

Osten Dal'Nay

By Morrie Mullins

"Born years ago in the Hedrett Medical Center on Cularin, Osten Dal'Nay forever yearned for the life of a soldier. Growing up with romantic tales of adventure and intrigue and visualizing no life quite as fulfilling as a life of service to his fellow beings, he enrolled at the age of eighteen in the Thaereian Navy. Thaere, at that time Cularin's Senatorially-mandated protector, had a sufficient standing military to keep whatever threats might arise clear of the system, and in the absence of any native military force within Cularin, Dal'Nay saw this as the best way to serve his home.



"As the years went on, however, Dal'Nay began to sense corruption within the Thaereian ranks. Early attempts to report such corruption brought threat of censure, leaving the young soldier uncertain as to how he could best protect his home while simultaneously upholding the vows he had made to Thaere. After being assigned to a secret base beneath Tilnes -- a base which, by his estimation, had no reason to be secret as it lay within the bounds of Cularin -- and learning that the Thaereian forces had some sort of alliance with the Metatheran Cartel (whom Dal'Nay had long distrusted), he became convinced that drastic action might need to be taken. When he learned that a group of Cularin's citizens had wandered into the wrong area of the mines of Tilnes and that an order had come down from on high for their extermination, he felt compelled to act. Abandoning his post, Dal'Nay warned the Culariners of the impending ambush and helped them escape the mines.

"Now a deserter from the Thaereian Navy, Dal'Nay went into seclusion in Cularin, slowly pulling together others, like himself, who loved and wanted to protect their home. With Broof Yurdel, a veteran of the Battle of Naboo and leader of the resistance that uncovered Metatheran Cartel misconduct on Cularin, Dal'Nay built the Cularin Militia. The heroes of Cularin responded, many enlisting and putting their own lives on the line to demonstrate that Cularin no longer needed 'protection' from Thaere. Not, at least, when that protection seemed likely to come at a high cost.

"Eventually, after significant planning, Dal'Nay, Yurdel, and the Cularin Militia struck. The ensuing conflict was only recently resolved, and for the first time in a number of years, the man who formed the foundation of Cularin's Militia finds himself with no immediate battles to fight. There exists the possibility that the Militia may be called to assist in the Clone Wars if Supreme Chancellor Palpatine should request such, but thus far the Chancellor has shown little interest in involving local militias in battles outside their own systems. So, while he plays what he refers to as a waiting game, while he continues to oversee training and deployment within the system, Dal'Nay has consented to an interview with Cularin Central Broadcasting's Yara Grugara, to answer questions about a number of recent issues that have arisen with respect to both himself, and the Militia as a whole."

Yara: Well, that was quite the introduction! I've always thought Jesi had some voice-over talent, but it seems he's also a fan of your work.

Osten (nodding): It sounds much more impressive after the fact than it felt while it was all ongoing. I'm just a citizen who did what he needed to do to protect his home. And I'm pretty sure I never used the term "waiting game."

Yara: Why is it everyone I have on this program insists on being modest? Seriously -- when you're a hero, why not be proud of it? You helped protect Cularin, after all.

Osten: The word "hero" gets thrown around a lot. I don't know anybody who acts like a hero who calls themselves one. It's like walking around and saying, "Look at me, I'm beautiful." You may be beautiful, but if you say it, people are going to dismiss you as vain.

Yara (preening): You think I'm beautiful?

Osten (pauses): That's not what I meant. It was an example. What I was trying to say was, I don't think of myself as a hero. The heroes are the soldiers who went out and fought for Cularin, who gave their lives in the conflict with Thaere. The heroes are ones who worked to carry out the orders I helped give. Once Commander Yurdel and I got the Militia rolling, we didn't have much chance to do anything heroic. We didn't get within ten thousand kilometers of most of the battles -- he may have been a little closer, leading the ground forces and all -- because we needed to be in a command post, making decisions. Making decisions is important, but heroic? I don't see it. If my life wasn't in danger, I can't call myself a hero with a straight face.

Yara: Everyone's got an opinion on that subject. I'm sure there are other things on our viewers' minds, though. Even with things calming down, you and the Militia have managed to remain in the public eye.

Osten: We're a standing military. It would be a bigger problem if nobody knew we were here.

Yara: Not exactly what Yara meant. Recently, there have been a number of stories posted to the holonet relating to the past, present, and future of the Militia. I was hoping you'd be willing to address some of these.

Osten: It's part of the reason I agreed to the interview.

Yara: Very good. I suppose the first thing I'd like to ask you about is, "[The Best Defense](#)." Have you read it?

Osten (slight smile, shaking his head): Any number of times. It's part of the editing process -- reading and re-reading.

Yara: So you wrote it, then?

Osten: Of course I did. I don't know how anyone got hold of it and why it would have been posted, but yes, I wrote it.

Yara: Are you familiar, then, with the various theories about the story? The two that I'm sure our viewers are most anxious to hear claim it's a story about what you wanted to do to a commanding officer who made you angry, or that it's some kind of confession. Comments?

Osten: You've gotten much more direct since the first time I saw you conduct an interview.

Yara: Thank you. Comments on the theories rather than my interviewing style?

Osten (smiles): Neither is correct. I only met Commander Kulkis once, and while we may not have gotten along, I was never the type to attack a superior officer.

Yara: There are those who speculate that a soldier willing to desert is not much different from a soldier who will kill an officer.

Osten (smile fades): Then they would be wrong. I did what I did on Tilnes to save lives, and because I was convinced of the wrongness of the orders I'd been given. There's a very big difference between acting to save lives, and taking a life.

Yara: I don't know much about this Kulkis . . .

She presses a series of buttons on the arm of her chair and reads something from the screen of a small datapad in her lap.

Yara: . . . but there are those who claim he was abusive. Several reports were obtained -- through sources that wish to remain anonymous -- that he often attacked enlisted men. Some of the scenarios described in the reports are eerily similar to the type of interaction you describe with him in "The Best Defense."

Osten: The best fiction is veined with truth. It's hard to create a character like Kulkis from nothing. He was a rotten individual, foul to his core. He did beat his soldiers, and anyone else who got in his way. I think every enlisted person I ever met who served under him had a different way in which they wanted him to die. One of them finally got their wish.

Yara: In exactly the way you describe. You don't find that odd?

Osten: A little ironic, I guess. But there's no evidence that he died exactly as I described in the story. He was tossed out an airlock, but there really wasn't enough left of him after the encounter with the ship to do a good autopsy, from what I've heard. Besides, I'm sure there were other stories written about individuals like Kulkis by Thareian regulars. He wasn't the exception in their command structure. Thare's military was everything I ever thought a military shouldn't be. Cruel, vindictive, and focused less on keeping allies alive than on making enemies dead. There's a reason our senior intelligence officer defected from the Thareian Navy just like I did.

Yara: Deserted, you mean. Defectors ask for asylum from the legitimate government of another system or planet. You left and went into hiding.

Osten (holds up his hands): You're right. I deserted. I set a poor example for the soldiers I would later ask to follow me in that regard. But I think I set a better example by standing up for what I knew to be right and standing up against what I knew to be wrong. By the time our intelligence officer came over, though, I was officially able to offer him asylum. So, if we're being technical, he did defect, and I did desert.

Yara: Did you kill Kulkis?

Osten: A young soldier wrote a story based on things he had heard about an unpleasant individual. That story was meant to convey certain military truths -- that some orders are not to be followed, that some officers are not worth following, and that you cannot take anything in any relationship for granted. The story should be read as metaphor, not literal truth, and discussing it as literal truth makes about as much sense as discussing mynock meat as good soup stock.

Yara: So the story does not reflect an encounter between yourself and Commander Kulkis?

Osten: Anyone who believes that is delusional. I have killed more than my share of people, but it's always been in combat. I have never killed someone with their own weapon and dumped them out an airlock.

Yara: Good enough for me. Now, how about the documentation that was released to our offices recently regarding this Cloud Force unit?

Osten: There is no such beast.

Yara: And if there were, would you be able to tell me about it?

Osten: Of course not. If such a unit existed, it would be classified, and I certainly couldn't confirm or deny any rumors about it.

Yara: So your position would be that the documentation we received, the memo addressed to you from -- Sergeant Drover?

Osten: There is no such individual in the Cularin Militia.

Yara: Your position would therefore be that the memo was fraudulent.

Osten: It would.

At this point, the transmission was disrupted by sunspot activity. The full transcript can be downloaded from the holonet at . . .

Osten Dal'Nay, Naval Commander, Cularin Militia

Human Male Soldier 6/Elite Trooper 3/Officer 4; Init +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Defense 24 (+9 class, +4 Dex, +1 dodge [feat]); Spd 10 m; VP/WP 99/14; Atk +17/+12/+7 melee (2d6+4/18–20, mastercraft dual-speed vibroblade) or +16/+11/+6 ranged (3d8+1/19–20 or DC 18 stun, mastercraft heavy blaster pistol); SQ Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to defense), Leadership, Requisition Supplies; SV Fort +12, Ref +10, Will +9; FP 2; DSP 0; Rep +5; Str 13, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Equipment: +3 Mastercraft dual-speed vibroblade*, +1 Mastercraft heavy blaster pistol, uniform.

Skills: Astrogate +7, Bluff +9, Diplomacy +15, Intimidate +17, Knowledge (tactics) +8, Listen +10, Sense Motive +10, Spot +10; Speak and Read Basic and Tarasinese.

Feats: Armor Proficiency (light, medium, heavy), Dodge, Heroic Surge (4/day), Improved Critical (heavy blaster pistol), Improved Critical (vibroblade), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Persuasive, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Quick Draw, Weapon Finesse (vibroblade), Weapon Focus (vibroblade), Weapon Group Proficiency (simple, blaster pistols, blaster rifles, heavy weapons, vibroweapons).

*A dual-speed vibroblade has its threat range for critical hits increased by 1; its market value is triple that of a standard vibroblade, but it is illegal in most systems.