

# LIBRARIAN CHYKA TALKS MASHIVA

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## Part Three Secrets and War

Well, it's been a while, hasn't it? I can't even remember where we left off...

Ah! Right! The year 3883 and the commencement of construction on the biggest secret naval base, that still, no one can figure out why it had to be such a big freaking secret.

Tell me. Have you ever been to New South City? Or South Spaceport? You ever wonder why all the houses there look the same, in their neat rectangular blocks that have absolutely none of the personality of Old Mashiva, or the old-school stateliness of Old South City? Or why they have those odd blocks of housing that look way more like they were built as barracks rather than apartments?

Well, I've got an answer for you. It's because both districts were actually built to house military personnel and families associated with the new secret Macharri Naval Base and its associated shipyard. Everyone there was military or family. Even the smallest, most inconsequential looking little shops were run by them, ensuring that any attempt at sneaking spies into the community wasn't going to go unnoticed.

Macharri Naval Base itself exists mostly under Old South City, with its massive hangars facing out of the bluff face along the district's east side, from the Great Falls down to the fractured rocky outcrops of the Ki'ta'lu Blades. It was delved out via a series of faux-mines located at what are now the area's infamously annoying, excessively large traffic circles. Some of these workings were claimed to be producing gold from the remnants of a former Mashiva River channel. Others were said to be serving as access points for the construction of new subway tunnels.

The former story wasn't the most convincing of covers. There is no known second channel of the Mashvia River, at least in the bounds of the city proper. The Yu'min used to run to the north of the city, through the location of Kima and down what is now the current course of the Ku'ni'ra River, a.k.a. Northway Park. But not the Mashiva.

The latter story was much more widely accepted, as there were indeed a whole new set of subway tunnels being built concurrently with Macharri. These included lots of interconnections with the old tunnels and special tunnels leading into the base proper. The old tunnels soon became postal and freight tunnels, allowing movements into and out of the Macharri site to be well controlled. Several base subway stations were built for purely passenger access, the biggest being near the current Maria Naval District Headquarters on the border of Old South City and South Spaceport.

Macharri would take nearly twenty years to fully complete and would contain all of the facilities of a major surface naval base. There were headquarters, hospitals, warehouses, power plants, waste processing plants, and barracks and recreational facilities for up to two hundred thousand personnel. There were hangars for six cruisers, twenty-four destroyers, thirty-six gunships, and countless small craft. All of this was protected by surface shields, armor, shock dampeners, and defensive batteries mounted in the former construction shafts. No one really knows how much it cost, but it definitely had to be one of the most expensive naval projects ever to be built in the whole of the Marian Drift Prefecture. And... no one really seemed to know what all the effort was for.

A massively centralized defensive facility with so much combat power contained within it was more or less contrary to military doctrine. All those eggs stashed in one stationary basket. Sure, all those eggs would be deployed at the first sign of trouble, but... why? Why not keep them dispersed in smaller bases like any rational Admiral would do?

No one knows. Whatever records there are on the matter are highly classified, even to this day. You've really got to wonder what sort of enemy they were hoping to surprise with such a big, but... well, let's be totally honest here, not really all that grand of a hidden force? Seems kind of silly compared to the dozen battleships, four cruiser squadrons, and all the smaller combatants that were buzzing around the system on any given day. Kind of makes you wonder if they were trying to protect something very specific, doesn't it?

Now, don't you get me going off on a speculative tangent here, but isn't it kind of strange that one of the most heavily secured areas in the who facility

was the area around Xinta Temple? Wink wink, right? No. I wouldn't suggest going exploring down there. Seriously. After so many years, they've gone and locked it all down again, along with the old subway tunnel line leading along the south bank of the river, to where it meets with the old underground spaceport. Gotta wonder why, don't you?

Now. Where was I? Ah, yes! 4013! A very... questionable year.

The J'zo might have been kicked out of Mashiva with a very heavy boot, but that had led to a power vacuum in the city's simmering criminal underworld. A new group had arrived, with a very different plan to take control of the Old City, and establish a base of wealth that was, in a purely technical sense, totally legitimate. They were the Makta Group, a large local conglomerate with a specialty in, you probably guesses it, mines.

At this point, you're probably thinking, 'wasn't it easier to mine asteroids?', and 'why would anyone in their right mind do surface mining when asteroid mining is so much more profitable?'. And... you'd be right on both counts. With the growth of major urban centers, interstellar commerce, and the resources brought to the field by both, asteroid mining *was* the best option. Trouble was, the asteroids here in the Maria system were notably deficient in heavy elements among the most important of these was uranium.

Fission, fission, fission. Why the fuck fission? Why fuck with fission when we can fly with fusion? Fusion, fusion, fusion. Fusion to the stars!

Is that how the old saying went? I can't remember. What I can remember is that fission was, and is still, a major source of power in various environments and depleted uranium's material qualities were quite useful in various applications. And that's where the Makta Group came in. They bought up a whole bunch of old gold prospects up in the mountain valleys than branched off to the west of the Yu'min. Areas where old mines were found to collect nasty things like radon gas. There was uranium in them thar hills, and all the Makta Group had to do was dig deep enough to get to it.

Roughly two hundred years would pass before scandal would rock the Makta Group, and expose it as the criminal organization that it was. In that time, the most eventful thing to happen in Mashiva was the commencement of development on what would become the modern Resort District. This was located between the new city and the bluff, and would be initiated in response to the commencement of a new high capacity rail line between Mashiva and Kaiune to replace the old single track line that ran up the Yu'min valley.

The Makta Group Scandal of 4218 would see the ostensibly legitimate business forced to 'sell off' its entire collection of various business entities owing to 'financial regularities'. Executives, faced with the prospect of prosecution for bilking investors out of billions of credits in capital, fled into the criminal underground. Investors were left with mere credits to the thousand as their investments were paid off in a fire sale that was just about as dubious in execution as the Makta Group's accounting methods.

In reality, the Makta Group, or the Makta Crime Family as it would become known some time later, would retain control of most of their previous business empire, raking in a massive windfall by using new front companies to purchase their former holdings for a small fraction of the value. The new Yu'min Mining Corporation would take control of the uranium mines. Unlike the Makta Group, this new organization didn't seem particularly interested in maintaining the civilized norms of a modern owner-miner relationship. With tensions rising, a very unexpected event would bring it all to a head, and lead to a war that absolutely no one on the planet could have possibly anticipated.

Despite the tensions with the 'new' mine owners, everything seemed to be running fairly smoothly in the mines. Or at least as smoothly as deep, hard rock mining for radioactive material could get. There were dozens of mines up there. The biggest was Brightstone. And that place was *hot*... and in more ways than one.

Safety had always been paramount at Brightstone. Even with the tensions, the new owners were very keen on not having the authorities breathing down their throats and micromanaging things. In early 4220, however, the Brightstone miners began to be exposed to shorter half-lived reaction byproducts. That was something you never wanted to run into, let alone in the enclosed space of a mine. The miners knew something was wrong. Very wrong.

The mine owners, however, insisted that things were perfectly normal and safe. The area was just a bit hotter than the rest. There was nothing to worry about.

The miners objected. They were temporarily placated with some new remote mining equipment that allowed them to control operations from safe control points well removed from the actual mining work. A week later, under the direction of the owner's 'best geologist' they drilled straight into a mass of molten uranium.

It would become known as the Brightstone Number One Reactor, a naturally critical mass of uranium that had been burning for millennia, at the very least.

Reaction byproducts spilled out, rendering an entire branch of the unsafe even with protective gear. The miners were furious, and rightly so. A general strike at all the Yu'min mines ensued.

It was a story as old as the history of mining. The miners refused to work. The owners tried to intimidate the miners back into the mines. The miners blocked access to the mines. The owners hired thugs to force their will. And then...

Well, then modern times intervened. The miners weren't an easily broken up group of lightly armed laborers like in times long past. They also weren't alone in the fight. The hired thugs were blocked from crossing the Yu'min river at places like Ra'ka and Myalu, where the lone rail bridges were blocked, not by miners, but by viciously angry villagers who had somehow managed to arm themselves to the teeth. Where the thugs could make it to various mines, they quickly found themselves trapped by miners to the front, and locals to the rear.

The mine authorities were trapped in the middle of all this, and weren't able to do what they needed to do to properly investigate Brightstone. They called for backup. The policing arm of the Mines Administration came in, but wouldn't bow to the YMC and use their resources to break the strike. All they did was gain access to Brightstone.

The strike continued in a stalemate for two weeks until an incident outside the mines turned it into a virtual war. Thugs began to take liberties in the mountain valley town of Ti'ma. Petty theft became rampant. The lone local police officer tried to arrest a perpetrator, caught in the act of snatching an expensive piece of crystal from a small shop. The thugs attacked. The townsfolk defended their officer. More thugs piled in, coming from two nearby mines, with the miners in close pursuit.

The Battle of Ti'ma, as it became called, resulted in more than thirty deaths, almost all of them townsfolk and corporation thugs. The police officer survived, barely. Within hours, the miners in the rest of the area had gone on the offensive. Even as the YMC began to send in more muscle, the miners were driving those already in the valley back down toward Mashiva, with the enthusiastic aid of pretty much everyone who lived there.

By the time the authorities were able to get past the information smokescreen that the YMC the firefights were pushing south toward Kima. The railroad was the first to respond, stopping trains and kicking off a load of thugs on the tracks between the front line and Kima itself. They waked to the front, only to find

that those who were left of the previous group retreating with haste. Hundreds were dead, now mostly thugs, whose bodies littered the rail line for kilometers.

As the thugs retreated, they were forced to evade a group of armed veterans who attempted to catch them in the open between the advancing miners and Kima itself. The Kima police weren't present to try and stop the violence. They'd all joined the vets.

Withing forty-eight hours of the Battle of Ti'ma, the final front line had been drawn, running from the Mashiva Reservoir to the northwest corner of Key'von Rock, and then north from Key'von Rock to the mountains north and east of Kima. On the south side were the YMC thugs and the Old Mashiva City District Police, whose corrupt senior officers had been convinced to intervene on behalf of the YMC. On the north side were the miners, armed civilians from throughout the Yu'min Valley, and the Kima Police. The government of Mashiva was left to sort through countless conflicting reports of the causes of the sudden spasm of violence.

The new stalemate would last for almost a week and result in another eighty dead and hundreds of casualties on both sides. For the miners and civilians, the numbers looked grim. There seemed to be an increasing prospect that the government was going to take the YMC side. And then... a train rolled into Kima.

The Maria Railroad Authority had come to its own conclusions, and sent five hundred heavily armed railroad police to Kima from the north, ostensibly to clear the line for railroad traffic. The YMC was ordered to disband its thugs, and the Old City police were ordered to retreat under Imperial authority. Both refused.

With the MRA now in effective control of the Yu'min, the central government in Mashiva was able to get a much clearer picture of what had taken place. Attempts to establish control of the situation were rebuffed, however, and aggressively so. The government turned to the marines stationed at Macharri, but concerns over the hazards of having to advance through the Old City to get to the front line resulted in considerable hesitance on the part of the Naval District command.

In the end, the Marines would use subterfuge to move into the Old City and establish control of the streets so that the remainder could move in with heavy equipment unimpeded. Disguised as tourists, a thousand marines filtered into the city, putting a fire team at virtually every street corner and transit station.

They didn't have any weapons that they couldn't conceal, but neither did the remaining Old City police. All of their heavy gear was up at Kima.

By the time the corrupt Old City authorities knew what had happened, the tanks were rolling into town from the south, and from the west across the dam. As they approached the front line, there were no pleasantries. No attempts to negotiate. One demand was made: unconditional surrender.

More than two thousand arrests would be made in the wake of the Yu'min Mine War. All would be YMC officials, YMC thugs, Old City police, and yet another batch of corrupt Old City officials. In mid 4221, all YMC assets would be nationalized, and the mines turned over the Strategic Resources Administration.

In 4223, all 'mine-side' participants in the Yu'min Mine War would be given official recognition and various veterans benefits on the order of Empress Mylah Kia Feyla. That's a bit of a custom here in the Empire, in case you didn't know.

Well... I think I've bored you enough for today, right? Maybe next time I can tell you about the decline of Macharri and the rise of the Resort District. That would be fun, right?