to call.

The final figure, STAR SIEGEL, a Caucasian twenty-something human male with swagger and confidence, steps through the smoke.

He points his own plasma pistol at the pirate crew with one hand and holds the captured captain in the other.

SUPER: THE GALACTIC GUNSLINGERS

STAR SIEGEL
THE GALACTIC GUNSLINGERS!

CUT TO:

INT. PRIVATE QUARTERS - 2367

A TABBY CAT, HOBBS, sits on his bed and sips at a cup of PINK MILK as he watches the rest of the title sequence of "The Galactic Gunslingers" on his hologram display.

AUTOMATED VOICE (V.O.)
Now approaching the planet Rine.

The annoyed feline switches off his display and jumps down from his bed with ease.

INT. HALLWAY

Walking on all fours down the central hallway of the spaceship ATHENA, passing the single BATHROOM, the small BRIG, and the humming ENGINE ROOM.

INT./EXT. KITCHEN

He stops as he looks inside the compact KITCHEN, leaning up against an open door on two paws.

ZAP MATTERS (35), tall, svelte, slightly muscular, and of Vietnamese descent, is busy mixing chemicals together in a plastic VIAL with their one gloved hand.

Hobbes watches intently as Zap ignores him and concentrates on the mixture.

They delicately adjust the temperature of a small PLASMA HEATER as the SILVER LIQUID becomes translucent.

Zap shuts off the heater and wipes their brow as they hear Hobbes giving them a round of applause.

Zap places the vial into a nearby stand to cool before taking an exaggerated bow.

HOBBS
Bravo! Bravo! Encore! Truly riveting watching you create, uh, whatever that shit is you just made.

ZAP
Thank you, thank you. Just me, my brain and my opposable thumb working wonders for this team as usual.

HOBBS

Oh, that's a low blow even for you, Zap.

ZAP

Gotta go low when your opponent is so close to the ground.

HOBBS

(laughs)

I'd like to see you try. Anyway, I was just checking in to see how our "genius captain" was doing. Are they ready to take us in for one of their patented silky smooth landings?

ZAP

As a matter of fact, they are. But even genius needs to be refreshed after such hard work. So if you excuse me...

Zap grabs a PLASTIC BAG with some clean clothes and a towel before they walk past Hobbes.

HOBBS

Don't use up all the hot water "refreshing your genius" by the way. We gotta save some for the return trip.

Zap turns and gives Hobbes an overly enthusiastic salute before they disappear into the bathroom.

ZAP

Aye, aye, Captain.

INT./EXT. LUCIA'S QUARTERS

Hobbes peeks into the room across the hall as he notices LUCIA LOPEZ (30), a well-built Hispanic woman, studying a holographic recording as she sits on top of her bed.

A middle-aged Caucasian PREACHER speaks silently yet boisterously in the center of her room.

Lucia picks at the faded scar across her face as she watches the man's sermon.

Noticing Hobbes staring at her with folded paws, she shuts off the recording.

HOBBS

Ya know, I get you're trying to be better at planning things, Lu. But how many times you gonna watch that? You gotta give it a rest. Besides, I have a good feeling about this gig. Call it "feline intuition."

LUCIA

Even if I believed in that, not everybody has nine lives like you.

HOBBS

Hey, if that actually were true, I wouldn't be spending one of them here. Anyway, just being a good crew mate and checking in. See you on the bridge.

LUCIA

See you.

Hobbes walks away as Lucia gets up. She hesitates before turning the display back on as she gets dressed.

INT. BRIDGE - LATER

Lucia walks onto the bridge of the Athena carrying two glasses of CRANBERRY JUICE.

Zap sits comfortably in the CAPTAIN'S CHAIR, checking the various readouts of the ship's vitals. Hobbes is curled into a ball on top of a control panel.

Placing one of the glasses off to Zap's side, Lucia sidles up to the front view screen, staring down at the vividly green and blue surface of the dwarf planet RINE.

LUCIA

Everything good, Zap?

Zap grabs the glass besides them and downs the juice in one gulp.

ZAP

Security just cleared us for landing. Taking us in for an approach into Lancaster now.

HOBBS

So Trevor wasn't full of shit after all. Can't believe scrambling the ID tags worked.

LUCIA

Kid needs us to trust him. If shit went sideways before we even landed, it would've tipped us off we might be walking into a trap.

ZAP

Still could be. Hell, we probably will be at some point knowing how paranoid they are down there.

LUCIA

And that's why we're all prepared for anything, right? Hobbes?

The cat stares daggers back at Lucia before turning away. Lucia smirks as she adjusts her black and white collar tie.

ZAP

Too low of a blow for you?

HOBBS

Ha. Ha. Very funny. I won't forget this next time you two need credits "transferred" to your accounts. Hacking is such hard work, you know?

LUCIA

Good thing we'll be fine with our meager funds for a while. The Final Starlight Soldiers "care for every fellow child," remember?

ZAP

Still should check our food every time. Who knows what Pretoria might be lacing shit with to make people go along with him for five years?

LUCIA

UCDS took samples of Trevor's blood when they had him. Report said there were no traces of anything unusual.

ZAP

Doesn't mean shit for us though. Who knows what they feed new recruits?

HOBBS

Hey, as long as they have good milk, I'll be happy. If I'm gonna be playing kitty-cat for God knows how long, it better be worth it.

LUCIA

I'm sure they do. Once we bag Pretoria, you can have as much milk as you want.

HOBBS

What exactly is the plan to capture the good father by the way? I'm assuming all that time studying in your room has led you to a full-proof scheme now, right?

ZAP

Considering your promise to us after the last job, I hope it's that good.

LUCIA

Hey, I get it. I screwed up. But, as promised, I've been preparing. And I've decided something.

ZAP

Yeah? What's that?

LUCIA

We're gonna be flexible.

HOBBS

Flexible?

LUCIA

We all know what we're doing once we touch down. After that, we'll play it by ear. Never dealt with religious zealots like these before. Best to not be too rigid.

HOBBS

Hey, I can deal with that for now but promise me we're not gonna try to capture another shithead without a plan once we're settled in down there.

LUCIA

Well, if I recall, last time the target was hiding out in some shitty apartments and we all thought we could just rush in and nab her. And yeah, we almost died but we got her in the end, remember?

ZAP

If by "her" you mean, "her barely intact brain after it was forcibly separated from her body," then yeah. Sure. We "got her," I guess.

LUCIA

Body, brain, same difference. Still got paid. And who managed to pull us all out of the shit in the end? No hay de que, by the way.

ZAP

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Fair enough. Doesn't mean I didn't come up with something myself. Call it our "backup plan" or just "part of being flexible." Anyway, catch.

In one smooth motion, Zap pulls out the plastic vial from their pants and tosses it over to Lucia as the woman catches it gracefully.

LUCIA

What's this?

Hobbes gets up off the panel to look more closely at what Lucia's holding, his CYBERNETIC EYES examining the contents.

ZAP

Something I cooked up in the kitchen. It'll knock out someone like Pretoria for hours. We slip that into his food or drink or whatever when we get him alone and we're set. Hell, maybe we just grab him and force it down. Mission accomplished.

HOBBS

I take back my sarcastic applause. You want some of the genuine article?

ZAP

I'll pass, thanks.

Lucia rolls the vial around in her fingers as she looks it over.

LUCIA

How do you know it'll work though?

ZAP

Because I've made it for myself. When I run out of meds, I need to conk out somehow on trips. Figured I could make some for a special occasion. Like a nice, private dinner with the good father.

HOBBS

That's assuming we ever get that close to him. We're really banking on that kid's intel that he has private audiences at all.

LUCIA

We all knew we'd be in it for the long game. Just need to be ready when the time comes.

ZAP

Well, you can thank me later when it saves our skin. We're coming up on Lancaster now. Everyone strap in.

Lucia taps on her thigh as the skin parts. She slots the vial into a metallic storage space before she and Hobbes buckle up in nearby seats.

EXT. LANDING PAD - LATE AFTERNOON

A fit Black man, TREVOR (25), watches nervously as The Athena touches down on a landing pad in front of him.

His intimidating Caucasian companion, ETHAN (40), stands stoically beside him.

Seeing two humans and a cat emerge from the ship's lower hatch, the anxious man relaxes a bit.

TREVOR

Welcome, recruits. Welcome to Lancaster. We've been waiting for you.

Lucia is the first to shake hands with him.

ZAP
Happy to be here.

LUCIA
Looking forward to initiation.

As Trevor goes to greet Zap, Ethan watches the group carefully.

The silent man looks down as he feels Hobbes rubbing up against his leg, the cat looking up at him with cloying eyes.

ETHAN
We don't need to search you for hidden weapons now, do we?

LUCIA
Not unless you feel the need. We know all about the "no arms of war outside of front-line combat" policy.

ZAP
Trevor made sure of that.

ETHAN
Good. He and I will escort you to his home. Come along. If we're lucky, we might be able to catch a glimpse of the good father at the arena.

Ethan beckons Trevor to join him as the two lead the group further into the village past GUARDS armed with LASER RIFLES.

MONTAGE - THE GROUP WALK TOGETHER

--Walking through the village, Lucia, Hobbes, and Zap look around as they pass through a crowded MARKETPLACE.

--Various people exchange fresh food, clothing, and other handmade goods with one another.

--Continuing on, the trio notice a tall CHURCH looming on a grassy green hillside far off in the distance as the sun sets on the horizon.

--The group come upon a small crowd gathered around an enclosed arena. The sounds of cheering and hollering can be heard as two people duke it out in hand to hand combat.

TREVOR (O.S.)

Father Pretoria likes to watch over his flock when they battle. Watch and observe.

END MONTAGE

INT./EXT. ARENA - SAME

The group stop to get a glimpse of a FEMALE COMBATANT battling her MALE OPPONENT as she lands a right hook to his jaw, knocking him to the ground.

The crowd roars but quickly goes silent as FATHER PRETORIA, (55), a middle-aged Caucasian man of average height with a scruffy beard and wearing plain robes and tight pants, enters the arena.

Pretoria helps the fallen man up before taking hold of one of the combatants' hands in each of his own.

After a moment, he lifts up the victorious woman's arm in triumph as the crowd roars back to life once more.

ETHAN

Now let us continue. You will meet the good father soon enough.

The group begin to walk away.

PRETORIA (O.S.)

Ethan, Trevor, my children! Where are you off to in such a hurry? Do you not wish to stick around to congratulate Victoria on her triumph?

Ethan and Trevor turn on a dime as the five all face the man beckoning them.

ETHAN

Of course not, father.

Lucia, in the back of the group, motions to Hobbes with her head to begin scanning Pretoria as Hobbes' vision transforms into a technically elaborate UI.

Without a word, the cat slips into the crowd and begins concentrating on the preacher.

TREVOR

We simply did not wish to disturb you while we escorted the new recruits to my home, father.

PRETORIA

Ah! Yes! I was told new members of our flock would be arriving today. Which one is the former UCDS soldier?

Lucia parts through the crowd as she steps forward.

LUCIA

That would be me, father.

PRETORIA

So, my child, are you as strong as Trevor has told me?

LUCIA

Stronger, father.

PRETORIA

We shall see about that tonight. And where is the engineer that arrived with you?

Zap steps up alongside Lucia as they notice Hobbes continuing to focus in on the preacher.

ZAP

Right here, father.

PRETORIA

I've heard you have combat training as well, my non-binary child.

ZAP

I most certainly do, father.

PRETORIA

Good. I know that you have other important tricks up that sleeve of yours also. Don't you?

ZAP

I suppose you'll have to wait and see, father.

PRETORIA

Indeed. It's actually quite fortuitous that you both have arrived today of all days.

(MORE)

PRETORIA (cont'd)

You see, Victoria here, who is a warrior similar to yourself, Lucia, and Thomas here, not too dissimilar from you, Zap, are also recent recruits. I've allowed them to battle each other one last time to regain some sense of honor after failing to live up to my expectations.

LUCIA

That is incredibly kind of you, father.

PRETORIA

Thank you, my child. I am nothing if not generous and merciful under the light of the stars.

Pretoria grasps the back of both Victoria and Thomas' heads as he addresses them.

PRETORIA (cont'd)

And now, Victoria, Thomas, with your honor restored, time for you to join your brothers and sisters in the stars above. May your energy power our flock for generations.

The two combatants nod before Pretoria smashes their heads together, shattering their skulls.

A pair of GUARDS rush in to drag their dead bodies away as the crowd roars back to life with cheers.

PRETORIA (cont'd)

Now, go, my children. Go forth to Trevor's home. I look forward to battling one of you tonight. May the light shine over you.

ETHAN

And the stars guide you home.

PRETORIA

You are dismissed, my flock.

The crowd disperses as Hobbes comes back to Zap's side.

TREVOR

Let us continue, then. Shall we?

The group walk away as Lucia manages to catch a glimpse of Father Pretoria wiping the BLOOD from his robes.

EXT. TREVOR'S HOME - SAME

The group come to a halt outside the small, humble-looking home of Trevor, a single story house lined up side by side among nearly identical ones.

ETHAN

I trust you can take it from here,
Trevor?

TREVOR

Of course. I'll have them both
prepared for tonight as soon as
possible.

Ethan nods as the two men bow to one another.

ETHAN

May the light shine over you.

TREVOR

And the stars guide you home.

Standing back upright, Trevor watches Ethan leave.

TREVOR (cont'd)

All right. C'mon, let's get you
ready.

The three follow Trevor closely as they enter his home.

INT. TREVOR'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Walking inside, Trevor wipes his shoes on a WELCOME MAT before he stops the group from continuing further.

TREVOR

Wipe off any dirt and take off your
shoes right here. We have to keep our
place as clean as possible for random
inspections.

As she wipes dirt off her shoes, Lucia glances around to see the four are inside a LIVING ROOM with a fire place and a few wooden chairs.

Straight ahead, she sees a hallway lead towards some rooms and a kitchen with a cast iron stove off to the right, a dining room with an ornate table beyond.

Just then, BENJI (30), a muscular man of East Indian descent, emerges from the hallway, a warm smile on his face.

BENJI

You're back! With our lovely guests!

He and Trevor share a kiss before Benji grips Lucia's hand tightly for a firm handshake.

BENJI (cont'd)

Nice to finally meet you both. I'm Benji. Trevor's better half.

TREVOR

You keep telling yourself that.

Lucia laughs as she returns the strong grip with her own.

LUCIA

Lucia. The pleasure's all mine.

Before he's able to initiate, Zap already extends their hand out, shaking Benji's even more firmly than Lucia.

ZAP

Zap. Mine as well.

BENJI

You know, Trevor told me a lot about you but he didn't mention how well you both shake hands. Only other person around here with grips like yours is Father Pretoria.

LUCIA

Bodes well for later tonight then, I suppose.

BENJI

I'd say having a grip as strong as the greatest man in the galaxy definitely bodes well. And who's this cutie?

Benji reaches down to notice Hobbes rubbing against his leg. He squats down to gently pet him.

LUCIA

That's Hobbes. The quietest cat you'll ever meet.

ZAP

Sleeps like a baby. Very low maintenance as long as he gets his milk.

BENJI

You didn't tell me they were bringing their cat, Trev.

TREVOR

Yeah, I did. You were just in the middle of chopping firewood, remember?

BENJI

Oh, that's right. My mistake. Sorry. Anyway, Hobbes is very lovely. We'll have plenty of milk fresh from the cows for him.

LUCIA

Much appreciated. Thank you again by the way for letting us stay here. We're both kind of nervous to be honest.

ZAP

We've heard such great things about the FSS from Trevor that we're just hoping we can live up to your high standards.

BENJI

Oh, don't sweat it. Sharing our homes is what we all do around here. And you'll be fine after tonight. Once you get through your first sparring match, everything else is a cakewalk. Trust me.

LUCIA

Glad to hear.

TREVOR

Anyway, I'm sure our guests are a bit tired from traveling millions of miles through space. I'll show them to their room.

BENJI

Wonderful. I'll head out and get some milk for Hobbes. Don't scare 'em off while I'm gone now.

(MORE)

BENJI (cont'd)
We all need to have food together
before the big match tonight.

TREVOR
I won't. Promise. See you in a bit.

Benji rises back up as the two men kiss once more.

BENJI
May the light shine over you.

TREVOR
And the stars guide you home.

The four watch Benji go before Trevor motions them to follow him further inside.

TREVOR (cont'd)
This way.

INT. GUEST ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Trevor opens the door to a small guest room, letting his guests enter first.

Zap tosses their bag onto the single twin-size bed, Lucia placing hers on the floor near a dresser drawer.

Hobbes stands up on two paws, leaning against the wall as he inspects the room.

TREVOR
It's not much and you'll have to
share a bed like everyone else around
here but it's something.

Zap sprawls out on the bed, sinking into the mattress.

ZAP
Hmm. More comfortable than my bed on
the ship at least.

LUCIA
Thanks Trevor.

TREVOR
You're welcome. And sorry you had to
see that display earlier. Father
Pretoria is-

HOBBS

A murderous psychopath? Yeah, we kinda already knew that from your report.

ZAP

He has a way with words though. I'll give him that.

LUCIA

Is he always that casual with executions?

TREVOR

Just lately. The more we've been losing, the more he's been recruiting and wanting people to be stronger, live up to his "standards." I sometimes wonder if the only reason I'm still around is because he trusts Benji so much.

LUCIA

That's actually something I've been wondering. Are you and your husband both coming with us once we grab Pretoria?

TREVOR

Are you kidding? Did you not hear his little display of reverence for the "good father" out there? "Greatest man in the galaxy," my ass.

LUCIA

Fair enough.

TREVOR

Benji's the one that got me into this whole thing in the first place. He's bought into everything hook, line, and sinker for years. For a while, I did too.

Zap sits up on the bed.

ZAP

What changed?

Without saying a word, Trevor storms out of the room, leaving the three a bit confused.

In a few moments, he returns with a engraved copper medallion, holding it up for them all to see.

TREVOR

This. Killed five United Coalition soldiers and got a handmade medal for it. That's it.

HOBBS

That's it? Just a medal?

TREVOR

Just a medal. But just a medal doesn't help you sleep at night. Or help deal with the faces of the dead you see when you're walking around. Benji told me everyone's like this and to suck it up and that I'll be fine after a while. It's been six months though and I'm not. I'm not fucking fine.

Trevor's hand trembles as he lowers the medal to his side.

LUCIA

I'm so sorry, Trevor.

TREVOR

Yeah, well, when I found out I'd have to go fight again, I just realized I couldn't do this shit anymore. First time I tried to defect was actually when I surrendered and got captured by the UCDS on the front lines. Told them everything I knew about Rine and Pretoria. Guess they passed that intel up the chain. You three just ended up being the ones hired to grab him finally, I guess.

Trevor tosses the medal to Zap as they snatch it out of the air.

TREVOR (cont'd)

Now read what's on the back. Out loud.

Zap flips the medal over to see the engraving on its back.

ZAP

"In honor of meritorious duty under the light of the stars after suffering indignities as a prisoner of war."

TREVOR

UCDS told you they "let me escape," right? Yeah, well, what happened was Benji convinced Pretoria to let him and a squad come rescue me. Thought I was being tortured. He and I were the only ones that came back alive.

Trevor takes a long, deep breath as he walks over and takes the medal back from Zap, the man tucking it in his pants pocket.

HOBBS

Jesus.

LUCIA

Trevor, that's-

TREVOR

You just need to stop this shit once and for all, okay? I love Benji. I really do. But I can't do this anymore. This bloodshed needs to end. Anyway, sorry for the rant. I'll let you all figure your shit out before tonight. There'll be food ready for ya in a bit too.

LUCIA

Okay. Sounds good. Thanks Trevor.

The young man nods before shutting the door behind him.

HOBBS

God, is it just me or is everyone around here more than a bit fucked up?

ZAP

No shit, it's a cult. That poor kid's been through hell and back. Almost literally. I'm sure most here have.

LUCIA

That's why we're gonna be careful about our next steps.

ZAP

Oh? Does someone have a plan now all of a sudden?

LUCIA

More an "outline of attack that's easily flexible." We're gonna hit this bastard three ways. But first, Hobbes, did you manage to grab anything useful during your scan?

HOBBS

Other than Pretoria's really strong and has the bone density of someone half his age? Not really. Nothing else I could pick up from him just standing around.

LUCIA

That's fine. You'll have a second chance tonight to find something out because here's how we'll approach this "initiation."

ZAP

Flexibly?

LUCIA

Of course.

MONTAGE - LUCIA AND ZAP PREPARE

--Lucia and Zap change into tight, form fitting clothes appropriate for a mixed martial arts match.

--The two eat some food prepared by Trevor and Benji. Hobbes enjoys some milk.

LUCIA (V.O.)

Zap and I'll both wear comfortable clothes. Pretoria won't know who he'll be fighting until the last second that way.

--Lucia, Zap, Hobbes, Trevor, and Benji walk together towards the arena.

LUCIA (V.O.) (cont'd)

We'll get there early. Slightly before sundown. If you remember the report, Pretoria can't handle impatience.

--Lucia and Zap walk into the arena as they notice the crowd of people surrounding the wooden fence that encircles it.

LUCIA (V.O.) (cont'd)
I'll step up and take Pretoria. Zap, you work over the crowd for any intel we can use to our advantage later. And Hobbes, you'll lay low and scan Pretoria while he fights me. If he has any implants, use your discretion but make sure the "good father" isn't too good.

END MONTAGE

INT./EXT. FIGHTING ARENA - SUNSET

Lucia and Zap watch as Father Pretoria enters the pit.

PRETORIA
Hello, my children. It's truly a pleasure to properly welcome two of the galaxy's finest to the cause. At least if what everything Trevor told me is correct.

Lucia reaches out to shake Pretoria's hand with a smile.

LUCIA
Hope you've heard only the good and none of the bad, father. It's an honor to properly meet you.

Pretoria stares at Lucia's outstretched arm and gently reaches out to lower it.

PRETORIA
You can save handshakes for afterwards, my child.

LUCIA
Of course, father.

PRETORIA
So which of my flock will I be battling tonight? Or will I have the pleasure of sparring with you both perhaps?

Lucia and Zap share a look of confidence as the two nod together and face towards Pretoria.

LUCIA
Just me, father.

Lucia takes one large step in front of Zap.

PRETORIA
Ah good. Normally, three on one is a good challenge for me during these initiation spars. However, considering your age and expertise, Lucia, I think a one on one battle sounds perfectly reasonable for this old man.

Pretoria takes off his robe and places it on the fence to reveal a set of CHISELED ABS beneath as he enters his fighting stance.

Zap exits the arena as they join back up with Trevor, Benji, and Hobbes.

PRETORIA (cont'd)
Now. Let us begin.

Lucia drops into her own stance as Pretoria smiles.

She makes the first move as she fights against Pretoria with a CAPOEIRA fighting style, flipping, kicking, and punching as if she was performing one unbroken, acrobatic dance.

Pretoria swiftly counters her using AIKIDO techniques to fend off her blows while managing to turn back Lucia using her own momentum against her.

Whenever Lucia flips, Pretoria backs up and punches away a quick kick from her, the woman transitioning to fast moving punches as both fighters enter a state of combat flow.

The gathered crowd circling the arena cheer on Pretoria as the two continue battling.

Zap can barely hear Benji and Trevor over the noise of the fighters and the hollering of hundreds of voices.

ZAP
Hey, hey.

BENJI
Hey. So let's see how long your friend lasts. Trevor and I thought for a second there you two might have been fighting together.

ZAP

Yeah, well, I'm the brains, she's the brawn. I've done enough fighting for one lifetime. I'm happy to let her have the spotlight.

TREVOR

Smart move. When it comes to the good father, I don't know anyone that would willingly fight him unless they had to.

ZAP

Yeah, I bet. But, if Lucia somehow does win, big "if" I know, what happens after?

BENJI

Besides the honor of besting the good father in front of our entire flock? A surprise private dinner most likely after tomorrow's service. Father Pretoria has only ever graced a handful of his flock with his homemade cuisine though.

ZAP

So he doesn't lose often?

The three watch as Lucia begins intensifying her strikes as she adjusts to Pretoria's counters better.

BENJI

I've been here for four galactic years, Zap. Losing is not in the good father's DNA.

ZAP

I guess we'll see what happens then.

Zap glances down for a moment to see Hobbes honed in on Pretoria, scanning his body as the older man continues to deftly combat the younger warrior.

The concentrating cat finally manages to notice a minuscule IMPLANT attached to the parietal lobe of Pretoria's brain.

HOBBS

(to himself)

Well, well, well. What have we here? The good father has some pain management? We'll see about that.

Hacking past the security of the device, Hobbes smirks as he sees Pretoria begin to breath noticeably quicker.

He wipes beads of sweat from his eyes as he starts to feel more of Lucia's blows.

Each fighter tries their best to keep up with the other as the crowd surges closer to the arena's edge, blocking Hobbes' view and interrupting his hack.

HOBBS (cont'd)
Out of the way, people! I'm trying-

Hobbes tries to push forward, his head banging against Benji's leg.

HOBBS (cont'd)
Ow! Watch where you're going, you-

BENJI
Huh? Who said that?

Benji looks down to see Hobbes rubbing his head with one of his paws before transitioning to licking his stomach as the feline notices Benji's gaze.

HOBBS
Meow? Meow!

Benji stares at Hobbes intently before smiling and going back to watching the fight.

Pretoria counters an oncoming flip kick from Lucia before he grabs a hold of one of her feet, throwing her to the ground.

As Lucia begins to fall, Hobbes manages to finally get a good angle.

He hacks back into Pretoria's implant just before Lucia twists her aborted flip kick into a strong leg sweep.

Letting out a sharp cry, Pretoria falls to the dirt below.

The two panting and exhausted, Pretoria shouts out something before Lucia can get up.

PRETORIA
Draw!

The crowd audibly gasps.

Lucia stares at Pretoria, unsure of his next move as the preacher gets up and walks over to her.

He reaches out with his right hand.

PRETORIA (cont'd)

I propose a draw. Before either of us get hurt. Is that acceptable to you, my child?

Lucia simply smiles.

LUCIA

It is, father.

Lucia grabs Pretoria's hand as he helps her rise to her feet.

The crowd is stunned into silence as no one knows exactly how to react.

Pretoria wipes the sweat off his brow as he addresses the crowd, pointing to Lucia.

PRETORIA

You see, my children, this is what all of you should aspire. This is what every new member of our congregation can become if you work hard enough. Because the day you become someone's equal in combat is the day you can start down the path of becoming their superior.

Lucia scans the crowd as she sees every pair of eyes is fixed on Pretoria and herself now.

PRETORIA (cont'd)

I know some questioned the wisdom of my decision to bring new members into our flock. But as you can see: the results clearly speak for themselves. Now, I will leave you all tonight with this. Go forth to your homes and begin to think about who it is that you can bring into the fold that can aspire to true greatness. May the light shine over you.

CROWD

And the stars guide you home.

As everyone disperses, Pretoria walks back over towards Lucia, shaking her hand vigorously now.

PRETORIA

Thank you for that wonderful match, my child. I truly have not broken a sweat during an initiation in quite some time.

LUCIA

You're quite welcome, father.

PRETORIA

Now, I look forward to seeing you and Zap at your first Sermon on the Mount tomorrow. Get a good night's rest. You deserve it. May the light shine over you.

LUCIA

And the stars guide you home.

Pretoria nods gently towards them before putting on his robe and walking away, leaving a silent Lucia behind before exiting the arena.

EXT. FIGHTING ARENA - CONTINUOUS

Zap, Hobbes, and Trevor bound over to Lucia, the three all giddy as can be. Lucia can't help but notice Benji talking to Ethan ten yards away.

TREVOR

That was incredible! I've never seen Pretoria like that. Ever. You really made him work. I knew you were good but where did you learn those moves from?

LUCIA

A Brazilian commander I trained under a long time ago. Toughest woman in the galaxy, let me tell you.

ZAP

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Brazilians got nothing on the Vietnamese though. You'll see I can kick her ass any day of the week soon enough.

LUCIA

You keep telling yourself that. Maybe one day it'll even be true.

ZAP

You're just lucky you won, punk.

Zap playfully punches one of Lucia's shoulders.

TREVOR

Well, you both definitely need to show me some moves one day. That's for sure.

LUCIA

Of course. As long as the good father lets us.

Lucia watches as Benji and Ethan finish their conversation, the man walking back over towards the group.

TREVOR

Who were you talking to?

BENJI

Oh, just catching up with Ethan after the fight. Congratulations again, Lucia. Father Pretoria never gets worked up like that unless he's truly facing someone worthy. Told you that grip of yours was a good sign.

Lucia lets out a nervous laugh.

LUCIA

Thanks Benji.

BENJI

Now, let's head home. We all need to be up bright and early for tomorrow. Especially for your first real service. Trev, mind if I talk to you for a bit while we walk? Privately?

TREVOR

Of course. See you two back at the house.

Trevor and Benji get ahead of Lucia, Zap, and Hobbes as the three walk back together in silence.

The three wait for the distance between them and the couple to widen a bit more before they start talking.

HOBBS

What do you think they're talking about? Us?

ZAP

Nah. Probably marital problems. I can tell by the body language something's up.

LUCIA

Poor bastards. Can't imagine trying to keep together a marriage in a place like this.

ZAP

I can. But enough about the lovely couple. Hobbes! Pick up anything about Pretoria during the fight?

HOBBS

Found a pain management implant tucked away in his brain that seemingly only activates during combat. Had to deal with some crowd control to keep up the hack but made sure to tweak it just enough so that he wouldn't get suspicious. You can thank me later.

LUCIA

Job well done. You kept a low profile too, right?

HOBBS

Of course. You think I'm an idiot? I made sure everyone was watching you before I did anything. Bumped into Benji but he didn't suspect a thing. I pulled the whole "cat cleaning" routine. Worked like a charm.

LUCIA

Just making sure. Anyway, how long do you think it'll take now before we can get some alone time with "the good father?"

ZAP

Well, yours truly got Trevor and Benji talking and they said after a performance like that, Pretoria's gonna surprise with you with some of his "homemade cuisine" tomorrow night.

LUCIA

Good. This might be the easiest snatch and grab we've ever had.

LUCIA (cont'd)

Thank God because I can't stand the thought of being in this cult hellhole a second longer than we have to. You still got the vial tucked away, right?

LUCIA (cont'd)

Oh yeah. I'm ready for anything. Starting tomorrow, the two of us are gonna have targets on our backs. Especially me.

ZAP

Wouldn't want it any other way, right?

INT. CHURCH - THE NEXT MORNING

Benji and Trevor, in their Sunday best, lead a formally dressed Lucia and Zap inside a packed church.

The four gather in a PEW together as Lucia pulls out her black tie collar from her thigh compartment, putting it on gently with the pair of tight gloves she's wearing.

ZAP

(whispering)

Wow, you really want to be a part of this church, huh?

LUCIA

Oh, shut up.

Lucia looks around as she notices the walls covered in decorative STAINED GLASS WINDOWS and a huge hanging PORTRAIT of Father Pretoria towards the back.

Glancing around the tightly packed benches, she sees what looks to be the entire town packing into the church, every member dressed in plain, formal, black and white attire.

Zap also can't help but realize that everyone is at least a young adult, not a child in sight.

ZAP

So where are all the kids? At a separate service or something?

Trevor doesn't respond, simply staring straight ahead.

LUCIA

Hey, you okay, Trevor? You haven't talked all morning.

BENJI

The children are gone. Just leave it at that. Please. It's a sensitive subject for us all.

Lucia and Zap shut up as they see Father Pretoria approach the pulpit, dressed in more decorative, fanciful robes befitting a preacher than what he wore yesterday.

Two TWINKLING STAR SYMBOLS can be seen clearly sewn into the the fabric.

PRETORIA

Good morning, my children.

CROWD

Good morning, father.

PRETORIA

Like always, it is a beautiful day to be under the stars. I have so much to say and, as always, so little time. Our soldiers scattered across the galaxy have made remarkable progress in even more remarkable time since last I spoke to you all.

A holographic projector whirs to life as the spiral form of the Milky Way flickers and shimmers above the pastor for everyone in the church to see.

PRETORIA (cont'd)

In the past week, we've taken back more of our holy land from the unholy regime of the UCDS on both the moons of Trinity and Pontianak.

The two moons light up in the display before zooming in and separating out from the rest of the map as Pretoria gazes up in wonder at them.

PRETORIA (cont'd)

We've even made considerable steps towards preparing our assault on the UCDS outpost on the planet Osomer where we believe the Young Soldiers of Starlight are currently being held underground.

A projection of the rocky terrain of the planet OSOMER comes into view alongside the two others.

PRETORIA (cont'd)

Finally, as I'm sure you are all aware from last night, I'd like to single out the newest members of our flock, Lucia Lopez and Zap Matters. They have been graciously taken in by two of our most dedicated children, Trevor and Benji Singh. May all four of you please stand up?

The four stand up and wave awkwardly as the rest of the congregation clap and cheer and stomp their feet with aplomb.

Lucia notices a rather large and ornate BAPTISMAL FONT being set up on top of a wooden stand in front of Pretoria's altar.

As the ovation continues, Pretoria finally motions for the crowd to settle down.

PRETORIA (cont'd)

Now, all of you, please. Come. Introduce yourselves to the rest of the congregation. I know many already know Benji and Trevor but I believe there are some of you that weren't here for their initiation either.

The four make their way to the front of the church, Lucia managing to hear Benji whisper something to Trevor.

BENJI

(whispering)

Just remember. He's not gonna kill us. He promised me that.

Pretoria gestures with a head nod to four of his GUARDS sitting off to the side in the front most pews.

Rising to their feet, each of the guards quickly grab a hold of one of the four before tasing them and shoving them to their knees, restraining them in DIAMOND SHACKLES.

The congregation look on in horror and confusion as the holographic projection of the Milky Way abruptly shuts off.

PRETORIA

My children, please. Calm yourselves. It brings me no joy to share with you that between last night and this morning, I received disturbing information that Lucia and Zap, are, in fact, fascist stooges of the UCDS.

LUCIA

What are you talking about, father?
We're-aghhh!

Lucia is interrupted by the shock of a taser to her upper back as the crowd stirs.

PRETORIA

SILENCE! Thanks to Benji, one of my most loyal children I might add, I was able to discover his husband Trevor's traitorous plot to bring in these two heathens and disrupt the Order of Things by having me taken from you all.

ZAP

He's lying to you! We're not-aghhhh!

PRETORIA

One more word and I'll have your tongues cut from your mouths! Along with your abomination's!

Pretoria looks up at the back entrance of the church as Ethan bursts through the door.

A struggling Hobbes screams obscenities as he tries to wiggle and claw his way out of the guard's ironclad grasp.

The congregation watch in disbelief as the uniformed man walks down the center aisle, Hobbes bellowing out threats and curses before being knocked out with a tranquilizer.

The man forcefully hands him over to Pretoria.

The preacher holds Hobbes aloft as he addresses the crowd once more.

PRETORIA (cont'd)

This travesty of nature was discovered this morning by my security team. This is what they brought with them to defile our holy place.

Without another word, Pretoria throws the unconscious cat to the feet of Lucia and Zap.

PRETORIA (cont'd)

So now, we must cleanse ourselves. We must cleanse ourselves of all those who wish to darken our light.

The congregation, now whipped into a frenzy, stand up and cheer as Pretoria walks over to a stunned and weakened Lucia before he drags her over to the waiting bowl of water.

Lucia stares back at her reflection in the glistening liquid's surface, trying to think of a way to escape.

Pretoria grabs the back of Lucia's head as he looks on at the woman before facing the enraptured crowd.

PRETORIA (cont'd)

But remember my children. I am nothing if not merciful before shepherding those down their final path. So I say to you, Lucia Lopez, do have any final words before the cleansing of your soul?

Lucia looks over at Pretoria with a calm steadiness.

LUCIA

Father, if you may, I would like to at least honor the dignity of my late mother and have her tie removed before my soul is cleansed.

Pretoria can't help but snicker.

PRETORIA

If that is what you truly desire, I shall honor your request. Not for you. But for her. Lest you stain two souls in one foul swoop.

As he grabs a hold of the seemingly banal fabric, the material of the collar tie transforms into that of a red hot LASER.

Burning through Pretoria's right hand, he cries out in pain.

In a flash, Lucia throws her head back as she whips the laser necktie through her restraints, cutting herself loose.

Zap throws their own head back and shatters the nose of the stunned guard holding them.

They run over and tackle Pretoria to the ground, putting him in a choke hold with their arm.

As the guards and congregation charge towards Lucia, the woman grabs a hold of her newly formed LASER WHIP before it burns through her clothes.

With both of her gloved hands, she whirls it around the inside of the church in a matter of seconds as the length of the whip extends outward in a wide arc.

The glowing weapon slices cleanly through everyone who is standing upright, guards and churchgoers alike.

As it comes back around, Lucia deactivates it just before it can cut through her own neck as adrenaline courses through her veins.

A few moments of silence pass before the dull roar of a couple hundred thudding noises are heard.

Lucia watches as carved up, cauterized bodies fall to the floor.

She sees Zap holding Pretoria at bay with their own restraint as the preacher grasps at his neck with his left hand, half of his right one splayed on the floor.

ZAP

A little help, please!

LUCIA

Right. Sorry.

Lucia reactivates her necktie to the terrified eyes of Pretoria.

She gets down on one knee before slicing away Zap's restraint as they tighten their grasp on him.

ZAP

Now the vial.

A quick tap on her thigh and Lucia is digging around inside.

She rips off the cap and pours the small container's contents into Pretoria's forced open mouth.

Zap makes sure he swallows it.

As Pretoria goes limp, Zap lets him fall to the floor.

ZAP (cont'd)
It actually worked, thank God.

LUCIA
Yeah. Wait, what?

Zap ignores Lucia as they roll over a dead guard's CORPSE, looking for something.

Rising to her feet, Lucia surveys the damaged interior of the church before finally noticing the shocked looks of Benji and Trevor.

She hears Zap waking up Hobbes with a jolt from one of the guard's tasers.

The cat springs back to life, looking around with wide eyes as he sees the damage wrought by Lucia and Pretoria's body lying on the floor.

HOBBS
You really love being flexible, huh?

Before Lucia can answer, a trio of GUARDS burst through the entrance of the church.

A snap of her whip decapitates all three cleanly.

Holding the weapon in both her hands, she turns to face Hobbes.

LUCIA
Guilty as sin.

END OF PILOT.