

Ezil's Return

By Morrie Mullins

Hah! Had to know old Ezil wouldn't stay gone. All you folk running around, talking about war-this and war-that and gotta fight. You don't know nothing about war until you been captured, put in a dirty little room where you got nothing for company but the little bugs what try and live off your flesh, brought out and tortured and then thrown back in a stinky little hole. You gotta live a little before you figure out how precious life is. Me, I lived plenty, and then I got put in a place where I had to live some more. Now I'm done with that kinda living, ready to get back to the kind where nobody's looking to put red-hot pokers in your eyes or start peeling the skin from your body.



You think I look pretty good, all things considered? Shows what you know. You look like a pile of mynock leavings, and you ain't seen half what I been through. If you're trying to say that old Ezil, he didn't get taken nowhere by no one, he just run off and hid while the fighting was intense, then I gotta say that you got less sense than a Savrip at a buffet. S'nothing that shows on me right now. Nobody put out my eyes, nobody ripped off my skin -- but there was folks around me what got that treatment, and worse. Good people from hereabouts, Culariners through and through. Gone, now. Miss 'em, sometimes. Pretty glad they weren't me.

You wanna hear stories? You think maybe Ezil's fiddling with your robes? I got no cause to fiddle with anything, no reason to lie. I got took -- plain and simple -- and things got ugly. What I need now is another drink, so if you're wanting to hear what I got to say, you just go talk to that man behind the bar. Tell him to keep the ale flowing. I'll take it intravenous, if he's got the hookup. And as long as I got drink, I'll talk. But I need drink. Went a long time without it, and now that I got it again, I figure I might as well use it to dull all the hurting that's left.

That's more like it. You got style, I give you that. This is the good stuff, not that Rodian swill. You ever wonder what makes Rodians look all puckered all the time? It's that *poodoo* they call "ale" -- they drink it all the time and it just makes their faces get all twisty, like somebody painted them and tried to make 'em look even funnier than they already did. But yeah. You keep this coming and I'll talk your ear off.

All started with one of them Thaereian raids. Seemed to me like they was wanting to flex some muscle, just show folks who's boss. Seen it before. Not so much in Cularin, but other places, whenever there's a bunch of folk that nobody much cares for or respects, and those folks got guns, they figure they can just make folks care about what they got to say. They can make folks respect 'em.

Course, these are the folks what can't tell the difference b'tween respect and fear. I tell you what, I seen a lot of guys from Thaere, but I never seen one in that uniform that I figured, "I can respect him." Not taking anything away from that Dal'nay fella -- he got out when he could. They call him "traitor," but he always said Cularin was his home, so he'd've been more a traitor if he'd kept on doing what Thaere wanted him doing, if you ask me. But there's not much to say good about what he did before he took off their uniform. Just a spaceslug like the rest of 'em.

That's who grabbed me. Most folk already figured out that the ones what disappeared got taken by Thaere. It's what happens after that nobody's talking much about, since until now, I can't think of a single person what got caught and came back to talk about it.

Now's the part where you say, "Old Ezil, he's just nuts. Thinks he's something special, he can outsmart those Thaereians while the rest of us just sit around and stare at our knees." Not so. I don't think I'm better or worse than any man, except maybe for folks what live in Thaere. Not that there's many what live in that pit, except in their bases. Near as I can tell, there's never been a real permanent settlement over there, just places to stage troops. Generation after generation. And they get to protect Cularin? Got to, leastways. Now, not so much.

What happened with me, to get me out, was I got lucky. Nothin' more or less. But that's the end of the story, and the way I figure, it's better to start at the beginning than at the end, even when you already got the end mostly puzzled out, what with me being back in Cularin.

There was about a dozen of us what got pinched that night. Just staggering around, minding our own business, when this Thaereian patrol wanders up. Now, this has got to be a year or more ago, understand, so things was a lot different then. At least, folks thought a lot different about what we were supposed to do, or not do. We were still convinced that working with Thaere was a good idea. Still letting ourselves be the happy little protectorate, for the most part.

These guys, they weren't in a "happy protectorate" place. They were angry, and it didn't seem like there was no good reason for them to be. They come up to us and they start talking -- shouting, more like. Shouting about how we didn't know law, how we didn't respect nobody, how if they weren't around, we'd be just another foul backwater pool.

Then they started in with the hitting. Just shoving, at first. Then there was some fists, and people getting whacked with the butt-end of a blaster rifle, and then somebody hits me over the head.

I swear to you, I wasn't swinging. Just standing there, mouth open wider'n a gooberfish after a Gungan baby, when someone tries to cave my head in. I still got the knot. Go ahead and touch it, but be gentle. I figure, something got fractured, and then I got no medical treatment, so it never did heal quite right. Still sore. When I sneeze, it kinda wiggles.

So I'm on the ground, watching big black-booted feet stomping on folks I just got done drinking with, and somebody steps on me. Just on the middle of my back, but that's bad enough since whoever it was felt like an obese Tauntaun. I think I lost most of the liquor from my system about then, and the last thing I remember before I passed out was lying there, my face getting wetter and stickier and smellier by the second, staring at Naiver Rekcus. He was staring back, except that I'm pretty sure he wasn't seeing much. Folk what're bleeding out the eyes, nose, and ears generally don't.

Next thing I remember is waking up in the dark. You wanna know what's scary? It's waking up in the dark, trying to open your eyes, and not being able to. You know it's dark on the other side of your lids, but you got no way to make 'em move, so you can't tell if maybe you got 'em open already, but there's nothing to see. Maybe you're just dead, and there's nothing to be done. Found out later they had me drugged up good, and there was no way I was opening anything. But when you can't open your eyes, it's not like you care if you can move your hands. Until you can crack those lids and see for yourself that there's something outside you, even if it's just shadows on a craggy black wall, there's nothing in the world but the trying.

It'd probably have been worse if I'd just been stuck there, not able to open my eyes, for a year. Maybe. I guess "worse" is hard to define, since they did everything from beat me with sticks to dress me up like a Twi'lek dancing girl. The less said about that, the better. But at least when they was doing that, I knew I was alive. Sometimes, it's the little things like that what keep you going. Yeah, I'm being humiliated. I'm less than a person when they do this to me. But at least I have a chance to get out of it. Dignity? Who needs it.

I waited, and after a while, I heard about this shuttle what was coming back to Cularin to pick up more recruits. I figured, I can get aboard that, I can get home. Be free again. So me and some other guys, we come up with this plan, and the plan's basically -- find out the schedule, kill some folks, get on the shuttle, steal it, fly away.

The details, we didn't so much know. We kinda played it as we went along. How it went . . .

Well, I'm here. I guess that's kind of the end of the story I was talking about. Look, I know you want details about how it happened, but this ale? Not quite tasty enough for me to want to remember. Put it this way -- I made it back. But there was a dozen other Culariners what didn't.

Another day. Come back another day, buy me another drink, and maybe we can talk.

Old Ezil, Human Male Expert 2/Scoundrel 4; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Defense 15 (+3 class, +2 Dex); Spd 10 m; VP/WP 22/14; Attack +4 melee or +6 ranged (3d6, blaster pistol); SQ Illicit Barter, Lucky 1/day, Precise Attack +1; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +4; SZ M; FP 1; DSP 1; Rep +1; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 11, Cha 13.

Equipment: blaster pistol, grimy uniform from a long-defunct shipping company.

Skills: Appraise +9, Computer Use +11, Demolitions +8, Entertain (storytelling) +12, Forgery +9, Gamble +6, Gather Information +12, Knowledge (Cularin) +9, Knowledge (streetwise) +10, Pilot +16, Repair +15, Survival +8; Speak Basic, Speak Shyriiwook, Speak Tarasinese.

Feats: Gearhead, Improved Initiative, Spacer, Skill Emphasis (Entertain), Skill Emphasis (Gather Information), Skill Emphasis (Pilot), Skill Emphasis (Repair), Weapons (blaster pistols, simple weapons).

*If you want to learn more about the **Living Force** campaign and how to take part in the adventure, this [introduction](#) will get you started.*