

# STAR WARS

## Dark Age III: Incubus:



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*The war has dragged on for nearly five years now.*

*Amelia, now Empress of the Galactic Empire, has waged a bloody war against anyone who oppose her.*

*The Galactic Empire, aided by the Sith Order, have forcefully taken control over much of the galaxy.*

*They control through fear, and military might.*

*Pockets of resistance exist.*

*The Resistance, a loose coalition consisting of the Galactic Alliance Remnant, and Fel's exiled-Empire have fought against the Sith-Imperial war-machine.*

*In response to the newly created threat, Empress Amelia has unleashed a new menace into the galaxy, her Fist, Darth Tyranid.*

*Lord Tyranid hunts down, and eliminates high-ranking leaders from within the Resistance, bleeding them of leadership.*

*For all intents and purposes, the Resistance is waging a losing war.*

*The Jedi Order have remained frustratingly passive during the Insurgency.*

*Two Jedi, however, have made it their will to punish the Sith, and win back the galaxy.*

## *Dramatis Personae*

*Alys Nalah Djo*: Queen Mother of the Hapes Consortium

*Amelia*: Empress of the Galactic Empire

*Angra, Darth*: Sith Lord

*Cosh Sonter*: Galactic Alliance Lieutenant; Razor Squadron Number Two

*Devar, Darth*: Sith Lord

*Drox Tamplin*: Galactic Alliance Lieutenant

*Garin Ashdown*: Galactic Alliance Ensign

*Lerona Teta Jade*: Princess of the Empress Teta system

*Mathias Malakon*: Jedi Knight; Razor Squadron Leader

*Renz*: Smuggler; Resistance fighter

*Serpain, Darth*: Sith Lord

*Sibar Fre'kay*: Galactic Alliance Captain

*Thrak Zann*: Spice Dealer; gangster

*Tyranid, Darth*: Amelia's Fist; Sith Lord

*Varik Kynnovan*: Galactic Alliance Commodore

*Vuul Corr*: Galactic Alliance Lieutenant

*Yuun Lii*: Jedi Master

# *Haven*

**Sanctuary Moon of Endor: 138.5 ABY:**

Three standard days have passed since The First Battle of Empress Teta; Jedi Knight Mathias Malakon was flying through the thick, smoke-filled atmosphere in his personal X-83 TwinTail starfighter. The X-83 TwinTail starfighter, a starfighter built by Incom Corporation, was one of the starfighters within the famous X-wing lineage; Jedi mostly own and operate X-83 TwinTail starfighters. Jedi Malakon looked out his cockpit window, and saw nothing but thick, black smoke rising from the massive forest fires below. The forest fires were set by the Imperial stormtroopers after they decided that if they couldn't use the forest moon as a base, than no one could. Towering columns of flames, over thirty metres high, rose into the sky; torrents of embers and ash spewed from the raging fires. Suddenly, his starfighter pitched and dropped violently; the sudden drop surprised Jedi Malakon. He recovered his starfighter immediately, and pulled back on the yoke. He blew out a sigh of relief.

*Thermal columns*, Jedi Malakon thought.

Thermal columns were massive stacks of super-heated air that rose quickly, sucking in cooler air from the bottom into the fire, fuelling them even faster. These massive convection cells would destabilize the air around them, making it incredibly hard to fly through. Jedi Malakon looked out through the cockpit viewport one more time; he saw the fire fronts starting to move towards each another.

"Ground control, we've got fire fronts merging towards the south." Jedi Malakon informed, "We need men there fighting them, or this wildfire will turn into a firestorm."

*"Confirmed transmission."* Ground control reported, *"Unavailable men for job."*

"Unavailable men!" Jedi Malakon countered, "This firestorm will consume the moon if you don't prevent it from merging!"

*"Understand, but we don't have the men to fight it towards the south."* Ground control informed.

*Frack*, Jedi Malakon thought, "Understood."

Jedi Malakon shook his head in disbelief. In the distance, he saw several freighters, normally used for transporting goods and people, dropping payloads of water onto the fire; the water came from a nearby lake on the forest moon, Lake Sui. Tonnes of water crashed into the forest floor, dowsing the flames; the water sizzled, and flash boiled upon impact. Then, a thick, light grey column of steam billowed out and

rose up from the forest floor. There were several hundred men, all Galactic Alliance army troopers, fighting the fires from the ground. They used massive pumps to bring the water from the lake, and fight the fire further in the forest. The firefighting efforts were only buying time, and weren't really going to save the moon, or the numerous Ewok villages scattered throughout the forest. Lake Sui, in particular, had a fishing village on its shore, occupied by over a hundred Ewoks.

Jedi Malakon thought back to a couple of days ago, when he just arrived on the forest moon. The Galactic Alliance, suffering a terrible defeat at Empress Teta, needed a base of operations in the middle of nowhere to regroup. The forest moon of Endor had historical significance, and was deep in the Outer Rim. Coincidentally, the Imperials wanted to establish a base on the forest moon as well, most likely as a staging ground to seize control of the tibanna gas on Bespin. The two forces met, and instead of a long drawn-out fight in the forest, the Imperials decided to set the forest aflame. The vicious tactics and complete disregard for life disgusted Jedi Malakon.

"Ground control, reroute the freighters to drop their payloads on the southside fires." Jedi Malakon ordered.

*"Negative, too much smoke." Ground control reported, "The smoke rising from the fires would shut down their engines."*

"Oh c'mon, give me a break." Jedi Malakon whispered to himself.

Already two-thirds of the forest on the entire moon had been burned down, and the rest were in danger of a similar fate. Over twenty million Ewoks have already been killed by the raging infernos, the rest were being sheltered in the non-burnt regions.

*We should never have come here,* Jedi Malakon thought.

Suddenly, when he wasn't paying much attention, his X-83 TwinTail starfighter flew through a dense column of black smoke. The engines started to choke, and struggled to fly. Suddenly, his starfighter pitched downward, towards the flaming forest. The inferno below had crowned, meaning the treetops were aflame, and spreading the fire further and faster. Jedi Malakon, completely shocked by the sudden drop, reacted immediately. Jedi Malakon pulled back on the yoke with all his strength, fighting gravity. His knuckles were white from the strain, and sweat started to pour down his face.

"C'mon you bastard!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

After a few terrifying moments, his starfighter's engines kicked back on, and started to level out. Jedi Malakon finally managed to pull his starfighter out of the dive, and back towards the sky. The towering columns of fire grazed the bottom of the starfighter, singeing it. Jedi Malakon let out another sigh of relief, and wiped the sweat from his brow. His short blond hair was soaked in sweat, and bags started to form under his bright blue eyes. He hadn't slept the entire time he spent on the forest moon, and was utterly exhausted; nevertheless, he continued to fight on. Jedi Malakon looked back towards the south again, and saw the two fires merge together. The two roaring infernos, fuelling each other, started to grow and spread even faster than before. Massive thermal columns could be seen in the convecting smoke above. Jedi Malakon looked towards the nearby trees in the forest; the trees were swaying towards the fire, almost like being sucked into the inferno.

*The winds must be incredible down there,* Jedi Malakon thought.

The thirty metre tall columns of fire started to influence the weather around them. The incredible wind shear generated by the tremendous winds caused the flames to twirl, and spin, similar to a tornado; a fire whirl. Immense volumes of black, dense smoke rose into the upper atmosphere, accompanied by small embers, capable of setting their own flames. The sky was eerie and disturbingly dark; black smoke filled the sky like clouds, while the glowing orange-red embers looked like snow.

"Ground control, the southside fires have merged!" Jedi Malakon reported, "We've got ourselves a firestorm!"

*"Confirmed."* Ground control informed, *"We're grounding all flights, report back to base immediately."*

"What?" Jedi Malakon shouted.

*"The smoke is making flights too risky."* Ground control informed, *"Report back to base immediately."*

Jedi Malakon shook his head in disbelief, "Roger."

Jedi Malakon turned his starfighter around, and headed north, towards the Galactic Alliance base located on the north shore of Lake Sui, adjacent to the Ewok village. The infernos hadn't reached the base yet, but were merely a couple tens of kilometres away. At the rate the fires were spreading, the base would be consumed within the hour. From the north, Jedi Malakon could see the freighters returning to base as well. He touched down on at the base, next to several other freighters. He

immediately jumped out of the cockpit of the starfighter, and landed on the ground. The wind around him was incredibly strong, and were all flowing towards the fire. The massive fires must consume large volumes of air in order to thrive, thus causing wind currents. The wind also carried torrents of red-hot embers that rose and fell to the ground like a blizzard of snow. Some of the embers fell onto the wicker huts made by the Ewoks, setting them ablaze. The roar of the flames was nearly deafening, almost like having engine thrusters next to your ear. Jedi Malakon looked back at his starfighter; it was covered in black soot from the smoke and flames.

"Huh, no wonder it stalled." Jedi Malakon said to himself.

He covered his face from the red-hot embers. He looked back, and saw several Galactic Alliance army troopers load up the freighters with the remaining supplies and gear. He ran over to one of the smuggler-turned-resistance fighter named Renz. Renz was a former gemstone smuggler that turned political idealist, smuggling medical, and food supplies for the anti-Sith coalition of resistance fighters all around the galaxy. Renz was a tall man, with short brown hair, and green eyes; hard to miss, since he looked like he owned the place, or at least acted like it. Jedi Malakon tapped Renz on the shoulder.

"What are you going?" Jedi Malakon shouted over the roar of the infernos.

"We're packing up! What does it look like?" Renz informed.

Jedi Malakon shook his head, "No! We've still got a job to do!"

"Not anymore!" Renz countered, "We've got orders to leave!"

Jedi Malakon was confused, "From who?"

Renz pointed towards the freighters, and saw Jedi Master Yuun Lii standing by, giving orders. Jedi Malakon immediately ran over to his Master.

"Master! What do you think you're doing?" Jedi Malakon shouted.

Master Yuun Lii was a formidable Jedi Master, highly skilled in the Jedi arts; his forte was in philosophy, always enjoying a heated debate on scholarly ideas. He was highly trained in control and mastery of the Force, although seldom used it. Master Yuun Lii had long, black hair that ran down to his shoulder, deep brown eyes, and dark olive skin. He wore dark brown Jedi robes, unlike Jedi Malakon's flight suit.

"We've got to go while there's still time, Mathias!" Master Lii informed.

He shook his head, "We can't just leave!"

"We have to!" Master Lii countered.

Jedi Malakon looked around, towards the Ewok village, "What about them?"

Master Lii shook his head, and reluctantly answered, "No room."

A jolt of anger ran through Jedi Malakon, "Then we have to give them as much time as possible!"

Master Lii looked confused, "What?"

Without saying another word, Jedi Malakon started running towards the north, following the hose running from out Lake Sui. Master Lii tried to shout something, but Jedi Malakon couldn't hear it over the roar of the flames. He used the Force to augment his movements, giving him an increase in stamina, endurance and speed. A blizzard of burning hot embers rained down on top of him; he could feel the heat rising as he approached the roaring inferno. In the distance, he saw several dozen Galactic Alliance army troopers, acting as firefighters, ahead; the Galactic Alliance army troopers wore bright yellow fire-retardant gear with a self-contained breathing apparatus. Although they had several hoses, dowsing the flames, the fire raged on. As Jedi Malakon approached the fire, the sound of the crackling and popping of branches burning and breaking, coupled with the roar from the inferno, was deafening.

Jedi Malakon ran over to one of the firefighters, "We need to press on!"

Huge gusts of wind started to flow towards the flames; the winds were so strong, it nearly toppled over Jedi Malakon, and knocked over one of the firefighters. The trees swayed towards the flames as the winds were sucking them towards the inferno. Twigs and branches from the trees broke off, and flew towards the inferno. Jedi Malakon looked towards the sky; it was dark as night because of the huge columns of black smoke rising from the fires. Although it was mid-afternoon, it looked as if it were in the middle of the night.

The firefighter looked at Jedi Malakon, "The infernos have merged! We don't stand a chance!"

The northside fires had recently merged into a single firefront as well. The massive single firestorm consumes the forests at a much faster pace, spreading and growing exponentially, until there is no more fuel left to sustain it.

"We've got to try!" Jedi Malakon shouted.

"It's self-sustaining! There's no stopping it!" The firefighter countered.

A self-sustaining fire means that the fire itself now can thrive and grow without outside influence. Jedi Malakon looked towards the sky once more, and saw the massive smoke column rise from the inferno. Suddenly, a lightning bolt streaked across the sky, originating from within the massive smoke column. The lightning bolt was followed by another, then another.

Jedi Malakon shook his head, "Pyrocumulus clouds."

The firefighter nodded his head, "Fire clouds... we've got to leave, now!"

The firefighters hosed down the flames in front of them, with little to no affect. The intense heat from the gigantic fire flash boiled the water before it could douse it. Coupled with that, the winds were spreading the fire much faster than originally predicted, and the embers, and now lightning bolts, threatened to start new fires elsewhere. There was no possible way to contain the blaze; any effort made would be completely futile. Suddenly, the winds changed direction, and the firefront suddenly jumped a couple of metres ahead. The blaze engulfed some of the firefighters; their fire-retardant suits protected them slightly, but the intense heat singed their flesh. Immediately, the firefighters ran over to them, and tried to put out the fires with their bodies or with the hoses. Another torrent of embers flew towards Jedi Malakon. He shielded his face from the burning-hot embers, but suddenly, he too was engulfed in flames; his flight-suit had caught fire. He screamed in terror, then pain. Jedi Malakon dropped to the ground, and started rolling, trying to snuff out the fire. Several firefighters immediately rushed over, and started to pat down the fire with their hands and bodies. Then, a shower of water rained down on Jedi Malakon from one of the hoses.

The firefighter nearest Jedi Malakon looked towards his men, "We're leaving!"

Immediately, the firefighter picked Jedi Malakon up, and threw him over his shoulders. They started running out of the forest, towards Lake Sui and the Galactic Alliance base. Jedi Malakon was in incredible amounts of pain; his entire back was burnt from the fire. He was going in-and-out of consciousness, and could only hear the roar and crackling from the inferno behind him. Jedi Malakon felt like he was going to pass out; his vision became dark and blurry. Finally, they made it out of the forest with the blaze right behind them. Master Lii ran up to the firefighter carrying Jedi Malakon.

"What happened?" Master Lii asked.

"The fire jumped on us!" The firefighter replied, "The winds are bring it this way! We've got to evac now!"

Master Lii nodded his head in agreement, "Get him on the next shuttle out of here!"

The firefighters ran over to the freighters, along with Master Lii. The Ewok village around them was ablaze. The floating embers from the fires caused the wicker huts to catch fire. The small lake-side village immediately went up in flames, and spread with incredible speed. Ewoks ran around the village, screaming in terror. Master Lii, unable to help them, continued running towards the freighters. One of the freighters, a Corellian-made YT-2400 light freighter with a big red-diamond symbol printed on its hull, opened its boarding ramp. Most of the freighters had already left, and this one was one of the last ones to leave. The firefighters climbed onboard, along with a semi-unconscious Jedi Malakon. Master Lii, standing at the bottom of the boarding ramp, looked back towards the fires. He could see the massive wave of fire heading towards him. He watched the dense black smoke column rise above the fires, then, occasionally, a lightning bolt streaked across the sky, followed by the rumble of thunder. The air was filled with embers, occasionally lighting smaller fires amongst bushes or shrubs. Master Lii then turned his attention back onto the Ewok village; it was completely set ablaze, and several Ewoks were already dead. The wicker village burned and sank into the lake. Reluctantly, he climbed onboard. Master Lii walked towards the cabin, where Renz sat alone in the pilot's chair.

"We're ready." Master Lii informed.

"Alright, we're outta here!" Renz said.

The YT-2400 light freighter had been customized by Renz over the years; with improved engines, and hyperdrive, they would be able to make it through the thick, dense black clouds that cover the upper atmosphere of the forest moon. The YT-2400 light freighter was part of the line of Corellian-made freighters that include the famous YT-1300 light freighter model, the *Millennium Falcon*. The YT-2400 light freighter, dubbed the *Red Diamond*, took off, and climbed through the sky with incredible speed. The windshield was completely covered with thick, dense black smoke; visibility was essentially zero. Within a few moments, the *Red Diamond* rose from the layer of smoke, and into clear upper atmosphere air. Master Lii and Renz looked back towards the forest moon.

"Not much of a forest now, is there?" Renz replied.

Master Lii took a few moments to reply, "No."

The forest that covered nearly the entire moon was completely burned out of existence; in the wake of the gigantic firestorms, all that was left of the forest moon were ashes. The massive firestorm that raged on the moon was visible even from orbit. A thick layer of black smoke covered most of the moon. In front of them, the enormous, reddish-pink gas-giant that was Endor filled the viewport. Swirls of banded clouds, and raging storms covered the entire atmosphere.

"Where to now?" Master Lii asked.

"Well, I can drop you guys off anywhere. But in a few days, I've got to get these supplies to Naboo." Renz informed.

"Okay, I'll let you know where we'd be heading." Master Lii informed.

Renz nodded his head, and turned his attention back on piloting the light freighter. Master Lii walked out of the cabin, and into the medical bay. The medical bay was lit with white lights from above, and stainless durasteel floors and walls. Jedi Malakon laid on top of a durasteel medical table on his stomach; they had cut the flight-suit off his burnt body. The burns on his back and sides looked terrible; the black and red flesh looked foul, and grotesque. For a moment, Master Lii cringed, then became sad. A firefighter, also a trained medic, was working on Jedi Malakon's injuries; he was placing white bacta patches over top the burns.

"How is he?" Master Lii asked.

"He'll live." One of the firefighters informed, "His burns are pretty bad, but nothing a little bacta can't fix."

Master Lii looked around the medical bay, "There are no bacta tubes here."

"No, there isn't." The firefighter replied, "We've put bacta patches on his back. That's the best we could do for him right now."

"That's it?" Master Lii asked in a surprised tone.

The firefighter nodded, "He'll be fine, but he'll have a nasty scar for the rest of his life."

"A reminder, I guess." Master Lii replied.



"We've loaded his body with painkillers to ease the pain, and antibiotics to prevent infection." The firefighter informed; then with a sigh, "All we can do now is hope for the best."

Master Lii nodded, and the firefighter walked away. Master Lii pulled a chair beside Jedi Malakon, and sat down.

"Mathias. Can you hear me?" Master Lii asked.

He opened his eyes, and nodded slowly. The firefighter replied, "He'll feel a little groggy from the drugs."

Master Lii nodded, "Mathias?"

"Master..." Mathias said.

"Hey kid, how do you feel?" Master Lii asked.

"I've had better days, Master." Mathias answered in a slow and low voice.

Master Lii nodded, "Running into that fire like you did..." He paused and shook his head, "You've got to be smarter than that, Mathias."

"I had to do what was right." Mathias replied.

"There's what's right, and there's what's possible." Master Lii explained, "We've got to fight this war smart, Mathias. We're the only two Jedi fighting this war." Master Lii paused to lean towards Jedi Malakon, "There might be more out there, but as long as the Jedi High Council stands against entering this war, we are alone. We need to set the example that a few Jedi can have a large impact. We need to show the rest of the Jedi that the Sith can be brought down. Understand?"

Mathias nodded his head, "I'm sorry, Master."

Master Lii nodded his head too, "I know."

"We shouldn't have been there, Master." Mathias replied, then blinked away a few tears.

"What?" Master Lii asked.

"The Galactic Alliance should never have put their base on that moon." Mathias explained, "They should never have endangered the inhabitants like that."

"Mathias, as long as the Sith and Imperials continue to hunt us, everywhere we go, risk will follow." Master Lii explained.

A tear ran down Mathias' cheek, "All those beings... burned... because of us..."

Master Lii placed a hand on his unburned shoulder, "I know, Mathias. That is why we need to stop the Sith now, before they can devastate more worlds like they did on the forest moon."

Mathias wiped the tears from his eyes, "I know, Master."

"Soon, the Jedi will see that open war against the Sith is the only way." Master Lii replied, "Soon, we will have more allies."

Mathias nodded his head in agreement, "Yes, Master."

Master Lii looked at Mathias for a moment, "Rest. Regain your strength. You're going to need it."



# *Loss*

**City of Iziz, Onderon: 143 ABY:**

It was mid-day, and the sky was covered in thick, light grey clouds; the wind had picked up, making the air chilly. Hovering overhead, just above the cloud deck, was a *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer, dubbed the *Dreadwing*. The light grey clouds partially concealed the massive warship. The *Dreadwing* remained quiet, simply hovering over the walled city of Iziz, capital of Onderon. All around the city of Iziz are thick, dangerous, wild jungles, populated by vicious creatures; the walls were erected many millennia ago in order to keep such animals from getting in.

Jedi Malakon crouched behind one of the stone buildings that populated the old-part of Iziz, near the Iziz Royal Palace. The buildings, simple in architectural design, were made of white marble, or pinkish-grey granitic rocks; the streets were made of large bricks made from similar material. Atop of some taller buildings were anti-aircraft gun emplacements, historically preserved from the time of The Onderonian Beast Wars. Another gust of wind blew down the street, towards Jedi Malakon; his Jedi robe filled with the cold air. His arms got goosebumps, and his teeth chattered a little. Jedi Malakon looked behind him; there were over thirty resistance fighters, all Onderonian, all young human males ranging in age from about eighteen to about thirty-five, standing next to him. They were wearing whatever armour and weapons they could scavenge or find; a makeshift army was all that was left after the initial Imperial assault.

One of the Resistance fighters tapped Jedi Malakon on the shoulder, and pointed upward, "Why isn't it firing?"

Jedi Malakon looked up at the *Dreadwing*; the immense Star Destroyer dominated the sky, "The Imperials want the city intact to use it as a staging ground against the Hapes Consortium. That means no orbital bombardment." He looked back down towards the Resistance fighters, "That's good for us."

Jedi Malakon took a peek around the corner; there was no one on the streets. He looked back towards the Resistance fighters, "Okay, it's clear."

Immediately, the Resistance fighters poured out from behind the stone wall, and crossed the street. They immediately took cover behind yet another stone wall, while providing cover for anyone still crossing. Jedi Malakon looked up into the grey sky, and saw three *Predator*-class starfighters streak across the sky. Their engines screeched as they flew overhead. Jedi Malakon was the last to cross. He finally reached the other side, and took his position at the edge of the stone wall. The streets were eerily quiet; there seemed to be no beings left in Iziz.

It was only a standard week ago that the Imperials arrived in orbit around Onderon. The Resistance was short; within the day, the walls of Iziz were breached, and stormtroopers and walkers poured into the city. While in the city of Iziz, however, the Resistance managed to fight back more effectively, preventing the Imperials from taking over any more ground. Jedi Malakon, and his Jedi Master, Yuun Lii, arrived after three days of fighting. The rest of the Onderonian citizens were evacuated off-world, leaving the city of Iziz empty. The attack on Onderon had been a complete surprise to everyone; it appeared that the Imperials were now looking to invade the Hapes Consortium, an independent government in control of over sixty worlds that had remained neutral through much of this conflict.

The Resistance fighters, led by Jedi Malakon, proceeded through the alley between the two stone buildings. Jedi Malakon could hear something coming from the approaching street. The familiar sounds of footfalls, armour rustling, and the mechanical clanking sound of walkers, were quickly approaching. Jedi Malakon reached the adjacent street, and took a peek around the corner of the stone wall. He saw a platoon of stormtroopers walking down the street, towards him, with two All Terrain Riot Control Transports, AT-RCTs, following behind.

The stormtroopers, now equipped with more advanced weaponry and armour, were more vicious and deadly than ever. Recently, the classic white plastoid armour that typified stormtroopers were replaced by a new plastoid-ceramic composite armour, that was both harder and more durable; the stormtroopers looked about the same as before, although slightly more bulky, and their armour was light-grey. Their weapons had been replaced too; the old BlasTech E-11 blaster rifles, and the ARC-9965 blaster rifle have been replaced by a new generation of assault blaster rifle. The BR55HB-SR assault blaster rifle is a heavy barrel, scoped rifle, that fires highly energized, highly accurate energy bolts at a significantly faster firing rate. The main advantage to the assault blaster rifle is that the energy consumption is minimized, relative to the ARC-9965, thus allowing for a larger magazine. With their new armour and weapons, they're three times more deadly. The AT-RCTs, two-legged open cockpit walkers, were altered as well; they now sported a variety of blaster and laser cannons, mortars, and grenade and rocket launchers, plus personal energy shields. Other weapons systems were rumoured, but were never confirmed.

Jedi Malakon moved away from the stone wall, and looked back at the Resistance fighters, "We've got major company."

"How many?" One of the Resistance fighters asked.



"A platoon, plus two walkers." Jedi Malakon informed.

The Resistance fighters whispered amongst themselves. Then, one said, "Take it to them."

Jedi Malakon smiled, and nodded his head, "Okay. Throw your grenades first; that'll confuse them. Then provide covering fire so some of us can cross the street. After that, fire everything. Got it?" They nodded their heads in unison, "Let's go."

Three resistance fighters, armed with fragmentation grenades and plasma grenades, came out from behind the stone wall and threw their grenades down the street. The stormtroopers were about fifty metres away, so the grenades would barely reach them. The grenades exploded with a violent fireball; shrapnel scattered everywhere, and cut down the stormtroopers nearby. The high-velocity, razor-sharp durasteel shrapnel shredded and shattered their armour, killing the beings inside. The Resistance fighters followed up their attack by firing their blaster and repeater rifles at the platoon of stormtroopers; the street filled with energy bolts, fired both ways. Some stormtroopers were shot in the chest, but were able to get right back up and continue fighting.

*The armour*, Jedi Malakon recalled.

Jedi Malakon activated his blue-bladed lightsaber; the *snap-hiss* echoed in the alley. He ran out into the street, deflecting blaster bolts that were shot his way. He was followed by a dozen resistance fighters, firing wildly into the crowd of stormtroopers. Jedi Malakon batted away as many blaster bolts as he could before he was forced to retreat behind a stone wall on the other side of the street. Jedi Malakon peeked around the corner of the stone wall; he saw the stormtroopers were advancing, while the walkers didn't seem to fire.

*I wonder why*, Jedi Malakon thought.

"Fire everything you've got!" Jedi Malakon shouted over the roar of battle.

Immediately, the Resistance fighters came out from behind the safety of the stone wall, and began firing their blaster rifles. Some fell from the barrage of blaster bolts fired towards them, but they fought on regardless. Jedi Malakon came out from behind the stone wall as well, and charged towards the stormtroopers. Immediately, he was fired upon by a torrent of energy bolts. He batted away two or three energy bolts, then was forced to retreat behind the safety of one of the buildings further up. Jedi Malakon

looked at the stormtroopers again; they seemed to be backing off, hiding behind stone buildings as well. The walkers didn't seem to be doing anything.

"What the frack are you up to?" Jedi Malakon whispered to himself.

Once the stormtroopers were all behind the two AT-RCTs, they started walking towards the Onderonian resistance fighters; the two AT-RCTs walked passed Jedi Malakon. The walkers cracked the stone streets they walked forward, and the mechanical clanking of the gears echoed within the empty building Jedi Malakon was standing in. Suddenly, the two AT-RCTs fired their heavy blaster cannons at the Resistance fighters. The massive energy bolts tore through the stone walls, killing several. Nevertheless, the Resistance fighters fired upon the two AT-RCTs; the blaster bolts bounced off the energy shields, while the two walkers continued forward. One of the AT-RCTs stopped, and fired two proton rockets at the building behind the Resistance fighters. The two proton rockets glowed red as it streaked through the air, followed by a white trail of smoke; the two rockets struck a building, sending chunks of rocks and debris everywhere. Huge boulder-sized chunks of rock collapsed onto the street. The other AT-RCT fired two proton rockets as well; the rockets struck the same building, blowing out the entire first floor. The critically stricken building collapsed under its own weight; the Resistance fighters tried to flee, but most were crushed under several tonnes of rock and durasteel. The entire street was filled with the debris of the toppled building; dust and particle matter lingered in the air. Jedi Malakon was stunned by the sight.

*So much for intact,* Jedi Malakon thought.

Jedi Malakon ran out of the building, using the Force to augment his movements. The stormtroopers behind him immediately started firing their assault blaster rifles at him. The energy bolts were much faster than typical blaster rifles, making it harder to deflect and bat away. Instead, Jedi Malakon decided to duck and dodge most of the energy bolts, and charge the two walkers instead. He was about twenty metres away, then he pushed another button on his lightsaber; the bottom of his lightsaber extended downward, making a long shaft. Jedi Malakon typically used a lightsaber lance, but sometimes found the extremely long hilt cumbersome; in order to rectify this, he build another hilt, with a retractable shaft, allowing him to shift from normal hilt into a lightsaber lance easily. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon grabbed the opposite end of the lightsaber lance, and leapt into the air, using the Force to increase the distance and height. The two stormtroopers piloting the rear AT-RCT saw Jedi Malakon coming towards them. They tried to turn the platform of the walker around but Jedi Malakon

reached their first. Jedi Malakon slammed his lightsaber lance into the control system of the AT-RCT, causing it to spark and sizzle. One of the stormtroopers onboard the two-legged walker fired his assault blaster rifle at him; Jedi Malakon dodged the energy bolt, allowing it to pass harmlessly by, hitting the other stormtrooper in the chest. The stricken stormtrooper tumbled back onto the platform floor. The other stormtrooper tried to fire again, but Jedi Malakon dodged that bolt as well. With incredible precision, augmented with the Force, Jedi Malakon jabbed the butt-end of the hilt into the stormtroopers chest. The force of the impact cracked and shattered the plastoid-ceramic armour, causing the stormtrooper to fly backwards and off the platform. The stormtrooper fell over four metres, and crashed onto the hard, brick streets below. Jedi Malakon looked behind him, and saw the other stormtrooper trying to get up. The energy bolt that struck him only cracked the breast plate armour, dissipating the energy, protecting the being inside. Before the stormtrooper could react, Jedi Malakon plunged his blue-bladed lightsaber lance into the chest of the stormtrooper.

Jedi Malakon looked back up, towards the other walker, and saw it had turned all the way around while he was fighting. The other walker fired its heavy blaster cannons at him. The energy shield protecting the walker dissipated the energy, protecting Jedi Malakon. Jedi Malakon instinctually ducked at the incoming blaster cannon fire, even though he was atop of the open cockpit walker. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon sensed danger through the Force, and immediately stood back up. Jedi Malakon leapt from atop the open cockpit walker, back towards the brick street. Just then, the other walker fired two proton rockets towards him; the glowing red proton rockets streaked through the air, and struck the walker he was just on. The platform to erupt into flames, and shrapnel and debris flew through the air. The walker toppled over, falling over backwards; Jedi Malakon landed, and rolled onto the open street with his lightsaber lance still in hand. He immediately came under fire from a barrage of rapid-fire light blaster cannon fire; Jedi Malakon used the Force to augment his movements, allowing him to dodge the energy bolts. The energy bolts narrowly missed him; chunks of rock flew out from the impacts, striking Jedi Malakon. Some of the surviving resistance fighters fired upon the AT-RCT; the energy bolts ricocheted off the deflector shield. The distraction from the Resistance fighters allowed Jedi Malakon to reach the inside of an empty building safely. He was breathless, and sweating from the adrenaline.

*Holy frack,* Jedi Malakon thought in relief.

Jedi Malakon looked back, and saw the stormtroopers moving up the street, towards him. They were trying to move around the flaming wreckage of the second



walker. He then looked towards the Resistance fighters; only half a dozen, or so, remained. The AT-RCT started firing its heavy blaster cannons, and grenades at them. Chunks of debris flew everywhere; the streets were filled with screaming, and the roar of battle. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon leapt from his hiding spot, and charged at the walker. The platform was orientated away from him, firing upon the Resistance fighters. Jedi Malakon charged from behind, and leapt into the air. The Force allowed him to travel that much further, and that much higher. He extended his lightsaber lance as far as it would go, and slashed at the left leg of the walker. The blue blade didn't slice all the way though, but a noticeable linear gouge, outlined by glowing orange molten durasteel, was present. Jedi Malakon landed, rolled on the street, and stood up on his two feet. With incredible power, Jedi Malakon unleashed a Force Wave attack against the walker. The left leg of the walker broke apart from the powerful impact. Immediately, it started to topple over, towards Jedi Malakon. Quickly, he jumped off to the side, out of the way of the falling walker. The AT-RCT crashed into one of the stone buildings before hitting the stone street. The side of the stone building was destroyed, and the street cracked and shattered from the impact of a multi-tonne walker. A billow of dust rose into the air, and covered them in fine rock-dust.

Jedi Malakon looked back at the few remaining resistance fighters. They were exhausted from the battle, and covered in gashes, cuts and bruises. Only half a dozen remained, "Okay, we have to retreat. Fall back!"

Jedi Malakon led them down the street, further away from the stormtroopers, who just managed to get around the flaming wreckage of the fallen walker. The stormtroopers immediately fired their assault blaster rifles at the fleeing resistance fighters. The incredibly fast energy bolts streaked through the air, and struck the stone all around them. Jedi Malakon retracted his lightsaber lance, and began deflecting energy bolts while running away. They ran down the street for only a few moments, when suddenly, the ground shook beneath them. Jedi Malakon, and the half dozen resistance fighters, immediately moved to the left-hand side of the street.

One of the Resistance fighters moved up to Jedi Malakon, "What is that?"

Jedi Malakon looked across the street; behind the stone buildings was a massive, black All Terrain Armoured Heavy Transport, an AT-AHT. These hulking machinations were over twenty metres tall, and weighted over two tonnes. They were heavy armoured against conventional direct-energy weapons, such as turbolasers, and were armed with heavy laser blaster cannons, while some sported light turbolaser emplacements. The four-legged walker could move surprisingly fast, at over eighty

kilometres per hour. Suddenly, the head of the AT-AHT looked directly at Jedi Malakon, and fired its heavy blaster cannons. Jedi Malakon's eyes went wide with surprise. The massive green energy bolts struck the building behind them, causing the side of the wall to collapse. Huge boulders of rock and durasteel toppled over, causing dust and debris to rain down upon them.

"Run!" Jedi Malakon shouted.

The Resistance fighters immediately started running away from the massive hulking mechanical beast. Jedi Malakon looked up the street, and still saw the stormtroopers chasing them. They fired their assault blaster rifles at him; he dodged the energy bolts easily. Suddenly, the AT-AHT fired its light turbolasers at the buildings around him. Instinctually, he ducked, and closed his eyes. The massive green energy bolts demolished an adjacent building, causing the stone structure to topple onto the brick street, cutting the stormtroopers off.

He opened his eyes and looked around, "That was lucky." Jedi Malakon said to himself.

He immediately ran away from the AT-AHT, following behind the half dozen resistance fighters. The AT-AHT trampled over the buildings, crushing them under its massive feet. The buildings toppled over with a crash and a roar, shaking the ground. Finally, Jedi Malakon caught up to the Resistance fighters, who were hiding behind one of the stone buildings.

Jedi Malakon activated his comlink, "Master, the westside has fallen into Imperial hands. My strike team was completely ineffective. We are in full retreat, but being pursued. Over."

*"Copy that. The game has changed; the royal family is being evacuated from the palace, and are being moved off-world."* Master Yuun Lii informed, *"Get to the palace immediately, or you'll be left behind."*

"Roger. Out." Jedi Malakon replied.

The Resistance fighters looked at him with worried expressions, "Kira is evacuating too?"

Jedi Malakon nodded, "Seems so."

The Kira family was the royal bloodline of the Onderonian people; the family has existed since Freedon Nadd, a Sith Lord, took power over four thousand years ago.



The Resistance fighters shook their heads, one of them said "What now?"

"We leave too." Jedi Malakon answered.

Suddenly, another barrage of heavy blaster cannon fire struck all around them. The stone building they were hiding in started to collapse under itself. Large boulder-sized rocks and durasteel beams started to fall all around them. Immediately, Jedi Malakon used the Force to create a protective bubble around him, but the Resistance fighters weren't so lucky. They were immediately crushed by tonnes of stone and durasteel. Jedi Malakon pushed the large blocks of stone away from him, and climbed out of the rubble pile. He looked back, and saw the AT-AHT still pursuing him. The AT-AHT fired another barrage of heavy blaster cannon fire at him; Jedi Malakon dodged the massive energy bolts, and watch them gouge metre-wide craters into the brick street. Using the Force, Jedi Malakon ran through the tight, narrow streets, and towards the Iziz Royal Palace. The AT-AHT relentlessly fired at Jedi Malakon; buildings collapsed all around him. He was forced to detour around, or climb atop massive stone and durasteel rubble piles.

Suddenly, his comlink activated, "*Mathias, you've got trouble heading your way.*" Master Lii informed.

"Your tell me!" Jedi Malakon replied while running away from the AT-AHT.

"*Worse, shocktroopers incoming.*" Master Lii informed.

*Frack*, Jedi Malakon thought, "Where?"

"*Between you and the palace, from above.*" Master Lii informed.

Shocktroopers were introduced relatively late in the Anti-Sith Insurgency, also known as The Second Imperial Civil War to the Empire. They were a special operations division of the Stormtrooper Corps., but were highly trained, highly skilled, and were incredibly deadly; they were notorious across the galaxy for their ability to kill Force-practitioners, especially Jedi. Jedi Malakon paused for a second, and looked up towards the sky. The *Dreadwing* began launching orbital drop vehicles, vessels that resembled TIE/In Interceptors from The First Galactic Civil War over a century ago, but their cockpit could rotate and invert when it came close to the ground. The arrowhead-like wings pointed straight down, and the cockpit rotated backwards; the ion thrusters slowed the vessel down, the arrowhead-wings dug into the surface, the cockpit opened, and a shocktrooper climbed out. There were approximately a dozen orbital drop vehicles.

"Okay, I see them." Jedi Malakon informed, "I'm at the Merchant Quarter. I'll try to make it to the Sky Ramp."

"Roger." Master Lii replied.

Jedi Malakon could see the Iziz Royal Palace in the background; the massive building was made of white granite rock, and was protected by an internal wall. The only pathway into and out of the palace was through the Sky Ramp. Jedi Malakon saw a dogfight in progress around the spires that surrounded the Iziz Royal Palace; the *Predator*-class starfighters were engaged in fighting with various CF9 Crossfire starfighters, or X-83 TwinTail starfighters. Meanwhile, Jedi Malakon also saw *Neutralizer*-class bombers performing strafing run on the Sky Ramp and the palace itself, dropping proton bombs and destroying nearby buildings.

Jedi Malakon charged directly at the orbital drop vehicles. The AT-AHT, surprisingly, ceased its pursuit of the Jedi Knight, and turned back towards the main city. Jedi Malakon came out from the buildings, and charged at the dozen shocktroopers. Shocktroopers were deadly soldiers, known to have killed Jedi, and Imperial Knights. Jedi Malakon crossed the open area, where typically Onderonian merchants would buy, trade and sell merchandise. Suddenly, a purple beam streaked through the air, and nearly hit Jedi Malakon.

*Particle beams*, Jedi Malakon thought.

More and more purple beams streaked through the air; Jedi Malakon dodged them, using the Force to anticipate and enhance his speed and reflexes. The powerful particle beams struck the white marble tiled floor that made up the Merchant Quarter, gouging out small centimetre wide pits. Suddenly, from above, another orbital drop vehicle started to descend onto the Merchant Quarter. Jedi Malakon saw the cockpit invert, and the ion thrusters blasting, slowing the descent of the orbital drop vehicle. The arrowhead-like wings dug into the marble tiles, and the hatch opened. The thrusters kicked up a cloud of dust and debris. A shocktrooper, wearing a black beta-carbon-nitride ceramic armour suit, with an optical helmet, jumped out, and landed on the marble street. He stood up slowly, and had a flip-sword in his hands. The flip-sword activated, and snapped into place; Jedi Malakon rose his blue-bladed lightsaber into an attack position.

Luckily, the orbital drop vehicle obscured the shocktroopers on the roof from getting a clear shot at Jedi Malakon. Nevertheless, they fired wildly at the orbital drop vehicle, to confuse, rather than to kill. Jedi Malakon charged at the lone shocktrooper;

their blades clashed, and a shower of sparks rained down from the blades. Jedi Malakon, using an aggressive masterful Djem So lightsaber style, used powerful swings and attacks against his opponent. The shocktrooper, moving incredibly fast as well, blocked and parried the lightsaber attacks. The shocktrooper's parries were precise, and accurate. Jedi Malakon relentlessly smashed and attacked the shocktrooper. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon leapt into the air, and drop kicked the shocktrooper in the chest, sending him backwards onto the marble street.

Jedi Malakon landed, "Not bad, for an Imperial minion."

Jedi Malakon extended his hilt, making a lightsaber lance. Immediately, Jedi Malakon charged at the downed shocktrooper. Surprisingly, the shocktrooper jumped onto his feet, and charged at Jedi Malakon too. Jedi Malakon swung his lightsaber lance with great power; the shocktrooper ducked under the blue blade, and sliced at Jedi Malakon. At the last minute, Jedi Malakon used the other end of the hilt to block the razor-sharp blade. The two metal objects clanked together as they passed by one another.

Jedi Malakon turned around, and leapt into the air. He rose his lightsaber lance above his head, and smashed the marble floor beneath him. The shocktrooper rolled out of the way; the blue blade hit the marble with such force, it cracked and shattered. The shocktrooper kicked Jedi Malakon in the back, causing him to become off-balance, then jumped back onto his feet. Jedi Malakon swung his lightsaber lance again, trying to decapitate the shocktrooper. The shocktrooper ducked under the blue blade, and charged. The shocktrooper's attacks were surprisingly fast and swift, while powerful and accurate. The flip-sword was a mere blur; the shocktrooper spun and twirled the flip-sword with great skill, almost reminiscent of lightsaber combat techniques. Jedi Malakon blocked and parried the relentless attacks with great skill, dropping into a defensive Soresu form. Suddenly, the shocktrooper jumped into the air, and came down hard onto Jedi Malakon. Their blades made contact, and sparks showered down from their blades. They were engaged in a sabre-lock.

"Impressive, Imperial. I'd like to know where you learned all that." Jedi Malakon asked.

Without saying a word, the shocktrooper round-house kicked Jedi Malakon, sending him crashing into the marble street. The shocktrooper jumped into the air again, and stabbed the ground where Jedi Malakon laid. In the nick of time, Jedi Malakon rolled over and away from the razor-sharp blade. The flip-sword pierced

through the rock, and embedded itself into the hard marble rock. With the aid of the Force, Jedi Malakon kicked the Mandalorian iron blade, causing it to break in half. The shocktrooper was obviously surprised. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon unleashed a powerful Force Wave against the shocktrooper, sending him flying backwards. The shocktrooper smashed into the marble street, and slid for a couple of metres. Jedi Malakon picked himself up, and charged. The shocktrooper rose from off the marble street, and tried to block the blue blade with his forearms. Instead, Jedi Malakon slashed at the shocktrooper's abdomen, then kicked him back down.

Suddenly, a torrent of assault blaster bolts shot his way. Jedi Malakon immediately dodged and ducked the bolts, rarely deflecting or batting any way. He ran towards the cover of the orbital drop vehicle, which was located in the middle of the Merchant Quarter. Jedi Malakon pulled out his comlink.

"Master! I'm pinned down at the Merchant Quarter!" Jedi Malakon informed, "I'm not going to be able to make it to you!"

The energy bolts struck all around him. The orbital drop vehicle was hardened against energy bolts, thus providing some protection.

*"Copy that."* Master Lii replied, *"I'm sorry, kid."*

Jedi Malakon nodded his head in acceptance, "Me too. Out."

Jedi Malakon looked towards the fallen shocktrooper, who was, surprisingly, starting to get back up. The shocktrooper rose to his feet, and the barrage of assault blaster rifle bolts ceased. Jedi Malakon took a closer look at where he landed his blow, and saw that the lightsaber merely cracked the armour, not penetrated it.

*Damn,* Jedi Malakon thought.

The shocktrooper charged towards Jedi Malakon at full speed. Jedi Malakon retracted his lightsaber lance hilt, and attacked him. With surprising grace and precision, the shocktrooper managed to evade the blue energy blade, and punch Jedi Malakon in the chest, stopping him in his tracks. One of his ribs felt like it cracked, and the sudden surge of pain was overwhelming. The shocktrooper continued its unarmed assault against Jedi Malakon. The best he could do is block and dodge the punches and kicks. The shocktrooper was fast, and didn't seem to slow down. Jedi Malakon, on the other hand, felt exhausted. His muscles were tired, and sore; his joints ached when he moved. Every time he took a breath, his chest hurt.

Suddenly, the shocktrooper grabbed hold of Jedi Malakon's neck, and started chocking him. His grip was powerful, and Jedi Malakon felt his throat starting to collapse; the black gloves on the shocktrooper was actually a hydraulic crushgaunt. Jedi Malakon's face turned red, and he struggled to breathe. With all the strength he could muster, Jedi Malakon slammed his fist into the armoured chest of the shocktrooper. The shocktrooper let go, and took two steps backwards. Jedi Malakon gasped for air, then returned to his feet. The shocktrooper charged at Jedi Malakon again. Jedi Malakon jumped into the air, over the head of the shocktrooper. He landed behind the shocktrooper, and stabbed him in the back, through the ceramic armour. The ceramic armour shattered and broke as the blue blade pierced through. The blue blade severed the shocktrooper's spine, killing him instantly. The shocktrooper fell limp onto the marble street. Suddenly, another torrent of assault blaster rifle bolts streamed towards Jedi Malakon. It seemed that there were only two or three shocktroopers left on the roof tops, firing at him.

*The rest must have gone towards the palace,* Jedi Malakon thought.

Jedi Malakon jumped behind the orbital drop vehicle again, shielding himself from the energy bolts. The red energy bolts struck all around him, gouging small pits into the marble street. Suddenly, the ground shook, and the familiar mechanical clanking sound emerged. Jedi Malakon looked to the far end of the Merchant Quarter, and saw an AT-RCT, with two stormtroopers on top, approaching.

*Give me a break,* Jedi Malakon thought.

The AT-RCT was fast approaching; the footfalls cracked the marble street beneath it. Suddenly, it fired a torrent of medium blaster cannon fire. The large red energy bolts stuck the orbital drop vehicle, and gouged out larger pits into the marble street. The orbital drop vehicle buckled, and collapsed; large circular, glowing orange spots covered the orbital drop vehicle. The glowing orange spots was where an energy bolt struck the hull. There was nowhere Jedi Malakon could go to flee the AT-RCT; he was covered behind an orbital drop vehicle, located in the middle of an open Merchant Quarter. The AT-RCT stopped approaching, and stood idle for a moment. Jedi Malakon peek behind the arrowhead-like wing, and stared at the walker.

"What now?" Jedi Malakon asked himself.

The AT-RCT suddenly launched two proton rockets at the orbital drop vehicle. The glowing red proton rockets streaked through the air at a tremendous speed, leaving a trail of white smoke behind them.



"Oh frack!" Jedi Malakon shouted.

He immediately ran away from the orbital drop vehicle, but it was too late. The proton rockets struck the orbital drop vehicle, causing it to explode into a massive fireball. Shrapnel and durasteel hull flew everywhere; luckily, none of the razor-sharp shrapnel pierced or punctured Jedi Malakon's flesh. The flame was so large, that parts of Jedi Malakon's robe caught on fire. He immediately fell to the ground, and started patting and rolling, trying to snuff out the fire. The AT-RCT started walking towards Jedi Malakon again; the mechanical clanking noise echoing within the open Merchant Quarter.

*I'm dead*, Jedi Malakon thought.

Suddenly, a grey-coloured J-1 shuttle appeared above, and started firing its double laser cannons at the open cockpit, two-legged walker. In the middle of the Merchant Quarter, the flaming orbital drop vehicle spewed a massive column of black smoke into the air; durasteel debris littered the Merchant Quarter. Master Lii looked out the window, and saw Jedi Malakon on the marble street.

"I see him!" Master Lii shouted in excitement.

The shocktroopers on the rooftops started firing at the J-1 shuttle, trying to provide covering fire. Glowing purple particle beams streaked across the gloomy, grey sky. Simultaneously, a torrent of red energy bolts poured out of the J-1 shuttle's double laser cannons. The energy bolts struck the rooftops where the shocktroopers stood. The shocktroopers immediately took cover behind various stone walls.

Master Lii walked over to the gunner, "Concentrate your fire on that walker!"

The gunner nodded his head, and began firing upon the AT-RCT again. The energy bolts coming from the double laser cannons were absorbed and deflected by the energy shield, but it was enough of a distraction to keep Jedi Malakon alive for a little longer.

Master Lii then walked over to the pilot, who was circling the Merchant Quarter, "I want you to fly over the walker, open up the boarding ramp and hover over him!"

"Are you crazy, he'll shoot us down in no time!" The pilot protested.

"Just do it!" Master Lii ordered.



The pilot shook his head in protest, but nevertheless, did as the Jedi Master ordered. Quickly, Master Lii went back to the holding bay.

"Everyone take out your grenades." Master Lii ordered, "We're going to drop them on top of that walker when we fly overhead."

"Isn't that dangerous?" An Onderonian resistance fighter replied.

"War is dangerous, soldier." Master Lii countered, "Now hurry to the ramp, we've only got one chance at this."

The Resistance fighters nodded their heads, and followed Master Lii towards the back. The AT-RCT was firing its medium blaster cannons at the J-1 shuttle as it approached. The shuttle's gunner was wildly firing at the walker, screaming and shouting profanities as he did. The boarding ramp descended, and a sudden gust of wind blew into the holding bay. Behind Master Lii were half a dozen resistance fighters, armed with various fragmentation and plasma grenades, as well as thermal detonators. They were anxious for some payback, and held the grenades eagerly in their hands.

"Okay, get ready!" Master Lii shouted over the roar of the wind.

The Resistance fighters took out their grenades, and activated the triggers. The J-1 shuttle flew over the walker with incredible speed, then suddenly slowed down and hovered overhead. The repulsorlifts activated with a roar, allowing it to hover for a moment.

"Now! Drop them!" Master Lii ordered.

The Resistance fighters released over a dozen grenades before the J-1 shuttle had to bail out because of enemy fire. The grenades fell over ten metres towards their target. Because the grenades were made of solid matter, and not direct-energy, the protective deflector shield did nothing to prevent them. The grenades violently exploded, crippling and destroying vital parts of the open cockpit. A dozen large spheres of heat and light from the grenades and thermal detonators rocked the two-legged walker, killing the two stormtrooper pilots. The fragmentation grenades spewed shrapnel into the walker, shredding the control-system. Suddenly, the walker toppled over, and crashed into the marble street. The massive walker cracked and shattered the marble from the immense impact.

"Yes!" Master Lii cheered, "That got 'em!"

The J-1 shuttle flew around the Merchant Quarter once again. The Resistance fighters cheered as they watched the grenades detonate and destroy the AT-RCT. Master Lii smiled, and then walked over to the intercom system.

"Let's pick up our friend!" Master Lii ordered.

"*Roger that.*" The pilot replied in a joyful voice.

The J-1 shuttle swung around, and headed towards the smoking wreckage of the orbital drop vehicle. The shuttle's gunner provided covering fire against the remaining shocktroopers. The shuttle landed hard on the marble street, and Master Lii, followed by half a dozen resistance fighters ran down the boarding ramp, towards Jedi Malakon. The Resistance fighters came under attack from assault blaster rifle fire, but they fired back towards the rooftops. Master Lii ran straight for Jedi Malakon, who was laying on the marble street, face down. He slid to his side.

"Master?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"Yeah, it's me, kid." Master Lii replied, "I'm going to get you out of here."

Another resistance fighters ran to Master Lii's side, and helped pick him up. The three of them immediately ran for the shuttle, while the others provided covering fire. Within moments, they were all on the shuttle, and heading upwards towards the grey sky. Master Lii dropped Jedi Malakon into one of the seats, while a medic administered some medical aid. The *Dreadwing* still dominated the sky above the city of Iziz, and the shuttle flew straight for it. Suddenly, the shuttle banked hard right, causing the individuals inside the holding bay to lose their balance.

Master Lii immediately picked himself up and ran towards the cabin, "What's going on?"

"The *Dreadwing* is releasing fighters." The pilot informed, "I'm going to need to take evasive manoeuvres."

Suddenly, two *Predator*-class starfighters flew passed the viewport; their screeching engines still audible through the hull of the shuttle. The pilot banked hard left again, avoiding a torrent of red energy bolts.

"Just keep us flying." Master Lii ordered, then retreated back into the holding bay.

"That was the whole idea." The pilot said to himself.



Master Lii ran to Jedi Malakon's side. He was feeling better, and was conscious now, "How is he?"

"Broken rib, and burns on his leg and lower back." The medic informed, "Nothing too serious. He's awake now."

Master Lii nodded his head, then looked back at Jedi Malakon, "How you feelin', kid?"

Jedi Malakon was sweating from exhaustion, and pain. His muscles were sore, and tired; his arms and legs felt as if there were lead-weights attached to them. He could barely move any part of his body without it agonizing and resisting in pain. His back and shoulders were aching, along with the rest of his joints. His right hand wouldn't stop shaking, and his vision was blurry.

"I've had better days." Jedi Malakon smartly replied, "Kira?"

"They're safe on the Dxun moon." Master Lii informed, "That's where we're heading now."

"Dxun? Isn't that obvious?" Jedi Malakon asked.

Master Lii nodded his head, "Yes, but we have no other choice."

"What about that Star Destroyer?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"We'll out-run it." Master Lii said with a smile.

"You can't jump while in the atmosphere." Jedi Malakon reminded.

"Don't worry about it." Master Lii sternly replied.

Jedi Malakon laughed a little, then stopped from the sudden jolt of pain from his broken rib, "Ouch..." He looked up at his Master, "If you say so."

The shuttle banked hard right again. The sound of blaster cannons could be heard through the armoured hull. The screeching engines from the various *Predator*-class starfighters around them echoed in the holding bay. Suddenly, the passengers could feel the shuttle start to pitch upward.

"We're crossing over into Dxun." Master Lii informed.

"Made it after all." Jedi Malakon replied, then smiled.

### Two Standard Hours Later: The Dxun Moon of Onderon:

The jungle moon of Onderon, known as Dxun, is filled with dangerous fauna; many beings have died or disappeared on Dxun over the millennia, fallen victim to the jungle. Meanwhile, Jedi Malakon was feeling better, and decided to help with the evacuation of Dxun. The Kira family was priority, and Master Lii made sure they had safe passage to the Hapes Consortium.

Jedi Malakon looked upward towards the grey, cloudy sky. Every once in a while, the orbit of Dxun comes close enough to Onderon that the two atmospheres actually merge into one, creating a bridge between the two worlds. In the past, flying creatures from both worlds would travel across this bridge, and just now, it allowed the J-1 shuttle to easily cross over onto Dxun. The *Dreadwing* still remained in geostationary orbit around Onderon, situated over the city of Iziz; some of the *Predator*-class starfighters had crossed the bridge, and now were scouting their location from the sky. It's unlikely that they will be discovered, however, because the jungle is so thick and dense, it makes it hard to see through the treetops. Every once in a while, the screeching engines of the *Predator*-class starfighters could be heard in the distance.

Jedi Malakon walked over to his Master, "Master, what are we still doing here?"

Master Lii looked over, "Well, I'm glad to see you up-and-about." He replied, then sighed, "We're waiting for the correct opportunity."

"What opportunity?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"Safe passage." Master Lii answered.

"There is no such thing as perfectly safe passage." Jedi Malakon countered, "We should leave as soon as possible, before the Imperials find us."

"Patience, Mathias." Master Lii replied, "The time will reveal itself soon enough."

"Maybe not, Master." Jedi Malakon replied, "We can't wait too long."

"I—" Master Lii started to say before a loud crack from the upper atmosphere rang out.

Everyone looked up into the cloudy grey sky, and watched as massive *Imperious*-class Advanced Star Destroyer, the *Enslaver*, arrived out of hyperspace. The *Enslaver* was an infamous warship, and was the flagship for Empress Amelia's Fist, Darth Tyranid. The *Enslaver* descended through the atmosphere at an incredibly rapid rate,

causing a sonic boom. The light grey clouds parted as the *Enslaver* descended through the cloud deck. Suddenly, an entire wing of *Predator*-class starfighters poured out of the ventral hangar bay. The *Predator*-class starfighters headed straight for the Resistance fighter's make-shift temporary base. The screeching sound of their engines resonated in the sky.

"Get everyone out of here!" Master Lii ordered.

Immediately, Jedi Malakon ran towards the few starfighters they had left. They were mostly old, worn-out CF9 Crossfire starfighters, or beat-up X-83 TwinTail starfighters. The *Predator*-class starfighters started their strafing run, firing blaster cannon bolts at the various shuttles on the ground. The energy bolts struck some of the shuttles, crippling them critically. Jedi Malakon saw some resistance pilots running towards their starfighters, as well as Alliance pilots; he quickly caught up with them.

"Alright Razor's, show time!" Jedi Malakon shouted, "Get up there, and keep them off our backs until we get the shuttles up and off the ground. Got it!"

Razor Squadron, a relatively new starfighter squadron within the Galactic Alliance Navy, founded and created by Jedi Malakon himself. The Razor's were an elite fighter squadron, similar to Rogue Squadron, and were composed mostly non-Jedi pilots. Razor Squadron were known to play things a little fast and loose, but were just as skilled and motivated as any other elite fighter squadron.

"You're not coming with us?" One of the Razor pilots asked.

Jedi Malakon shook his head, "No. I've got to stay down here, and make sure everyone gets off-world."

They nodded their heads, and ran towards their CF9 Crossfire starfighters. Suddenly, he ran into one of the Razor pilots, Lieutenant Cosh Sonter. He was a human male from Corellia, well known for his daredevil attitude, and death-defying stunts while dogfighting.

"Cosh!" Jedi Malakon shouted.

Cosh Sonter turned around, and walked over to Jedi Malakon, "Sorry you ain't going up there with us. We could've used you."

Jedi Malakon nodded, "Take care of yourself up there."

"Always!" Cosh Sonter replied.

He quickly turned around, and ran towards his CF9 Crossfire starfighter. The Razor's immediately took off, and almost at once, were engaged in various dogfights within the lower atmosphere of Dxun. Although the Alliance starfighters were beat-up and worn-down, they were still a formidable match for the *Predator*-class starfighters. Some of the starfighters were immediately shot down, sending the flaming wreckage careening into the jungle, exploding upon impact.

Jedi Malakon started running towards their own shuttles, mostly comprised of J-1 shuttles or, more commonly, *Crix*-class assault shuttles. They were being loaded with the remaining resistance fighters, and whatever gear and supplies they could fit onboard. Master Lii was taking care of the evacuation. He ran over to Master Lii, who was issuing orders.

"You didn't go up?" Master Lii asked in a surprised voice.

"I thought you could use my help." Jedi Malakon replied.

Suddenly, they both looked up at the incoming *Enslaver*; the ventral hangar bay released over two dozen *Nune*-class Imperial shuttles, descending towards the temporary base. The Imperial shuttles were escorted down by numerous *Predator*-class starfighters. They both watched as the Resistance starfighters, mostly comprised of CF9 Crossfire starfighters, attempted to shoot down the *Nune*-class Imperial shuttles. The *Predator*-class starfighters, using their superior speed and manoeuvrability, easily out-paced and shot down the various resistance starfighters in massive dogfights. Explosions filled the sky, and scraps of flaming durasteel hull rained down all around them.

"Here comes the invasion force." Jedi Malakon replied.

With urgency, Master Lii ordered, "Find out where those shuttles are going to land, and hold them off for as long as you can."

Jedi Malakon nodded his head, and started running north, towards where he thought the Imperial shuttles were likely to land. Jedi Malakon looked up at the *Enslaver* one more time; it was incredibly close to the ground now, hovering above only five or six kilometres above them. The *Enslaver* dominated the sky above, casting a great shadow upon the temporary base. Suddenly, he ran into a small group of resistance fighters, maybe only two dozen.

"You guys! Follow me!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

They nodded, and followed the Jedi Knight into the dense jungle of the Dxun moon. The Imperial shuttles must have landed already, but more and more descended from the ventral hangar every minute. Jedi Malakon ran through the dense jungle with ease, jumping over fallen logs, or pushing through dense brush. The jungle made the day seem darker, since little light penetrated the treetops. The *Enslaver* overhead also blocked a lot of the incident light, essentially turning early evening into midnight. After a few minutes of trekking through the jungle, Jedi Malakon heard the stormtroopers approaching the temporary base. He rose his right fist into the air, indicating stop.

The stormtroopers approached. Jedi Malakon heard the stormtroopers break branches as they walked through the dense brush; their plastoid-ceramic composite armour clanked together as they walked. The Resistance fighters were wearing camouflage gear, and Jedi Malakon wore a dark brown Jedi robe, allowing them to blend into the jungle. The stormtroopers, on the other hand, wore light-grey armour; they stood out like a sore thumb.

*They must've deployed on short notice,* Jedi Malakon thought.

Stormtroopers are versatile soldiers; they possessed different kinds of armour for different tactical situations. The light-grey armour is simply a default style, used only on short notice, or for general occasions. The Resistance fighters laid low, allowing the stormtroopers to pass. Jedi Malakon looked back, and indicated using hand signals to fan out quietly. The Resistance fighters started moving through the dense jungle, moving as quietly as possible. They started taking up positions around the stormtroopers, who were marching through the jungle without much discretion.

Jedi Malakon moved behind the stormtroopers. He saw only fifty light-grey armoured stormtroopers, but there had to be more elsewhere. Jedi Malakon got into position, and snuck up behind one of the stormtroopers. Jedi Malakon used the Force to conceal his presence, both physically and through the Force, until he was right behind the stormtrooper. With lightning fast reflexes, Jedi Malakon grabbed the helmet of the stormtrooper, and snapped his neck. There was a short, audible crack; Jedi Malakon looked around the dense jungle. No one seemed to notice, so Jedi Malakon gently laid the dead stormtrooper on the leafy ground.

Jedi Malakon moved onto the next stormtrooper. He used the Force once again to conceal his presence, minimizing the sound he made as he moved through the dense brush. With a Force augmented strike, Jedi Malakon smashed the helmet of the next stormtrooper into the trunk of the tree. The helmet shattered from the impact, crushing

the skull of the being inside as well. The smashing sound made was clearly audible, and caused the rest of the stormtroopers to turn around and take notice. By then, Jedi Malakon had already disappeared into the dense jungle, out of sight. One of the nearby stormtroopers approached the body of the smashed stormtrooper. Blood ran down the stormtrooper's, a human male, face. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon activated his blue-bladed lightsaber. The *snap-hiss* startled the stormtrooper, but before he could act, Jedi Malakon plunged the blue blade into his chest. The plastoid-ceramic composite armour cracked and shattered instantly, providing essentially no protection from the energy blade. Almost immediately after the blue blade cleaved the stormtrooper's heart in two, Jedi Malakon deactivated the energy blade, and disappeared back into the jungle.

"We've got Jedi!" One of the stormtrooper's shouted.

All the stormtroopers went on high alert, raising their assault blaster rifles in the ready-position. All the stormtroopers seem to be approaching the site where two of their comrades had fallen. One got within striking distance. Suddenly, with a Force-assisted leap, Jedi Malakon soared through the air, and activated his blue-bladed lightsaber. As Jedi Malakon descended, he smashed one of the stormtroopers on the helmet with the blue blade, shattering the light-grey helmet, killing the being inside. Jedi Malakon crashed into the leafy ground, and rolled onto his feet. A dust cloud rose into the air, and slowly started to settle out of suspension. The stormtroopers were completely shocked.

"Now!" Jedi Malakon shouted.

Suddenly, the Resistance fighters rose from their hiding positions, located on either side of the stormtroopers, and started firing their blaster rifles. The ambush caught the stormtroopers by surprise, and immediately, some of them were shot down. Unlike previous generations, these stormtroopers could take some beatings. It typically took three or four well-placed blaster bolts to take down one of these stormtroopers, because of the improved armour they wore. That new fact made the ambush that much harder, and much more frustrating.

Jedi Malakon charged at the stormtroopers, swinging and stabbing the stormtroopers as fast and as swiftly as possible. Jedi Malakon's attacks were incredibly fast; the blue energy blade was a mere blur to the stormtroopers. They had almost no time to react to Jedi Malakon's attacks. Jedi Malakon would appear out of nowhere, slash and hack at the stormtrooper, then disappear back into the jungle again. Occasionally, Jedi Malakon would use the Force to throw a stormtrooper into the trunks

of trees, shattering their armour, and knocking them unconscious. Jedi Malakon utilized the Force, and his lightsaber with perfect unity.

Suddenly, a wave of dark-side energy descended upon him. It caused him to feel cold; goosebumps rose on the back of his arms. A sense of danger permeated his body. Jedi Malakon looked up into the sky, and saw that there was only one *Nune*-class Imperial shuttle remaining in the air. This *Nune*-class Imperial shuttle was unusual, however, because it was painted pitch-black with red Sith markings on the side. The Imperial shuttle seemed to be heading for the temporary base.

*Master!* Jedi Malakon thought.

Jedi Malakon immediately started running through the dense jungle, towards the temporary base. He used the Force to augment his movements, allowing him to run faster and for longer. The stormtroopers fired relentless at him, but were usually cut down by the Resistance fighters. Although the Resistance fighters were outnumbered, their superior knowledge of the jungle, and guerrilla tactics, allowed them to fight back effectively. As Jedi Malakon got closer to the temporary camp, he heard screams of terror, and the familiar clash of lightsabers. Fear permeated the Force, mostly from the civilians still on-world.

Finally, Jedi Malakon got into a relative clearing; he saw his Master engaging in lightsaber combat with an unusual Sith Lord. This Sith Lord was partly, if not almost entirely, mechanized. His legs were robotic, while his torso and arms seemed to be flesh. The Sith Lord wore a black, heavy cloth Sith robe that covered nearly his entire body, and wore the hood up, concealing the face.

*Darth Tyranid*, Jedi Malakon thought.

Darth Tyranid utilized an aggressive Djem So style lightsaber technique, coupled with *Jar'Kai*, a dual lightsaber technique. Darth Tyranid's lightsabers were unusual too; one was a typical crimson-bladed black durasteel hilt lightsaber, while the other was a silver-bladed Imperial Knight style lightsaber. Master Lii, on the other hand, used a more defensive lightsaber style, Soresu. Darth Tyranid's attacks against his Master were powerful, and fast. Darth Tyranid expertly used rapid cuts and powerful smashes to confuse and wear down his opponent. Jedi Malakon could feel his Master's strength waning.

Jedi Malakon, about five hundred metres away, ran towards his Master as fast as he could. He watched as the flashes of light from the clash of lightsabers got more

intense, and more frequent. Master Lii strained against the incoming lightsaber attacks; his muscles tired, and his joints were sore. Jedi Malakon sensed his Master was in grave danger. Although a Jedi Master, Yuun Lii was more of a philosopher, and a scholar, rather than a warrior. He fought in the Anti-Sith Insurgency because his moral and ethical inclinations told him it was the right thing to do. Unlike Jedi Malakon, he didn't particularly enjoy fighting and war.

Jedi Malakon was only about one hundred metres away from the titanic lightsaber clash. Suddenly, the unthinkable happened; with a cleaver parry, and a spinning attack, Darth Tyranid stabbed Master Lii in the abdomen. Master Lii's eyes went wide from surprise, and he screamed in shock and pain from the energy blade burning through his gut. The sudden surge of pain that ran through Master Lii poured into the Force; Jedi Malakon felt as if he suffered the deadly blow.

"No!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

Master Lii's body fell limp onto the ground; Jedi Malakon felt no life within his Master's physical body any longer. With his blue-bladed lightsaber drawn, Jedi Malakon charged at the Sith Lord. Jedi Malakon used the power of the Force to send him charging at Darth Tyranid. Jedi Malakon closed the distance between himself and Darth Tyranid quickly. Jedi Malakon lashed out at the Sith Lord with his lightsaber. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon's feet were picked up off the ground. He hovered there for a moment, confused and surprised. Almost instantly he realized what was happening; Darth Tyranid grabbed hold of him with the Force, and was now slowly crushing his body, Force Crush. The mechanical claw of Darth Tyranid was stretched out in front of the Sith Lord, and was slowly squeezing the life out of Jedi Malakon.

"Foolish of you, Jedi." Darth Tyranid said in a mechanical voice, "You should have ran when you had the chance."

Jedi Malakon felt his bones start to bend, and his organs tighten; he screamed in pain as his bones creaked from the strain. His shoulder joint popped from the tremendous strain, resulting in a flurry of pain. Jedi Malakon's vision started to blur and darken. Before he passed out, Jedi Malakon mustered all the energy he could, and unleashed a Force Wave attack. The sudden Force attack caused Darth Tyranid to release his grip on Jedi Malakon. Jedi Malakon fell onto the ground hard.

Suddenly, one of the Resistance fighters came off one of the *Crix*-class assault shuttles, and picked Jedi Malakon up, "C'mon, we've got to go!"

Jedi Malakon was too injured to resist, or to protest. The Resistance fighter brought Jedi Malakon onto the assault shuttle. The stormtroopers emerged from the jungle, hundreds of them, and ran running towards them. They were too far away for assault blaster rifles to be effective, so they continued to run. Darth Tyranid, also recovered from the Force attack, started to walk towards Jedi Malakon. The Resistance fighter finally got the Jedi Knight onto the shuttle; almost immediately, the assault shuttle took off, leaving behind Darth Tyranid, and his Master. Only about fifty metres into the air, the assault shuttle suddenly stopped. The sudden stop jolted the shuttle, knocking the beings inside off their feet. Jedi Malakon, recovering from the Force attack, got up and looked out the transparisteel viewport. It was Darth Tyranid, using the Force to prevent the assault shuttle from ascending.

"Fire everything!" Jedi Malakon ordered the gunners.

The gunners immediately let lose a volley of laser cannon fire towards Darth Tyranid. Darth Tyranid roared in defiance as the energy bolts struck the ground all around him. Most of the energy bolts missed, but some forced the Sith Lord to release his grip, and bat away the energy bolts. The assault shuttle began to ascend through the atmosphere again. Jedi Malakon looked upward, towards the sky, and saw only the *Enslaver* through the viewport.

*I don't know how we'll get out of this one,* Jedi Malakon thought.

The assault shuttle immediately broke hard right, and started jinking and juking wildly. Several *Predator*-class starfighters swooped in, and fired a volley of blaster cannon fire at the assault shuttle. Suddenly, the assault shuttle started to pitch violently downward; several energy bolts struck the hull of the assault shuttle. The assault shuttle continued flying, however, and performed evasive manoeuvres to the best of its abilities.

*We're really dead,* Jedi Malakon thought.

Out of nowhere, a pair of CF9 Crossfire starfighters appeared. The CF9 Crossfire starfighters were custom-built, and flown and operated exclusively by Razor Squadron. Relief descended over Jedi Malakon. He watched as the CF9 Crossfire starfighters circled the *Crix*-class assault shuttle, shooting down various *Predator*-class starfighters with death defying manoeuvres. The CF9 Crossfire starfighters were powerful and strong starfighters, able to take a major beating before giving up. Jedi Malakon reached out with the Force, and sensed the two pilots in the CF9 Crossfire starfighters; one was Cosh Sonter, the other was a new member to the squadron, Razor Three, who was

young, aggressive, highly skilled but inexperienced. Nevertheless, the two Razor pilots were flying circles around the Imperial pilots.

"*Thought you guys might need some help!*" Cosh Sonter said over the comlink system.

The sudden arrival of two Razor pilots caused the rest of the passengers inside the shuttle to cheer, and cry out for joy. Not for Jedi Malakon though; he simply stared out the window, and watched the dogfight in silence. The viewport was filled with *Predator*-class starfighters circling the assault shuttle; green and red energy bolts, coming from both the starfighters, and the *Enslaver* overhead, filled the viewport. The *Enslaver* above pounded the assault shuttle with turbolaser fire. The cover from the two CF9 Crossfire starfighters, and the expert flying from the assault shuttle's pilot, allowed them to flow out from beneath the *Enslaver*, and make it into orbit. Once clear of the gravitational well of both Onderon, and the Dxun moon, the assault shuttle and the two CF9 Crossfire starfighters jumped into hyperspace.

Mathias sat in one of the rooms the Resistance gave him on the *Crix*-class assault shuttle. The room was simple; with only a bed and closet, it was small, and poorly lit. He had been in the room, alone, for over an hour; he hadn't said anything to anyone, or did anything the entire time. He simply sat on the bed, staring down at the cold durasteel panel flooring. He felt miserable, depressed, and alone. His mind went over the day's events over and over again. He thought of all the times he nearly died that day, and all the times his Master was there to rescue him.

*My Master is dead, Mathias thought, the one time he needed me, I wasn't there.*

He dreaded the fact that he couldn't even recover his Master's body, and return it to the Force. He could always rely on his Master being there, and now, he was gone forever. Mathias and Master Lii were inseparable over the past five years, or so; fighting side-by-side on so many battlefields, and through so many fortresses, they were more friends, than colleagues. Although, officially, Mathias was apprenticed to Master Lii, Master Lii never saw Mathias in that light for quite some time. They were equals on the battlefield; they trusted each other with their lives. Guilt over the incident poured over Mathias; he blamed himself for his Master's demise.

*I should have been there! Mathias thought, I should have been there to protect him! It's all my fault!*



Tears filled his eyes, and ran down his cheek. He put his face in his hands, and he cried. The well of emotions he had been fighting off for the entire day suddenly flooded his senses and mind. The emotions poured out of him uncontrollably. He felt all the different emotions, all at once; anger, grief, sadness, and guilt.

*I failed.*



# *Unbearable*

*Fire. It surrounded Mathias. Mathias was standing in the middle of a dense forest, similar to the one on the forest moon of Endor. Mathias turned around, and saw a raging inferno all around him. Instinctually, he ran, but in no particular direction, away from the fire. The roar of the inferno was loud, almost deafening. Embers showered upon Mathias, and the wind was strong; Mathias shielded his eyes from the burning hot embers. Mathias looked up again, and saw another wall of fire in front of him. There was no escape from it. The inferno roared and howled, as if it were a beast consuming the forest.*

*Suddenly, Mathias heard a scream coming from the forest. Mathias turned around, trying to find where the scream was coming from. Suddenly, he heard it again. Mathias followed it. He ran towards the source; no, not screaming, shouting. Mathias ran with all his might. Suddenly, he came upon a hooded figure; Mathias turned around, and saw the massive inferno bearing down on him. The fire lashed out, and caught Mathias. His clothing was on fire. He immediately dropped to the ground, and started rolling and patting the fire to snuff it out.*

"No!"

Suddenly, Mathias woke up from the nightmare, and sat up on the bed. His breathing was laboured, and he gasped for air. His face and body were drenched in sweat. His muscles, still sore from the previous day's events, twitched and spasm. Mathias rolled out of bed, and ran his hand through his short blond hair; his hair was soaking wet from sweat. Mathias closed his eyes, and tried to calm himself. He had nightmares before, most of them were shortly after the mission on the forest moon of Endor, but he hadn't had one since then.

*I thought I was over this, Mathias thought.*

Mathias shook his head in disbelief. Suddenly, there was a light knock on the door. Mathias looked up, and stared at the cold, durasteel door. He hesitated at first, but soon acknowledged.

"What is it?" Mathias asked.

There was a slight pause, "The pilot's need you in the cabin right away."  
Someone answered.

Mathias sulked for a moment, and shook his head, "I'll be there in a minute."

Mathias threw on his Jedi robe, and walked out of the room. When Mathias stepped outside, no one was there waiting for him. Mathias didn't think anything of it, and proceeded towards the cabin. He walked to long, narrow corridors alone.

Occasionally he would pass an officer, or somebody else, but he didn't care to greet them. He got there within the minute, and leaned over the pilot's chair.

The pilot looked back at Mathias, "You look like hell."

"Didn't get much sleep." Mathias answered, "What's this about?"

"Hapan Mist Patrol." The pilot answered, "They want our clearance."

The pilot turned on the communication beacon, "*Unidentified shuttle, transmit clearance orders or prepare to be fired upon.*"

Mathias picked up the comlink, "Hapan Mist Patrol, this is Jedi Knight Mathias Malakon, we are transporting refugees from Onderon, including the royal family." He looked over at the pilot, who was transmitting the clearance codes, "It was our understanding that the Hapes Consortium has granted refugee status for the Onderonians."

"*Unidentified shuttle, if you are transporting Onderonian refugees, where is Master Lii?*" Hapan Mist Patrol asked.

Mathias paused for a moment, "He died on the Dxun moon as we fled the system."

There was a long pause, "*Sorry to hear that. The Queen Mother has granted you access. We will escort you into Hapes.*"

"Thank you."

### **City of Ta'a Chume'Dan, Hapes, The Hapes Consortium:**

Hapes was a beautiful world; much of the world has been untouched, because the Hapans want to preserve its natural beauty. Interestingly, because of the reflected light from its seven moons, and the shimmer from the Transitory Mist, a region of ionized space, the Hapans never experience true darkness. Hapes, in particular the city of Ta'a Chume'Dan, which means 'The Queen Mother's Residence' in Hapan, was the central hub for commerce and governance in the Hapes Consortium. The city of Ta'a Chume'Dan was filled with elegantly built buildings, made out from the local rocks, and decorated with flowers and climbing vines; the city was small, and neatly organized, with only a few hundred thousand residents. Many of the buildings were architectural masterpieces; archways, domes, spires and pillars, and water fountains were commonly used architectural features on most buildings. Lovely gardens, filled

with flowers ranging from all colours, dot the city. The most surprising structure in the city is the Castle of Per'Agthra, the Fountain Palace, an unreal palace perched onto of a massive black basaltic mesa that looked over the entire city.

Jedi Malakon watched the Onderonian refugees climb out of the shuttles they had been travelling in, and being sorted out and assigned living spaces by the Hapans. A preliminary count of the number of surviving Onderonians were estimated to be less than two thousand. Meanwhile, the Hapan military allowed the few surviving shuttles and starfighters left in the anti-Sith coalition, the Resistance, to refuel and rearm within the Royal Hangar. Jedi Malakon walked the length of the Royal Hangar, taking in its exquisite beauty, while trying to find the rest of Razor Squadron; although built for military use, the architecture and beauty was surprising. Climbing vines, with thorns and red flowers, clung to the polished pinkish-white granite pillars supporting the dome roof of the hangar. Plants were hung from the ceiling, adding to the overall beauty. Hapan military officials, most of them beautiful women, were busy preparing and loading the various shuttles, starfighters and other vehicles. Their uniforms were quite unique, and very revealing; they mostly consisted of tight fitting black and green attire, with a low-cut top, and capri pants. Suddenly, one of the Hapan military personnel, a cute blonde woman, ran towards Jedi Malakon.

"Jedi Malakon! I'm glad I found you!" The Hapan said.

Jedi Malakon turned around, "What is it?"

She ran over to him, and paused to catch her breath, "Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo requests an audience with you."

Jedi Malakon nodded, "Lead the way."

She brought him through the Royal Hangar, and into the Fountain Palace. They walked the halls of the Fountain Palace together; neither of them said a word. The Fountain Palace was exquisitely elegant, and beautiful. Beautiful works of art hung on the walls, the floor was made of polished stone, and lined with luxurious red carpets. Vines and other floral arrangements covered the ceiling, bring an natural beauty to the palace. The windows, arch-like in design, were elegantly crafted, and lit the hallways perfectly. The Hapan led Jedi Malakon to the Queen Mother's exercise room; she opened the grand, dark wood double door.

"Go right on in." The Hapan woman replied.

"Thank you." Jedi Malakon replied.



Jedi Malakon walked into the exercise room, and saw Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo sparring with three other Hapan males using blunt blades. The Queen Mother, an elegant and powerful woman, only thirty-three years of age. Her light reddish blonde, curly hair was tied back behind her head, and her bright green eyes was focused on her opponents. Her figure, that of an athlete, was perfect, accentuated by her tight-fitting green and gold battlesuit. The battlesuit, made of elegant and luxurious material, was a one-piece body-glove that allowed for maximum movement and minimum restrictions. Her opponents, three Hapan males, were simply wearing black trousers, and shirtless. They were extremely fit and well built, both muscular and tall. The Queen Mother overwhelmed the three Hapan males without difficulty; her strikes were powerful, and swift, her attacks were accurate and precise. Suddenly, she caught eye of Jedi Malakon. The Hapan males stopped, bowed their heads, and moved off the training mat.

"Jedi Malakon, come." The Queen Mother replied; she turned to the Hapan males, and said, "Leave us."

The Hapan males bowed their heads once more, and proceeded out of the exercise room. The exercise room was a large room that was mostly empty; there was a blue training mat in the center, with some weights and other equipment off to the side. The lightning wasn't particularly good, and only illuminated the training mat.

Jedi Malakon approached the training mat, "You requested an audience, Queen Mother?"

"Please, just Alys." She replied, "You know, Master Lii and I were good friends. Before the Insurgency, he visited Hapes quite often."

"Yes, he spoke very highly of you." Jedi Malakon replied.

"He liked to say he was the unofficial liaison for the Galactic Alliance." The Queen Mother laughed, "Those were good times."

"Yes, they were." Jedi Malakon answered.

"I do miss him." The Queen Mother replied, "Probably as much as you do."

Jedi Malakon didn't say a word, but just stood at the edge of the training mat. She saw his reaction, and understood immediately; she inadvertently poured sorrow and sadness into the Force. She nodded her head, then walked over to her training bag off to the side, and pulled out a green towel. She wiped the sweat on her face, then looked back at Jedi Malakon.

"How have you been coping lately?" The Queen Mother asked.

"I've been having nightmares. That's all." Jedi Malakon answered truthfully.

She nodded, and put down the towel. Suddenly, she pulled something else out of her training bag; it was an unusual object she was holding. Jedi Malakon didn't recognize it immediately, but soon he realized what it was.

"Is that—" Jedi Malakon started.

"Yes. It is." The Queen Mother answered immediately.

The Queen Mother held the object in her hands. It was the lightsaber used by her great-great-ancestor Jedi Tenal Ka Djo; the lightsaber had a unique hilt. The hilt of the lightsaber was made from a rancor's tooth, and the focusing crystal used was a Rainbow gem, a very expensive and rare gemstone. It was rumoured that the estimated value of the Rainbow gem inside that lightsaber was worth an entire solar system. Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo activated the teal blade; the *snap-hiss* echoed in the empty exercise room. She turned around, and walked to the center of the training mat.

"Come, Jedi Malakon." The Queen Mother replied, "I could use a real challenge, and I think you could use the distraction."

Jedi Malakon paused for a moment, "I thought you never trained as a Jedi before."

She smiled, "Anti-Jedi sentiment runs strong in Hapes, yes, but that doesn't mean I abandoned the Force completely."

Jedi Malakon thought about it for a moment, then activated his blue-bladed lightsaber. He held the grey-silver hilt in his hands for a moment, then walked towards the center of the training mat. They stood two metres from another; both the lightsabers hummed. The Queen Mother immediately twirled her lightsaber, and dropped into a defensive stance, Soresu.

"You know, my Master also used that technique." Jedi Malakon informed.

Jedi Malakon approached her, and struck out with a series of aggressive attacks, using the Djem So lightsaber technique. Jedi Malakon was incredibly fast, and immensely powerful; nothing like what the Queen Mother was used to. Regardless, the Queen Mother wasn't without her skill. She parried and blocked his relentless attacks with the typical Soresu movements, although she was a little rough around the edges.

Jedi Malakon pressed the attack, spinning and twirling his body and lightsaber simultaneously. Jedi Malakon began to let go of his consciousness, and dive deeper into the Force. The Force guided his movements, attacking with precision. Surprisingly, Alys Nalah Djo let herself go to the Force as well, although to a much lesser degree. Because she lacked the training of a formal Jedi, her powers and abilities were limited. The Force allowed her to speed her movements, increase her stamina and endurance, and anticipate attacks, but all to a limited extent.

Suddenly, with surprising agility and speed, Alys Nalah Djo leaped over the head of Jedi Malakon, and landed behind him. Jedi Malakon immediately turned to face her, and their lightsabers made contact. The two lightsabers sizzled against each other, and a shower of sparks rained down from both energy blades. Both fought against the other's blade; explosions of light erupt from the contact of both blades, partially blinding both. Without warning, Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo broke the sabre-lock, and unleashed a Force Push. The sudden attack caught Jedi Malakon by surprise, making him take a couple of steps backwards in order to regain his balance.

The Queen Mother smiled, "Had enough?"

Jedi Malakon looked at her, and gave her a smirk of his own, "You fight like my Master."

"He taught me well." The Queen Mother informed.

Jedi Malakon smirked, "Is that why he was always coming around here?"

The Queen Mother took a few moments to catch her breath. Sweat poured down her face, "He thought it was essential that I embraced the Force, regardless of what my people felt." She paused again, "He didn't want me to waste my natural talent."

The Queen Mother came from a very distinguished and honoured family line; her ancestors included the noble Allana Djo, who was the daughter of Tenal Ka Djo, and Jacen Solo. Both were Jedi Knights who came to prominence, and became heroes of the Galactic Alliance during the infamous Yuuzhan Vong invasion over a century ago. During the Second Corellian Insurrection, fifteen years after the Yuuzhan Vong invasion, Jacen Solo fell into darkness, and transformed into the Sith Lord Darth Caedus. Because of Tenal Ka's relationship with Jacen Solo, the Hapans have become very weary of Jedi, leading to many to have anti-Jedi sentiment towards them. Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo refused Jedi training in order to keep the peace in her own world.

Jedi Malakon nodded his head, "Yeah, that sounds like him." Suddenly, Jedi Malakon extended the shaft of his lightsaber hilt, and spun the lance, "Let's see what you're really made of."

The Queen Mother was suddenly worried, and surprised by the unusual weapon; she poured confusion into the Force. Jedi Malakon charged at the Queen Mother, spinning and twirling the lightsaber lance in unexpected directions, with incredible speed. The Queen Mother was overwhelmed, but parried the onslaught of attacks. Her muscles started to tire, and become heavy. Her movements and reflexes waned, and her speed diminished. Nevertheless, she fought on, grunting with strain. Jedi Malakon, feeding off the emotions of the past few days, only grew stronger. His attacks intensified in both strength and speed; the power through the Force fuelled him. Jedi Malakon spun his lightsaber lance, using both the blue blade, as well as the phrik shaft as weapons. A shower of sparks rained down when the two blades meet, followed by an explosion of light. Jedi Malakon had completely lost control, allowing the Force to guide his actions. As the attacks intensified, the Queen Mother felt as if she were losing control of her own actions. She awkwardly blocked the incoming attacks, and she found herself off-balance numerous times.

Suddenly, a powerful attack to her side caused her to fall off her feet. She slammed into the training mat, hard. Jedi Malakon stood over her, lightsaber lance posed to attack. She looked into his eyes; his eyes were filled with tears. After a few moments, he took two steps backwards, and deactivated his lightsaber, and retracted the hilt. She remained on the training mat for another moment, then stood up. They made eye contact for just a moment, but it felt like an eternity.

"Giving into your emotions—" The Queen Mother started.

"You don't know what you're talking about." Jedi Malakon cut her off.

The Queen Mother tried not to take offense to the remark, "No, I suppose I don't."

The Queen Mother deactivated her teal-bladed lightsaber, and walked over to her training bag. She carefully placed it inside, and towelled off again. Her battlesuit was soaked in sweat from the extensive workout. Suddenly, one of the Hapan Royal bodyguards, a tall muscular human male, stormed into the exercise room.

"Your Highness, I'm sorry to interrupt, there is an urgent message for Jedi Malakon." The bodyguard informed.

Jedi Malakon turned around to face the bodyguard. He handed over a flimsiplast with the order, and turned to leave. Recently, the Imperials have been hacking the HoloNet and other encrypted communication outlets, listening for Resistance communications. The use of flimsiplast, with beings delivering the message personally, has become a new style to combat the electronic hacking. Jedi Malakon read the order.

The Queen Mother turned around and looked at Jedi Malakon, "What is it?"

Jedi Malakon looked up at the Queen Mother, "I've got orders to head to Manaan."

"Manaan? Why?" The Queen Mother asked.

Jedi Malakon shook his head, "It doesn't say why."

"So I guess that means you won't be staying with us." The Queen Mother stated.

"No, I'm sorry." Jedi Malakon replied.

"No, don't be." The Queen Mother answered, "Duty calls."

### **Two Standard Days Later: Navlaas, the Pyrshak system:**

Jedi Malakon was transported to the third planet in the Pyrshak system, named Navlaas; the gas giant was orbited by eight moons, all of them dead worlds. Like all gas giants, the world had a thick atmosphere, with perpetual storms raging all across its surface. The intense magnetic field, generated by the metallic hydrogen core at the center of the gas giant, disrupted sensor readings, allowing starships to remain concealed. Recently, a small Galactic Alliance fleet has rallied in orbit around the gas giant; the fleet mostly composed of *Sabertooth*-class Rescue & Assault Vessels, with some *ShaShore*-class and *Tri-Scythe*-class frigates, one *Scythe*-class battle cruiser, and a stolen Imperial *Ardent*-class fast frigate.

Jedi Malakon was currently onboard the *Scythe*-class battle cruiser, dubbed the *Reliance*. The *Scythe*-class battle cruiser was a unique design, engineered by the Mon Calamari; it had a massive vertical blade centered on the bow of the battle cruiser, and was armed with the most advanced weaponry. Jedi Malakon was on the bridge, staring blankly through the viewport, thinking about Master Lii, while Commodore Varik Kynnovan, a pale-skinned human male, and other Galactic Alliance officers waited for the battle plan to come online. One of the officers, Captain Sibar Fre'kay, a male Bothan with long canines, was the next most senior officer. The other three were human males;

Lieutenant Vuul Corr, a dark-skinned, muscular man, Lieutenant Drox Tamplin, a older pale-skinned man, and Ensign Garin Ashdown, a short and stocky individual.

Suddenly, on the holographic projector, a large blue cone emerged from the base, and a large blue planet appeared above. Jedi Malakon snapped back to reality, turned away from the viewport, and approached the hologram.

"Manaan." Jedi Malakon said.

"Yes." Commodore Varik Kynnovan answered, "The Alliance has labelled the world *of great importance*."

"I bet." Jedi Malakon replied.

Recently, this world had become important in galactic affairs because of kolto, a liquid substance that could be found only on Manaan, and only at specific rift valleys on the sea floor, most notably the Hrakert Rift. With the advent of bacta, kolto fell by the wayside; but with the Insurgency dragging on, and bacta production at a maximum, kolto was required to fill in the demand.

"The Galactic Alliance fleet has tasked us to free the waterworld from the Imperial grasp." Commodore Varik Kynnovan informed in an overly confident voice, "Ahto City, and its Selkath inhabitants have been under Imperial tyranny for too long now. It is up to us to free them."

Ahto City was the capital of Manaan, and the only surface city and spaceport on the entire planet. With the exception of a handful of small islands, Ahto City was the only dry land on the entire planet. Most of the Selkath, Manaan's indigenous species, live in underwater cities. Approximately three years ago, the Empire, aided by the Sith, invaded Manaan, and enslaved the Selkath. The Empire monopolized the kolto, and forced the Selkath to build naval vessels for them. Many of the vessels built by the Selkath were submarines, but others included battleships, and dreadnoughts. Only recently, some of the Selkath started uprising against their Imperial overlords, intent on sabotaging the shipyards and destroying the kolto supplies.

"I hope you have a plan to do that, Commodore." Jedi Malakon replied.

"I do." Commodore Varik Kynnovan answered, "The plan is quite simple."

The Commodore punched in a few keystrokes, and the holographic world rotated to show Ahto City, with a single *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer in a geostationary

orbit around the planet. The Commodore pointed to the Star Destroyer, "This is the *Barricade*... a fitting name. It is currently the only Star Destroyer present in the entire system. The Imperials have let their guard down, and the time to strike is now."

"What kind of resistance can we expect?" Lieutenant Vuul Corr asked.

"The *Barricade* is only minimally crewed at the moment, and most of the starfighters and bombers have been retasked to other warships." Commodore Varik Kynnovan informed, "Within the city itself, patrols of stormtroopers are common, but not numerous."

"So what's the plan?" Jedi Malakon asked, "Just fly in and take over the city?"

"Precisely." Commodore Varik Kynnovan answered.

"What?" Jedi Malakon grudgingly replied.

"We wait until Ahto City is facing away from Navlaas, which will be approximately twelve hours from now." The Commodore started, "We perform an in-system microjump to Mana'an, arriving on the opposite hemisphere. The microjump will have to be precise and accurate, because we don't want the Imperials to know we've arrived."

"How accurate?" Lieutenant Drox Tamplin asked.

"We have to jump close enough that we come out of hyperspace just within the upper atmosphere, approximately four hundred kilometres above the surface." The Commodore explained, "That way, the planet itself will act as a shield, cloaking us from Imperial sensors."

Jedi Malakon thought about the proposed entry; something about it troubled him greatly, "How can you expect to jump that close to the planet?" Jedi Malakon asked, "The gravity well would pull us out of hyperspace well before we reach the atmosphere."

Commodore Varik Kynnovan punched in a few more buttons and a holographic schematic diagram of an *Ardent*-class fast frigate appeared in front of them, "We've acquired an Imperial *Ardent*-class fast frigate which we hope will aid in our infiltration of Mana'an." He explained, "We're retrofit the frigate, along with the other capital ships in our fleet, with hyperwave inertial momentum sustainers. That should allow us to jump near enough to the planet without much chance of detection."

Jedi Malakon winched a little during the explanation. Hyperwave inertial momentum sustainers were originally developed by the Bakurans during the First Galactic Civil War after the Ssi-ruuvi Imperium invaded their small world; they were first employed in combat during the First Corellian Insurrection. The HIMS surrounded the vessel in a static hyperspace "bubble", effectively allowing the ship to skip in between hyperspace and realspace. He had heard of terrible stories where the HIMS would catastrophically fail, tearing the ship apart. The whole notion of being on a capital ship with a HIMS system terrified him. Nevertheless, it was their only chance of insertion without detection, potentially.

"What if the Empire has patrols roaming the open-ocean?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"They don't." Commodore Varik Kynnovan answered quickly, "Intelligence reports all on-water patrols are restricted to a fifty kilometre radius around Ahto City."

Jedi Malakon shook his head slowly, "Then what?"

"Once we've microjumped into orbit around Manaan, our fleet will remain in geostationary orbit on the opposite hemisphere as Ahto City, while our *Sabertooth*-class assault vessels, and the stolen *Ardent*-class fast frigate descend through the atmosphere." The Commodore explained, "The *Ardent*-class fast frigate will head towards Ahto City, while the assault vessels will remain out of Imperial sight. Once the *Ardent*-class fast frigate reaches Ahto City, it will land, and a strike team will seize control of the spaceport hangars."

"How will the fast frigate even make it into Ahto City?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"We've acquired the authorization codes, courtesy of our Bothan friends." The Commodore answered; he punched in some buttons and a hologram of Manaan rotated and zoomed into Ahto City, "Once the strike team has reported the successful capture of the spaceport, our fleet in orbit will engage the lone Star Destroyer, while the assault vessels will proceed towards the city. Alliance commandoes, with the aid of local resistance groups, will engage the Imperials in urban combat. Once we've acquired Ahto City, the rest of Manaan will fall shortly thereafter."

The Galactic Alliance officers nodded as they listened to the plan. They all seemed to agree with the plan, while Commodore Varik Kynnovan seemed overly confident, possibly to the point of being arrogant. Jedi Malakon wasn't so sure; instead, he shook his head, "I don't like it. This seems too easy. Something's wrong, something's missing in this scenario. A variable overlooked perhaps."

"Nothing is missing, Jedi Malakon." Commodore Varik Kynnovan answered, "Rather, the only thing missing is an adequate Imperial presence, and possibly your nerve."

Jedi Malakon turned and stared at the Commodore, "Excuse me?"

"Jedi Malakon, I was to understand that you were to be the best individual to lead the ground assault." The Commodore explained, "However, your reluctance towards this flawless plan begs the question, 'are you the right man for the job?'."

Jedi Malakon stormed over to the Commodore, stood face-to-face, and in a stern voice said, "You listen to me you little worm! I've fought more battles than you've heard about! I've earned my reputation, so do *not* question my valour, or my leadership qualities!"

The Commodore stood up straight to meet Jedi Malakon eye-to-eye, "I respect what you've done for the Alliance in the past, Jedi Malakon. After all, you and Master Lii were the only two Jedi fighting the Sith in the early campaigns for quite some time. But you of all people should understand the seriousness of Imperial tyranny."

"I understand, Commodore." Jedi Malakon replied, "But the Imperials aren't so foolish to leave themselves so obviously open to attack."

"I beg to differ, Jedi Malakon." Commodore Varik Kynnovan countered, "Imperial strategy is based on economics, not necessity. Simply put, the Imperials are stretched thin across the galaxy, fighting on numerous fronts, on numerous worlds. Manaan, as you've seen, has been deprioritized. Bled of fighting power, and reinforcements, we are simply capitalizing on their error."

"Something is *wrong* with this, Commodore." Jedi Malakon said sternly, "Manaan is a crucial world, not only because of the kolto production, but also for their shipyards. The Imperials would never jeopardize one of their war-factories."

"Is that so, Jedi Malakon?" Commodore Varik Kynnovan replied, "If the Imperial presence is as tight-knit as you suggest, then explain to us how it is that the Alliance has managed to smuggle out our kolto supplies, huh?"

Jedi Malakon thought about the question for a moment, "I'm not sure, Commodore. Maybe the Imperials allowed it."

"Allowed it!" Commodore Varik Kynnovan protested.



"Yes!" Jedi Malakon said sternly, "It is possible the Imperials allowed kolto to be smuggled out in order to lull the Alliance into a false sense of security."

Commodore Varik Kynnovan shook his head, "Jedi Malakon, I think you over-estimate their capabilities."

"I think you over-estimate ours!" Jedi Malakon rebutted.

"Whose side are you on, anyways?" Commodore Varik Kynnovan countered.

"I've seen too many poorly planned missions lead to the deaths of thousands because of over-confidence and incomplete information!" Jedi Malakon answered, "I will not be a party to it any longer!"

Commodore Varik Kynnovan growled. Finally, the rest of the Alliance officers step in. Finally, Captain Sibar Fre'Kay, said, "This is a solid plan, Jedi Malakon. We must attack now, while the window-of-opportunity is still open!" He said in a growling voice, showing off his massive canines, "It's now or never."

Jedi Malakon watched as the other Alliance officers agreed with the assessment. He looked over to Commodore Varik Kynnovan, and said, "I'll only go on one condition."

"And what might that be, Jedi Malakon?" Commodore Varik Kynnovan asked in a stern voice.

"I'm on that fast frigate." Jedi Malakon answered.

*The fire surrounded Mathias; it consumed everything around it. The forest was burning down all around Mathias. Burning hot embers rained down all around him, and the gusts of wind were powerful. The howling, and the roar of the inferno was deafening. Mathias simply stood in the middle of it; the eye of the firestorm. Nevertheless, Mathias heard a scream coming from the forest. Sensing trouble, Mathias immediately ran towards the scream. He ran hard, and fast, searching for the source of the scream. As he ran faster, he realized that the scream wasn't a scream at all, but rather it was shouting. Mathias managed to get a glance at someone wearing a black hood. The hooded person ran deeper into the forest. Reluctantly, Mathias followed, eager to find out who this person was.*

*Mathias suddenly stopped, and looked behind him; he watched as the inferno burning behind him lashed out. The flare caught Mathias, and started burning his robe. He immediately*

*fell to the ground, and started rolling and patting the flame, trying to put it out. The heat from the flame burned his flesh. Mathias screamed in terror.*

"No!"

*Pain crept up his spine, and tears filled his eyes. The fire wasn't going out. Finally, Mathias tore the robe from off his burnt body, and patted down the last of the flames. Mathias stood, and gazed that raging inferno all around him. The sky was black, filled with smoke and embers; the wind was powerful, spreading the embers all around him. Lightning streaked across the blackened sky. The thunder pounded his chest, causing him to flinch for a moment.*

*Suddenly, Mathias heard the shouting again, and the familiar clash of lightsabers. Mathias quickened his pace, until he came across a clearing in the forest. The person in the black hood was armed with a crimson-bladed lightsaber. He was fighting his Master, Yuun Lii. The strain on his Master's face was undeniable. Shock and fear raced through Mathias' heart.*

"Master!"

Suddenly, Mathias was woken up; the sudden shock of being woken up startled him. One of his friends, Cosh Sonter, a member of Razor Squadron and number two man, was standing over him. At first he was smiling, but then his expression turned to worry. Mathias swallowed, hard; he felt a slight tingle slowly creep up his spine.

"Nap time's over, buddy." Cosh Sonter said, "Hey, are you alright?"

Mathias nodded, "Yeah, I'm fine. Just a bad dream."

"Alright... you were talking in your sleep." Cosh Sonter replied.

"I do not!" Mathias denied immediately.

Cosh laughed, "Alright, whatever. Anyways, it's almost time."

Mathias nodded his head, "I'll be there in a minute."

"Alright, don't take too long." Cosh Sonter replied.

Cosh Sonter left the quarters, and closed the durasteel door behind him. Mathias was breathing hard, and was drenched in sweat. He had goosebumps on his arm, and he felt chilly. His chest felt tight, and his head was killing him. As he rose to get up out of bed, his muscles were still sore, and his joints ached. Slowly, Mathias put on his Jedi attire, and closed his eyes.

*I'm going crazy, Mathias thought.*



Mathias composed himself, and walked out of the room, towards the hangar of the *Ardent*-class fast frigate. The corridors were nearly empty of personnel, but the few who passed him, nodded.

A standard hour passed without event, and now Jedi Malakon stood in front of the trapezoidal viewports located on the bridge of the *Ardent*-class fast frigate. He spent most of his time making sure the troops and pilots were ready for the coming battle; only just recently has he had any time for himself. He closed his eyes, and fell into a Force-induced meditation to calm his nerves; recently, all he could think about was his failure on Onderon. He didn't want to think about it, but he couldn't help it; it haunted him.

The mighty *Ardent*-class fast frigate was well armed, although much smaller relative to its Star Destroyer cousins; only one quarter of a Star Destroyer's size, it was faster, more manoeuvrable, and packed quite a punch. Classically, *Ardent*-class fast frigates have been used by the Imperial Navy to out-flank and pummel enemy frontlines, while the Star Destroyers come in after to land the killing-blow. As a result, commanders of *Ardent*-class fast frigates were fearless daredevils, with nerves of durasteel, and blood as cold as ice.

"The window-of-opportunity is upon us, Jedi Malakon." An Alliance officer reported.

For this mission, Jedi Malakon was granted command over the *Ardent*-class fast frigate, redubbed the *Trojan*. Jedi Malakon turned from his viewport, and stared at the Imperially-dressed crew sitting within the pit. In order to remain consistent with recent Imperial trends, the entire crew was comprised of humans. Recently, the Empire had reverted back to its more humanocentric prejudice; this resulted in many humans being promoted to higher positions in the military, relative to other species of aliens. As a result, entire Star Destroyers sometimes were crewed entirely by humans. They all stared at him, waiting for their orders.

Suddenly, he snapped to life, "Recalculate jump vector." Jedi Malakon ordered.

"Jump coordinate and vectors have been checked and rechecked, Commander." Another Alliance officer informed.

Jedi Malakon took a deep breath in, then ordered, "Commence microjump."

Immediately the Alliance officers began to work, issuing commands and orders. The jump coordinates, and the specific jump vectors were crucial for stealth, and safety. This particular manoeuvre devised by Commodore Varik Kynnovan was a risky one at best. Over the intercom system, the exact jump coordinates and vectors were being transmitted to each ship in the fleet.

*Moment of truth*, Jedi Malakon thought.

Suddenly, a mechanical female voice rang over the intercom system, "Microjump commencing in five, four, three, two, one... jump!"

Jedi Malakon turned around just in time to see the stars in the viewport stretch out into white string-like objects, then blur into a glowing blue-white sheet of light. Within a microsecond, a gravitic anomaly detector blared inside the bridge; the detector had already sensed the gravity well around Manaan, and activated the hyperwave inertial momentum sustainers. Suddenly, the bridge rocked and jerked violently, almost sending Jedi Malakon into the durasteel walls. The *Trojan* jerked in between hyperspace and realspace, violently jarring the ship as it skipped between both planes of reality. The high-pitched screeching of fatigued metal filled the bridge. Finally, with one last jerk, the *Trojan* emerged back into realspace. Immediately, the bright blue world of Manaan was in front of them. The large waterworld filled all the viewports. Jedi Malakon immediately turned around to look at the officers in the pit. They seemed fine, just a little jarred.

"Where are we?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"Exactly where we're supposed to be!" An Alliance officer reported.

Jedi Malakon ran over to the other viewports, and checked to see if the other Galactic Alliance ships made it. They dropped out of hyperspace only a second after the *Trojan*. Relief filled Jedi Malakon's mind, and he let out a long sigh. He turned back to the forward viewports, and gazed at the unusual waterworld of Manaan; the waterworld was unlike anything he had ever seen before. The blue world, almost completely covered with an immensely deep ocean, was quite a wonder. Beautiful, white, puffy clouds littered the sky, breaking up the blue ocean, and making the world seem even more elegant.

"Alliance fleet has initiated geostationary orbit." Another Alliance officer reported.

"Commence atmospheric descent." Jedi Malakon ordered.



Almost immediately the *Trojan* started to pitch downward towards the oceanic surface. The *Ardent*-class fast frigate rapidly descended through the upper atmosphere, and within a minute, they were entering the cloud deck. The dense, thick, white, puffy clouds filled the viewport, obscuring their vision. They finally descended through the cloud deck, and started to level the *Trojan* out. Jedi Malakon looked up towards the crisp, clear blue sky.

"What's our altitude?" Jedi Malakon ordered.

An Alliance officer reported, "Twenty-four hundred metres above sea-level."

"Set a course for Ahto City." Jedi Malakon ordered; then he said quietly, "And let's hope that authorization code works."

Jedi Malakon walked over to the side-viewports, and observed five *Sabertooth*-class Rescue & Assault Vessels descending through the cloud deck. They continued descending through the crystal clear atmosphere further down, however.

"How low are those Sabertooth's?" Jedi Malakon asked.

One of the Alliance officers answered, "They're levelling out at just over one thousand metres above sea-level."

Jedi Malakon nodded, *so far, so good*.

Jedi Malakon watched as the *Sabertooth*-class Rescue & Assault Vessels spread out into a delta formation, with a leader, and two vessels taking the flank on either side. The light from the primary star, Pyrshak, reflected off the crystal clear water like a mirror, making it glisten. The calm blue ocean was covered with white-caped waves; the undulatory movement of the ocean was almost hypnotic. The ocean completely covered the horizon; for as far as Jedi Malakon could see, it was all blue ocean. Jedi Malakon then turned around, and looked towards the pit.

"How long until we arrive at Ahto City?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"At present rate, just under two hours." An Alliance officer informed.

Jedi Malakon nodded his head, *just sit back, and enjoy the ride*.

"Ahto City on the sensors." One of the Galactic Alliance officers informed.

"Very good." Jedi Malakon answered.

Jedi Malakon gazed upon Ahto City. He saw the massive walled city, although he was over fifty kilometres away. Ahto City was a gigantic city that was shell-shaped in structure, with a base that sloped into the ocean. The city literally floated on top of the water, using buoyancy to keep the city afloat. Ahto City was once destroyed by the Sith approximately thirty-seven hundred years ago, but it was later rebuilt by the Galactic Empire during the reign of Emperor Palpatine.

"Wow." Jedi Malakon whispered to himself.

Jedi Malakon watched in awe as the massive city afloat the never ending sparkling ocean approached. For a moment, Jedi Malakon forgot his worries. Jedi Malakon allowed himself to smile at the fantastic sight. He then walked over to the side viewports to observe the *Sabertooth*-class Rescue & Assault Vessels.

"The Sabertooth's are pulling back." An Alliance officer informed.

"Good." Jedi Malakon replied, "Tell them to watch their backs, and to stay out of Imperial sensor range."

"Confirmed." The Alliance officer replied.

The *Ardent*-class fast frigate sped through, into the Imperial occupied zone, approximately fifty kilometres around Ahto City. Almost immediately, they were hailed.

"Imperial spaceport command is on the horn!" An Alliance officer reported.

*"Unidentified Ardent-class fast frigate, reduce your speed and altitude, and transmit authorization code, or prepare to be fired upon."* Imperial spaceport command ordered.

Ahto City had a top-notch spaceport, equipped with state-of-the-art docking ports, high-tech security, and top-rated engineers and mechanics; the entire perimeter of the city was lined with hangars and landing zone, as well as harbours and ports. Ahto City was also among the most secure, and strict spaceports in the entire galaxy. Before, the Selkath dock authorities were tasked to maintain security. But now, since Imperial occupation, stormtroopers and Sith Knights have taken over that task.

"Reduce speed, and transmit the codes." Jedi Malakon ordered; then, in a whisper, "Moment of truth."

A few seconds passed after sending the authorization codes. Ahto City was steadily getting closer, but they were approaching at a much slower speed. They remained relatively high in altitude, only descending a couple hundred metres. The tension on the bridge, as well as inside Jedi Malakon, grew as the Imperial spaceport command didn't respond.

Jedi Malakon shook his head, "They're not buying it! Get ready to run!"

"Sir, unidentified dreadnought class off to our port stern!" Another Alliance officer reported.

"Break!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

The *Ardent*-class fast frigate began to bank to starboard. Suddenly, the entire bridge shook violently; sparks showered from the electronic equipment, and many of the Alliance officers in the pit toppled over, out of their chairs. The officers screamed from the sudden, violent jarring. Jedi Malakon looked out the forward viewport just in time to see a massive red energy beam strike the hull, and punch straight through. The entire mid-portion of the portside was missing, replaced by a glowing white hole. His eyes widened from the shock and surprise of the attack. In order to remain standing, Jedi Malakon used the Force to stick himself onto the durasteel floor.

Finally regaining his balance, "What was that?"

"Unknown!" An Alliance officer reported.

"Hull breach!" Another Alliance officer reported, "We're breaking up!"

The *Ardent*-class fast frigate suddenly began to pitch downwards towards the open ocean, and roll side-to-side at uneven angles. Suddenly, loud popping and cracking sounds resonated inside the bridge. The entire stern of the *Ardent*-class fast frigate torque and rotated, slowly and forcefully breaking off from the bow. The stern of the massive warship violently plunged through the crisp, crystal clear atmosphere, headed directly for the great blue ocean. Suddenly, the crippled ship shattered into two separate pieces, with the rear portion crashing through the atmosphere at a much higher rate. Debris from the hull, as well as equipment and personnel were jettisoned into the open air, falling through the atmosphere until they smashed into the water at an incredible speed.

"Send out a mayday to the Alliance fleet!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

"Mayday-mayday-mayday!" Jedi Malakon heard several Alliance officers transmit, "*Trojan* going down, approximately twenty kilometres west-southwest from Ahto City!"

Suddenly, a body of a human male smashed into the forward viewport, cracking the transparisteel window. The impact of the body left a blood stain on the window. The deep blue ocean of Manaen filled the viewport until it was the only thing visible. Jedi Malakon began walking backwards, towards the pit.

"Altitude, three hundred metres!" An Alliance officer reported.

"Prepare for impact!" Jedi Malakon shouted.

Jedi Malakon leaped into the pit, just as the rear of the *Ardent*-class fast frigate crashed into the water. The bottom buckled, and tore off from the surface tension and friction of the water, and the sudden deceleration. The transparisteel viewports shattered instantly, and cracks tore through the walls and ceiling of the bridge. Sparks showered down from cables and electrical equipment. The water crashed against the hull of the warship; the massive cracks that formed on the outside of the hull from the tremendous impact, started filling in with water. Finally, the *Ardent*-class fast frigate levelled off, and started sinking. Very quickly, the *Ardent*-class fast frigate started to sink into the ocean, water poured into the corridors, sweeping beings off their feet, while drowning others.

"Everybody out!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

A group of Alliance officers were trying to get the bridge doors open. Jedi Malakon looked back at them, and shouted, "Forget the doors! Out the windows!"

Jedi Malakon climbed out of the broken viewport windows. He turned around, and help the remaining Alliance officers get out through the windows as well. Jedi Malakon stared at the edge of the cracked and shattered hull of the once-triangular wedge-like fast frigate. The cracks in the armoured durasteel hull were quite massive; each was over five metres long, and the gap was over two centimetres wide. The cracks spread across the entire hull, causing smaller cracks and fractures to form all around. The cracks were spreading, with smaller fractures coalescing into larger ones. The sound of bending and shattering metal was chilling, and getting louder by the second. The armoured durasteel hull was bending, and collapsing rapidly. The gigantic ocean waves crashed and pummelled the shattered hull of the fast frigate. Although they appeared tiny from above, they were enormous at surface level. The water was pouring

into the crippled warship, causing it to sink rapidly. Quickly, the Alliance officers followed him. They all stared out into the open ocean; there wasn't a soul out there on the horizon.

"Better hope that mayday got through." Jedi Malakon replied.

Jedi Malakon then looked downward, towards the turning ocean. They were standing about eighty metres above the surface of the water. Fear swept over Jedi Malakon.

"Can we survive that?" One of the Alliance officers asked.

Jedi Malakon thought about it for a moment, "No."

"Then what?" Another Alliance officer asked.

Jedi Malakon looked over to his side, and saw the bow starting to sink, causing the stern of the fast frigate to pitch upwards. Jedi Malakon pointed towards the bow, and started running. Immediately, the Alliance officers followed.

"We have to get lower!" Jedi Malakon shouted, "Once the bow goes under, we should be able to jump off at a safe height!"

The hull was being torn apart, falling into the ocean as twisted pieces of durasteel. Some pieces of armoured durasteel hull was still glowing orange from the intense heat from the energy beam; once they hit the water, the super-heated durasteel sizzled, causing the water to boil and steam to billow.

They ran towards the front of the *Ardent*-class fast frigate as fast as they could. They got to about twenty metres from where the water was starting to rush on top of the hull. The waves crested, and crashed onto the hull with incredible force. The water was coming over the top of the hull with frightening speed. Jedi Malakon steadied himself on the rocking hull.

"Get ready!" Jedi Malakon shouted, then suddenly, "Now!"

Immediately, he leapt into the air, and dove into the water. The Alliance officers followed. As Jedi Malakon hit the water, a sudden chill washed over him. The water was unexpectedly cold, only about eleven degrees centigrade. The saline water filled his mouth, leaving a bitter aftertaste in his mouth. He surfaced and spat the water out. He treaded water for a moment, making sure the others made it.

After a few surfaced, he shouted, "Swim!"

Jedi Malakon immediately started swimming away from the sinking vessel. As more water poured into the fractured fast frigate, the faster it sank. The sinking *Ardent*-class fast frigate caused a vacuum effect, essentially sucking anything nearby down with it. Jedi Malakon swam hard, fighting against the vacuum being created by the sinking fast frigate. Spouts of water shot up into the air, as the last voids filled with water. After only a few minutes in the water, Jedi Malakon and the rest of the Alliance officers managed to escape the sinking vessel. Jedi Malakon looked back at the *Trojan*, watching it finally sink completely into the deep blue ocean. Off to the side, about ten kilometres away, the front portion of the former fast frigate also sank; the entire nose of the triangular wedge-like vessel had broken off from the impact.

He treaded water, then looked around. Amongst the floating debris, mostly twisted durasteel, furniture, and various supplies and gear, were other Alliance personnel. Jedi Malakon rose his hand, and waved, "Hey, over here!"

The survivors waved back, and shouted their greetings. The waves on the open ocean were surprisingly tall, causing the survivors to bob up-and-down violently. Occasionally, the saline water would get into Jedi Malakon's face, causing his eyes to sting momentarily. He immediately started swimming over to the rest of the survivors. A bunch of them, only about a dozen, gathered together in the turbulent waters.

He recognized one of the Alliance officers, "Did that mayday get out?"

The Alliance officer shook his head, "I don't know."

Jedi Malakon spat out some saline ocean water, "Well, let's hope it did."

Off to the side, after ten metres away, a large, twisted piece of armoured hull was still afloat. Jedi Malakon swam over to it. The twisted hull was very large, probably seven metres by five metres.

"Get on top of this!" Jedi Malakon shouted.

The Alliance officers swam over. Jedi Malakon help the female officers get on first. Only three people were able to get on. Jedi Malakon clung to the edge of the twisted hull, using it help him stay afloat.

After a few moments, one of the Alliance officers asked, "What could have done that? What could have taken out an *Ardent*-class fast frigate with one hit!"

"Nothing conventional, that's for sure." Another Alliance officer added.

Jedi Malakon shook his head, "No. I saw the energy beam."

"What kind of weapon system has such a powerful laser?" A third Alliance officer asked.

"Nothing we know about." Jedi Malakon answered.

Jedi Malakon's body started to get colder; his muscles were twitching, and goosebumps ran up and down his arms. His teeth chattered from the cold, and his body started to turn numb. His lips started to turn blue from the cold. Jedi Malakon looked at the others, and they were in similar condition.

"What about that dreadnought?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"No way! No naval vessel has that kind of firepower!" One of the Alliance officers asked.

"Planetary turbolasers can pack that kind of punch." One of the female Alliance officer informed, "And they're manufactured by Kuat Drive Yards."

"Planetary turbolasers are ground-based platforms, not oceanic." Another Alliance officer informed.

"That doesn't mean they couldn't stick one on a dreadnought." Jedi Malakon answered.

Suddenly, a roaring sound appeared behind them. They all looked, and saw one of the *Sabertooth*-class Rescue & Assault Vessels approaching. The *Sabertooth*-class Rescue & Assault Vessel was a unique design; with a typical oval body, it had two long spires, or 'fangs', that extended down from the bow of the vessel. These spires were adjustable to almost any angle, and were heavily reinforced in order to latch onto other ships. The Alliance officers started waving, and cheering as the *Sabertooth*-class Rescue & Assault Vessel approached. Jedi Malakon smiled at the sight. Within seconds, the vessel hovered over a hundred metres overtop of them, with its spires bent backwards. Suddenly, three rescue swimmers repelled down from the vessel, and crashed into the water. The rescue swimmers were wearing black wetsuits, and oxygen masks; they swam over to the survivors.

"It's real good to see you guys!" Jedi Malakon shouted over the roar of the engines above.

The rescue swimmer nodded, "It's good to see some made it!"

Jedi Malakon felt the relief pour over the dozen Alliance officers through the Force. The other two rescue swimmers went to different sections of the water, presumably to aid other survivors.

The rescue swimmer unhooked the rope from his harness, "Whose first?"

After thirty minutes, Jedi Malakon was the last person in the water. He sat on top of the large, twisted piece of durasteel hull, waiting for the rope to descend from the *Sabertooth*-class Rescue & Assault Vessel. The rope started its descent, and finally, the rescue swimmer grabbed hold of it.

"Alright, we go together!" The rescue swimmer shouted.

Jedi Malakon nodded his head as the rescue swimmer tied the harness and rope around both their chests. The winch started to pull them both out of the water; Jedi Malakon's robes were completely soaked in saline water, and they felt as if they weighed a tonne. The wind was picking up, adding to the chilly feeling he already felt from being in the water for so long. The wind was also causing the rope to swing side-to-side, making Jedi Malakon very nervous. After a two minute ascent, the other two rescue swimmers finally pulled both Jedi Malakon, and the accompanying rescue swimmer into the vessel.

"Get us out of here!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

"Yes, sir." One of the rescue swimmers replied.

The rescue swimmer rose and relayed the order via the intercom system. Almost immediately, the vessel started to pitch upward, heading towards the upper atmosphere. Jedi Malakon remained on the diamond-plated durasteel floor, breathing hard, and shivering. He tried to tear his robe off, which was soaked in cold water, but his muscles were sapped of strength. His body was numb, and his skin was blue from the cold. His muscles were twitching uncontrollably, and his teeth wouldn't stop chattering. Eventually, one of the Alliance officers, a cute looking brunette, came over with an oversized blanket. She took his Jedi robe off, and covered his body with the blanket; she wrapped her arms around him, and started rubbing his back.

"This'll keep you warm." She replied.

Jedi Malakon couldn't get a word out to thank her because his teeth wouldn't stop chattering. His body started to warm up, and the twitching of his muscles started to dissipate. The chattering of his teeth also started to slow down.

"How're you feeling?" She asked.

Jedi Malakon composed himself for a moment, "Much better."

She let go, and wrapped the blanket around his entire body. She helped him towards one of the chairs. His joints ached when they moved, and his muscles were exhausted. Suddenly, one of the Galactic Alliance Commandoes, also known as GAC, appeared in front of him.

"Miss, if you'd excuse us." The commando replied; she nodded, and walked away. The commando turned his attention back onto Jedi Malakon, "Sir, you need to be debriefed."

Jedi Malakon composed himself, "How many survivors?"

The commando thought about it, "Eighty."

*Out of five hundred*, Jedi Malakon thought with despair. He placed his face in his cold hands, "Did you check the other crash site."

"Yes." The commando answered, "There weren't many survivors there too."

"Damn." Jedi Malakon whispered.

"Sir, the debrief." The commando insisted.

Jedi Malakon slowly stood up. Being submerged in cold water for an extended period of time caused his joints to seize, making it hard, and painful, to move. His muscles didn't have much left in them after the ordeal, but nevertheless, he forced himself to walk with the commando. They finally reached the bridge of the vessel, where a blue cone of light emerged with a holographic image of Commodore Varik Kynnovan. Only his head and shoulders were visible, and the hologram was fuzzy and full of static.

"Jedi Malakon, it's good to see you made it. We were worried when we heard your frigate went down." Commodore Varik Kynnovan replied, "We're moving around the planet as we speak, making our way to you."

Jedi Malakon nodded, "Good to see you too, Commodore."



"What the hell happened out there?" Commodore Varik Kynnovan asked.

"The Imperials shot us down!" Jedi Malakon answered.

"Why would—" Commodore Varik Kynnovan started.

"Because your code didn't work!" Jedi Malakon shouted, "Or, they were waiting for us!"

"I hardly think—" The Commodore started.

"Your intel was fraudulent!" Jedi Malakon cut him off.

"Impossible." The Commodore replied.

"Really? Because there was a vessel out on the water with enough firepower to rip our frigate in half!" Jedi Malakon countered, "We have no idea what the true Imperial presence is here."

The Commodore bit his tongue, and swallowed his pride, "What do you suggest we do?"

Jedi Malakon thought about the question for a moment, "We need to proceed with the plan."

"How?" Commodore Varik Kynnovan asked.

Jedi Malakon took a moment to think, "How certain are you that Star Destroyer in orbit is minimally crewed?"

"Very." Commodore Varik Kynnovan answered, "We have several reports, from a variety of sources that indicate that the *Barricade* has been slowly bled of crew, munitions and fighters."

Jedi Malakon took a deep breath in, "If this is true, then we might have a shot at taking the city."

"I'm listening." Commodore Varik Kynnovan replied.

"The entire Alliance fleet will have to get involved." Jedi Malakon explained, "The *Reliance* and the rest of the frigate will have to engage the *Barricade*. Hopefully, you'll be able to disable it, or at least create a big enough distraction for a small contingent of fighters to descend through the atmosphere, and attack the city."

"This sounds very sceptical, Jedi Malakon." The Commodore replied.

"It's the only way." Jedi Malakon argued, "If we do nothing, then those Selkath down there will die for nothing."

"How exactly do you plan to disable the *Barricade*?" Commodore Varik Kynnovan asked.

"How many starfighters do you have?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"Two hundred Crossfires, and twenty-two shuttles." The Commodore answered.

"The *Reliance* and the frigates will have to concentrate their fire on specific weak spots on the hull, while the fighters go in and swarm the bridge." Jedi Malakon suggested, "Just like the old days."

"And what about the city?" Commodore Varik Kynnovan asked, "It has active sensors that will pick you up on the scanners before you even get anywhere near it."

Jedi Malakon nodded his head, "We'll have to perform a free-fall drop into the atmosphere. That should make us blind to their sensors. Then, about a kilometre above the surface, we activate our engines, and head for the city." Jedi Malakon informed, "We'll load up with proton torpedoes, and blast a hole into the side of the city. Then, once the breach as been successfully executed, we'll order the shuttles to drop down. My fighters will escort them down, and make sure they're safe. The GAC teams inside will do the rest, and hopefully, the local Selkath resistance hasn't been killed off by then."

"What about that vessel that supposedly shot you down?" The Commodore asked, "The Imperials will no doubt contact them for help. How will you contain that?"

Jedi Malakon shrugged, and shook his head.

"This plan seems... implausible." Commodore Varik Kynnovan replied, "How will you get in, and take down the city's defences?"

"Razor's can do it." Jedi Malakon said confidently.

"You do know that we don't have enough shuttles to bring all the GAC teams in at once." Commodore Varik Kynnovan informed, "The shuttles will have to make multiple trips, and so will you."

"I understand, Commodore." Jedi Malakon answered, "The Razor's can do it."



The Commodore thought about it for a moment; it was a dangerous and daring plan. After a couple of moments, he finally came to a decision; he reluctantly said, "Alright. Let's do it."

Razor Squadron, consisting of Jedi Malakon, his wingman Cosh Sonter plus his co-pilot, and twenty other elite pilots, occupying eleven other starfighters, were waiting anxiously for their free-fall drop. A free-fall drop was a risky and dangerous manoeuvre, whereby a fighter would plummet through the atmosphere without engines. At a sufficiently low enough altitude, they would restart their engines, and hopefully, pull out of the dive. The main worry was that the engines wouldn't start, although falling several hundred kilometres without engines was the another. Razor Squadron consisted of all CF9 Crossfire starfighters, except for Jedi Malakon, who flew in an X-83 TwinTail starfighter. They were currently onboard the *Reliance*, sitting inside their individual starfighters. All starfighters had their S-foils, or strike foils, closed. The hangar door opened, and the *Reliance* positioned itself for the drop.

"Alright Razor's, show time." Jedi Malakon replied, "Remember to use your flaps while falling. At nine hundred metres, turn your engines on, and pull out of your dive. Pull hard... there is no room for error."

"Copy that, Razor One." Cosh Sonter replied over the communication system.

The rest of the Razor's acknowledged with a series of clicks on the microphones. Then, the hangar turned dark, and red lights started flashing all around them. A horn sounded, and the hangar door started opening. Without an atmospheric shielding, the hangar door opened up to hard vacuum, causing anything inside the hangar to be sucked out. A loud roar filled the hangar as the atmosphere rushed out into the vacuum of space. The starfighters were sufficiently clapped down however.

"Release!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

The secure clamps holding down the X-83 TwinTail starfighter suddenly released, and the starfighter lifted off the permacrete floor. The starfighter rushed towards the hangar door, which were wide open. The whistling and howling created by the wind, and atmosphere escaping, resonated within the cockpit. The starfighter was jettisoned out of the *Reliance* hangar, headed straight down towards the upper atmosphere of Mana'an. Within seconds, the starfighter was in hard vacuum, mere kilometres away from the upper atmosphere. Jedi Malakon looked around through the

cockpit viewports; the atmosphere of Manaen gave the planet a majestic blue aura. Jedi Malakon laughed at the exhilaration, and smiled. Although a dangerous manoeuvre, it was exceptionally fun. He looked back to see if the others were following. They were, one by one being released from the hangar.

"Okay Razor's, the easy part is over." Jedi Malakon radioed, "Now just hang back and enjoy the ride. Maintain radio silence throughout the free-fall. Out."

The Razor's acknowledged the command with a series of clicks on the microphone. Almost immediately they entered the upper atmosphere. The X-83 TwinTail starfighter started shaking and rocking; the atmosphere started exhibiting friction on the hull of the starfighter, causing it to jerk around.

*Entering the mesosphere.*

The shaking got violent, and Jedi Malakon had to grab the yoke hard to prevent it from pitching and rolling wildly. Although the engines were off, the flaps on the wings still worked, allowing for some control. The shaking was unimaginable; Jedi Malakon gripped the yoke so hard, his knuckles turned white. His arms shook with the rest of the starfighter, trying to bring the free-fall under some kind of control. Suddenly, the nose of the starfighter started glowing yellow-orange.

*Friction from the atmosphere is heating the hull.*

Flames poured over the nose and onto the transparisteel cockpit viewport. The entire forward viewport was engulfed in flames. Jedi Malakon, unable to see, still fought against the shaking and rolling of his starfighter. Jedi Malakon tried to look behind him, to see if his squadron was doing alright, but the flames and the jarring made that impossible. Jedi Malakon focused on bring his starfighter back into control. He looked over at his altimeter.

*Fifty kilometres, Jedi Malakon thought, entering the stratosphere.*

The flames died down, and Jedi Malakon was able to see out his forward viewport again. The edges of the transparisteel windows were singed, but it was still clear enough to see out of. A sudden blanket of white, puffy clouds came over the viewport. The clouds were thick, and visibility was only a few metres. The starfighter flew through the clouds at an astonishing speed, terminal velocity. Because the X-83 TwinTail starfighter has aerodynamic properties, it fell at a much higher rate, relative to the CF9 Crossfire starfighters. The X-83 TwinTail starfighter rocked violently from side-

to-side, and rolled at irregular intervals. The retraining harness keeping Jedi Malakon in his chair pulled against his body, digging into his skin.

"C'mon!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

Jedi Malakon relentless tried to bring his starfighter into control, using just flaps, but it was extremely difficult. Sweat poured down his face because of the exertion. Jedi Malakon continued to manipulate the yoke, even though his hand was cramping from his tight grip.

*Twenty kilometres, Jedi Malakon thought, entering the troposphere.*

Suddenly, the starfighter began jarring and pitching wildly. Jedi Malakon was taken completely surprised by the violence his starfighter was experiencing. His starfighter shook aggressively. Jedi Malakon slammed into the side of the cockpit a few times because of the sudden violent jerks. He was still falling through the clouds, so he was unable to see what was below him either.

"What the hell!" Jedi Malakon shouted.

The air from the surface raises because of thermal heating from the incident light from the primary star. As air heats up, it expands, becomes less dense, and rises. This creates convection cells, and vertical mixing, resulting in turbulence. The turbulence from the rising air caused his starfighter to yaw and pitch unpredictably.

*This is suicide, Jedi Malakon thought with a flash of fear.*

The jarring and shaking of his starfighter didn't dissipate much as he rapidly descended through the thickening atmosphere. Jedi Malakon strained against the yoke, fighting against the powerful forces acting against him. Jedi Malakon clenched his teeth together, growling as he fought against the jarring starfighter. He looked down at the altimeter again.

*Three kilometres.*

"Computer, prepare the engines for emergency activation." Jedi Malakon ordered the onboard integrated astromech droid.

Jedi Malakon could hear the engine block struggling to turning on. A cold start of the engines could cause it to blow out, and disable the engines completely, which travelling at terminal velocity wouldn't be ideal. The integrated astromech droid was a hallmark of Incom Corporation design. Like astromechs before it, they were fully

autonomous intelligences that, without frequent memory wipes, could develop its own personality. Some pilots, however, like the astromech droids to develop its own personality; Jedi Malakon hated it though.

Jedi Malakon anxiously watched the altimeter dial down. The starfighter plummeted through the atmosphere at an incredible rate of speed. Sweat, both from the exertion of fighting the starfighter and from fear, poured down his face; his robe was utterly soaked in sweat. His heart raced, and his breathing intensified. Jedi Malakon's hands were cramped from gripping the yoke so hard, but he continued fighting the forces acting against him. Suddenly, the starfighter came out of the clouds, and into the crystal clear atmosphere. He looked over at the altimeter as it just reached nine hundred metres.

"Activate engines!" Jedi Malakon shouted.

The astromech droid was already programmed to activate the engines when they reached nine hundred metres. The engines came alive with a massive roar; Jedi Malakon could feel the sudden jar from the engines when they activated. Immediately, Jedi Malakon pitched the starfighter's nose up, so the thrusters would counter-act the force of gravity. The friction from the atmosphere made this difficult however, making the rotation slow. Jedi Malakon fought against the yoke once more, pulling the stick into his gut. Jedi Malakon grunted and growled as he fought against the yoke. He looked at the altimeter, for just a moment.

*Two hundred metres.*

Fear and doubt started to swell up inside Jedi Malakon's mind. With all his strength, Jedi Malakon tried to pull out of the dive, and level himself off. The yoke was fighting against him, shaking and vibrating, but Jedi Malakon fought back. He watched as the horizon seemed to level off, but the starfighter was still plummeting at a tremendous rate. Just then, Jedi Malakon felt just a slight nudge of forward momentum.

*One hundred metres!*

The yoke was buried into the Jedi's gut. His knuckles were white, and sweat soaked through his Jedi robes. His breathing became laboured and erratic; his vision became cloudy and blurry. His heart beat so hard and fast he thought he might get a heart-attack. Jedi Malakon screamed at the controls, nothing audible, just random angry screams. His arms were exhausted from the constant bombardment of opposing forces acting against his starfighter.

*Thirty metres!*

The surface of the ocean was coming up fast. The starfighter only just began moving forward, a sign that he was pulling out. Jedi Malakon could see the ocean waves white-cap, and the light reflect off its surface. With all of his might, he fought against the yoke. Just then, the starfighter started to come out of the dive, and fly forward. The starfighter was still falling however, but it was coming out of the dive. The starfighter's rear engines slammed into the surface of the water, and bounced back up. The engines, surprisingly, were unharmed, and the starfighter flew forward, parallel to the surface of the ocean.

"Yes! I knew it!" Jedi Malakon screamed in joy, then laughed.

Water from the ocean splashed onto the forward viewport, temporarily blurring his vision. The water constantly bombarded the forward viewport, kicked up by the waves and the engines. The constant pummelling of water onto his starfighter was deafening. Jedi Malakon breathed a sigh of relief, and relaxed for a moment. He listened as the water splashed onto his starfighter; it sounded like rain. He smiled, then looked back to see if the rest of the CF9 Crossfire's had made it. The CF9 Crossfire starfighters actually seemed to have it easier than Jedi Malakon. He nodded in relief. He watched as his wingman, Cosh Sonter levelled out, and came up behind him.

"What do you hear, Cosh?" Jedi Malakon asked.

There was a moment of silence, then Cosh replied, "Nothing but the rain, sir."

Jedi Malakon laughed, "Boom, boom, boom."

Jedi Malakon smiled, then stared out onto the horizon. The water splashed onto his viewport, so he pitched upward slightly. They were flying just under fifteen metres above the surface of the water.

"Alright Razor's, we're approximately sixty kilometres southwest of Ahto City." Jedi Malakon informed, "If we maintain an altitude of fifteen metres, we should be able to fly right under their sensors."

A series of clicks acknowledged that they all heard the information. Jedi Malakon counted the clicks; they were all present. He sighed in relief again.

"Everyone look out for anything on the water." Jedi Malakon ordered, "And once we reach Ahto City... unleash hell."

The dozen pilots soared mere metres off the surface of the water; the waves crested and crashed, occasionally splashing water onto their windshields. The water would bead on the transparisteel windshield, only to fly off due to the incredibly speed they were travelling at. Flying at over twelve hundred kilometres per hour, they reached Ahto City in under three standard minutes. The gigantic floating city, as beautiful as anything Jedi Malakon had ever seen, was dead ahead. The great grey walls surrounded the city, while waves crashed onto its surface.

"Coming up on Ahto City." Jedi Malakon informed, "Lock S-foils in attack positions."

The S-foils locked into place, and Jedi Malakon armed all weapons. The enhanced heavy laser cannon on the X-83 TwinTail starfighter were extremely powerful, and the autofire function allowed for greater accuracy when firing against fast moving targets. Armed with sixteen proton torpedoes, the X-83 TwinTail starfighter could deal-out some serious damage. Jedi Malakon pitched the starfighter upwards, climbing into the sky. Suddenly, he rolled the starfighter over, and dove towards the outer edges of the city. Jedi Malakon looked up, keeping the city in his sight the entire time. The nose pitched downward, and pointed towards the hangars and landing docks that littered the perimeter of the city. Jedi Malakon squeezed the trigger twice, letting two proton torpedoes loose. The pair of proton torpedoes streaked through the air with a red glow trailing behind. Jedi Malakon levelled the starfighter out, and flew parallel to the surface of the city. The glowing red proton torpedoes struck one of the hangars; the proton detonator set off the baradium charge, focusing the explosion through a tight cone. The energy was more than enough to collapse the durasteel and permacrete hangar.

Jedi Malakon looked back to watch the explosion, "Direct hit!"

He watched as the CF9 Crossfire starfighters also made their attack runs, launching a single proton torpedo each. The CF9 Crossfire starfighters were only equipped with six proton torpedoes, but packed a powerful punch with cannons. Several more hangars and landing docks were blown to pieces from the impacts of the glowing red proton torpedoes. Jedi Malakon turned his starfighter around, and came at the city again, lining up for another attack run.

"Target their communication tower!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

"*Copy that, Razor One.*" Cosh Sonter replied.

Jedi Malakon looked over his right shoulder, and saw his wingman's starfighter following closely behind. Jedi Malakon pitched his starfighter down, gaining speed, and lined up the nose with the closest communication tower. The communication towers were large spire-like buildings, with multiple antennae and parabolic dishes to relay information. Jedi Malakon sped towards the building at full speed. Jedi Malakon lined up the communication tower with his targeting reticule, and locked in the target. The target locked turned red, indicating a good lock.

"Sweet lock!" Jedi Malakon shouted; he squeezed the trigger, and fired a single proton torpedo, "One away!"

Jedi Malakon banked hard left; Cosh Sonter fired a single proton torpedo as well, and broke hard right. The two proton torpedoes tore through the structure, causing it to collapse. Blocks of durasteel crashed into the nearby hangars, structurally crippling them as well. Jedi Malakon looked around for the rest of his squadron. The various elite pilots were performing strafing runs on the hangars and landing docks; some were taking out the numerous communication towers, but there were too many.

"Alright Razor's, look out for incoming enemy fighters." Jedi Malakon informed, "They're bound to be coming in any minute."

Meanwhile, Razor Squadron continued bombarding the city with torrents of proton torpedoes and energy bolts. The fighters focused their attack on a specific section of the city, the westside spaceport. After only a few minutes of flybys and strafing runs, the entire westside spaceport was in ruins. Only twisted durasteel columns, and permacrete rubble remained. Flames erupted from the rubble pile, black smoke rose from the ruins, and sparks showered the entire area. Jedi Malakon checked to see his armaments; only nine proton torpedoes left.

"*Reliance*, send down the shuttles now!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

"Copy, Razor One." *Reliance* control replied, "*Shuttles inbound*."

"Copy. Shuttles inbound." Jedi Malakon repeated, "Alright, we're a go!"

Jedi Malakon looked towards the crisp blue sky to see if there were any enemy fighters incoming. The clouds overhead were thin, and he could see straight through to the *Barricade*. He saw the Alliance fleet engaging the Star Destroyer. Occasionally, a bright ball of fire would erupt on the hull of the minimally crewed Star Destroyer. He couldn't see any more detail, but the battle seemed to be going well.

"Alright Razor's, time to make our climb!" Jedi Malakon informed.

He quickly looked back over his shoulder; The entire westside of Ahto City was draped in thick, black smoke. Jedi Malakon pulled back on the yoke hard, and initiated a steep, high-g climb. The rest of Razor Squadron followed. They shot up through the atmosphere as fast as their starfighters would allow. Almost immediately, they were back into the clouds. The clouds above Ahto City were thinner, and visibility wasn't much of an issue. As the Razor's climbed, they finally saw the *Crix*-class assault shuttles, twenty-two in total, streaking through the atmosphere, a tail of white exhaust following behind. The massive *Crix*-class assault shuttles were hard to miss; they were the standard means of transporting large numbers of troops and heavy equipment and vehicles onto a planet's surface. The *Crix*-class assault shuttles were reminiscent of previous transports designed by Corellian and Mon Calamari engineers; the assault shuttle was a circular transport, armed with a variety of weapons, and equipped with shields.

"Talley visual." Jedi Malakon replied, "I've got eyes on them."

The *Crix*-class assault shuttle, carrying about fifty GAC individuals each, were relatively slow, only flying at eight hundred and fifty kilometres per hour. Jedi Malakon flew up past them, then rolled over, and dove back down. The manoeuvre was extremely risky, and jarring. Jedi Malakon's body was pulled and pushed in opposite directions with incredible force; he strained against the opposing forces, trying to maintain his control over the starfighter. He started to dive, and flew past the lead assault shuttle. Jedi Malakon looked behind his right shoulder, and saw the assault shuttles plus Razor Squadron, falling through the atmosphere.

"Keep a look out for Eyeballs." Jedi Malakon ordered.

Eyeballs was an Galactic Alliance slang used to indicate the *Predator*-class starfighter; the term was used because of the distinctive spherical cockpit, and the arrow-like hinged-wings. They descended through the thin, wispy, white clouds, and flew straight for Ahto City. At over a kilometre above the water surface, they descended rapidly. They could see the plume of black smoke rising from the spaceport, and headed straight for it.

Suddenly, alarm bells chimed; Jedi Malakon looked at the readouts, "Computer, what it is?" The readout spelled it out for him, "Damn. We've got an aircraft carrier ten kilometres out from Ahto City, and closing."

Jedi Malakon looked out towards the open ocean; the water glistened as it reflected the incident light coming from the primary star. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon saw the *Phoenix*-class aircraft carrier. Although technically a maritime naval vessel, it was also capable of interstellar flight. The aircraft carrier was reminiscent of the *Venator*-class Star Destroyer from The Clone Wars in shape, although slightly smaller; the aircraft carrier was a triangular wedge-like vessel, approximately a kilometre long, with large armoured panels sloping off to the side, and into the water. Above, it had an enormous dorsal hangar bay, which can house hundreds of *Predator*-class starfighters, *Neutralizer*-class bombers, and an array of shuttles. The bridge was similar to that of the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer, and the vessel sported several turbolaser and laser cannon emplacements.

"I've got eyes on the aircraft carrier." Jedi Malakon informed, "Ten o'clock low, approximately thirty kilometres."

"Copy that." Cosh Sonter replied.

Suddenly, the dorsal hangar bay doors on the aircraft carrier opened, and a flurry of *Predator*-class starfighters started pouring out. The *Predator*-class starfighters shot up into the sky, and headed straight for the assault shuttles.

"Incoming fighters!" Jedi Malakon shouted, "Evasive manoeuvres!"

Jedi Malakon banked hard left, and headed straight for the incoming *Predator*-class starfighters. He headed straight for the closest *Predator*-class starfighter.

"Computer, put shields double front." Jedi Malakon ordered.

Immediately, the integrated astromech droid rerouted power to double the deflector shield power for the front portion of the starfighter. Jedi Malakon closed in on the *Predator*-class starfighter with incredible speed. Surprisingly, the *Predator*-class starfighter started firing wildly at Jedi Malakon, even though he was well out of range. In response, Jedi Malakon smiled and shook his head.

"Don't waste your torpedoes on these guys... they're rookies." Jedi Malakon ordered.

A series of clinks indicated that they all received the transmission. Jedi Malakon closed in on the closest *Predator*-class starfighter; armed his enhanced heavy laser cannons, he squeezed the trigger. A torrent of blue energy bolts streaked through the atmosphere. The powerful energy bolts pierced straight through the spherical cockpit,

shredding it apart; the *Predator*-class starfighter erupted into flames, then plummeted down towards the open ocean.

*First kill*, Jedi Malakon thought.

The swarm of *Predator*-class starfighters filled the sky. One passed him, and Jedi Malakon immediately pulled a hard high-g left turn in order to chase the *Predator*-class starfighter down. Jedi Malakon was forced to pull upwards, then pitch his nose back downward, in order to make the tight turn. Jedi Malakon was right on the Imps tail; he lined up the targeting reticule, and squeezed the trigger. A flash of blue energy bolts streaked out in front, but the *Predator*-class starfighter broke hard right in order to avoid the energy bolts. Immediately, Jedi Malakon broke hard right in order to give chase; Jedi Malakon slammed the yoke hard. His knuckles were white from the stress, and his teeth were clenched.

Jedi Malakon lined up the targeting reticule again, and squeezed the trigger, "Now I've got you!"

The energy bolts struck their mark, and pierced the ion engines. The entire back portion of the *Predator*-class starfighter exploded with a ball of flames, followed by a stream of black smoke. Small pieces of hull smacked into the deflector shield, resulting in a bluish-white spark on the forward viewport. Suddenly, a stream of red energy bolts flew past Jedi Malakon.

"Frack!" Jedi Malakon shouted, "Computer, shields double back!"

Jedi Malakon immediately started evasive manoeuvres, jinking and juking the starfighter in every direction possible. Jedi Malakon strained against the centripetal forces, grunting and growling as he slammed the yoke back and forth.

"I've got an Eyeball on my six!" Jedi Malakon shouted.

Jedi Malakon broke hard right, trying to lose the *Predator*-class starfighter. The more agile *Predator*-class starfighter easily followed the turn, and started turning into Jedi Malakon. The Imp pilot fired another torrent of red energy bolts; two of the energy bolts bounced off the deflector shield, causing it to light up. Suddenly, from up high, a CF9 Crossfire starfighter dove through the sky, and fired a barrage of laser cannon fire. The green energy bolts pierced and shredded the *Predator*-class starfighter's left wing, causing it to plummet uncontrollably into the ocean.

"Thanks, Cosh." Jedi Malakon replied.

Cosh Sonter continued his dive, and engaged another Imp pilot. Jedi Malakon looked over his left shoulder to see how the assault shuttles were holding up. Each *Crix*-class assault shuttle is equipped with four blaster cannon batteries, plus twin laser cannons. Each assault shuttle fired wildly at the *Predator*-class starfighters that were swarming it. Occasionally, one of the gunners on the assault shuttle's would land a hit, causing the *Predator*-class starfighter to either explode, or to plummet towards the ocean. Suddenly, one of the assault shuttle's exploded; the fireball was massive, and a plume of black smoke trailed out from behind. Jedi Malakon could feel the deaths of everyone onboard when the assault shuttle exploded; the feeling hit him like a sledgehammer. Jedi Malakon broke hard left, and swooped in beside the crippled assault shuttle. Only the back portion was in flames, while the bow plummeted towards the ocean.

"All fighters, protect the shuttles!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

"Copy." Cosh Sonter replied.

More and more Imp fighters were swarming the assault shuttles; there seemed to be hundreds of them. Jedi Malakon flew circles around the incoming assault shuttles, protecting them as best he could. The various other pilots with Razor Squadron swooped in, and shot down several *Predator*-class starfighters; the Imp starfighters rained down onto the rough ocean. Ahto City was close now, and Jedi Malakon broke left to climb back into the dogfight.

"First drop off is away!" Jedi Malakon informed.

Several *Predator*-class starfighters were chasing the assault shuttles, but the remaining CF9 Crossfire starfighters either shot them down, or scared them off. Jedi Malakon circled the drop zone to make sure they landed safely. He watched as several hundred GAC teams exited the assault shuttles, and moved into the rest of the spaceport. Once all commandoes were unloaded, they immediately took off, and climbed back up through the atmosphere. Jedi Malakon was on his way up too, when suddenly, the *Predator*-class starfighters banked towards the west, heading away from the city.

"What are they up to now?" Jedi Malakon whispered to himself.

Suddenly, a message disrupted by static came in, "*Contact– Imperial– massive! Razor Seven, going–*"

Jedi Malakon's eyes widened from shock, "*Razor Seven! Come in, Razor Seven!*"



Shortly after, "*Razor One, this is Razor eight. Seven is down!*"

*Damn it!* Jedi Malakon thought, "All Razor's, on me!"

Jedi Malakon immediately started flying out west, following the *Predator*-class starfighters, and homing on Razor Seven's last known position. Jedi Malakon was furious, and determined to make the Imperials pay.

"Computer, reroute all power to the engines!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

Suddenly, he felt the great boost in power, and sped faster towards the Imperial pilots. Suddenly, on the horizon, Jedi Malakon saw something on the water. It was a massive maritime vessel.

"Computer, even out the shields, and get me a readout on that ship!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

The readouts came in almost instantly. Shock filled Jedi Malakon's emotions, then fear.

"All Razor's, break, break, break!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

Jedi Malakon immediately broke heard left, followed by the rest of the Razor's. The readouts indicated that the Imperial dreadnought in the water was none other than the *Overlord*, the most infamous warship in the entire Imperial Maritime Navy. Custom built by Admiral Cypher Pohar, the *Overlord* acted as his flagship, and was extremely large, over two kilometres long, and three hundred and fifty metres wide; the long and slender design was unusual in the Imperial Maritime Navy, but it was much more efficient and faster relative to the triangular-wedge designs that were more common. Heavily armoured, and well armed, it housed three oversized planetary artillery guns, an anti-orbital ion cannon, plus another hundred long-range artillery guns, turbolaser emplacements, and ion cannons on its deck. The oversized artillery guns are powerful enough to destroy a *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer with a single volley, and the anti-orbital ion cannon could disable one completely. The portside of the *Overlord* was more heavily armed, making the ship, overall, asymmetrical. Anti-aircraft missiles and guns, torpedoes, and medium-range missiles are also equipped on the battleship. A full squadron of *Predator*-class starfighters and *Neutralizer*-class bombers could be housed and launched from its internal hangar. It was equipped with a dry-dock located on the bottom where submarines can launch from. The hull was heavily armoured against turbolasers, and torpedo attacks. Its propulsion system was state-of-the art; it used an advanced magnetohydrodynamic drive that allowed it to run silently.

*That's what shot us down before,* Jedi Malakon thought.

Jedi Malakon watched the *Predator*-class starfighters returned to the aircraft carrier, which was now located three kilometres away from the *Overlord*. Some *Predator*-class starfighters remained in the air, however, circling the *Overlord* in a defensive formation. Surprisingly, the aircraft carrier was moving away from the *Overlord*, heading towards the north end of the city. Jedi Malakon, and the Razor's, hung back and observed the *Overlord* as it streamed through the water at breakneck speed, heading towards Ahto City.

"Two contacts!" Razor Ten informed.

"Which one?" Razor Eleven asked.

Jedi Malakon thought about the question for a moment. Both were desirable targets, but they could only afford to go after one. "Prioritize, take on the *Overlord*!" Jedi Malakon ordered, "We need to stop it before it reaches the city!"

"How do we do that?" Razor Four asked.

Jedi Malakon thought about the question for a while, "The planetary turbolasers pose the greatest threat. Target them first. Fast strafing runs; in-and-out."

Jedi Malakon banked hard right, and dove towards the ocean surface. Water sprayed all over the windshield as he dove closer to the water's surface. Jedi Malakon attacked the enormous dreadnought from the starboard side; he looked at the entire length of the vessel in amazement. The Razor's flew closely behind Jedi Malakon, and armed their proton torpedoes. Jedi Malakon lined up the targeting reticule, and locked in the target, the first planetary turbolaser emplacement. Suddenly, a torrent of red energy bolts, of all sizes, filled the space around them. Small explosions of black smoke filled the air, while red energy bolts streaked passed them.

"Stay on target!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

"Too many!" Razor Three screamed.

"Stay on target!" Jedi Malakon ordered again.

Suddenly, Razor Three screamed over the microphone and erupted into flames as three energy bolts tore through its hull, rupturing its power generator, causing it to explode. Jedi Malakon felt him perish in the Force. Jedi Malakon jinked and juked

slightly from left-to-right, trying to maintain his heading, while dodging the armada of energy bolts streaking across the sky.

"Computer, shields double front!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

Suddenly, the targeting reticule turned red, indicating a solid lock. Just then, the *Overlord's* anti-aircraft missile artillery launched into the air; grey smoke trailed the glowing blue missile as it streaked through the air. Jedi Malakon squeezed the trigger, firing a pair proton torpedoes; immediately Jedi Malakon banked hard right to avoid the incoming anti-aircraft missile. The missile passed underneath him by mere metres; the roar of the missile filled the cockpit. Smoke from the missile's exhaust clouded his cockpit windshield momentarily, but Jedi Malakon was still able to see. Jedi Malakon turned to look over his left shoulder; one of his torpedoes hit its mark dead centre, exploding at the base of the triple-barrel planetary turbolaser, while the other was shot down by a multitude of laser cannons. The other Razor's proton torpedoes weren't as fortunate also; they fired their proton torpedoes further away, and the countless laser cannon batteries littering the bow and starboard side of the *Overlord* shot most of them down. In total, only two torpedoes hit the planetary turbolaser emplacement, including his own.

"Damn it!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

Suddenly, a salvo of energy bolts flashed all around Jedi Malakon from behind. Jedi Malakon jinked and juked, dodging the energy bolts. The energy bolts were numerous, and relentless. He slammed the yoke left-to-right hard, threatening to break it off.

"Computer, shields double back!" Jedi Malakon screamed while dodging energy bolts.

Suddenly, a siren went off inside Jedi Malakon's cockpit, and red lights flashed. Jedi Malakon looked at the readout, then over his left shoulder. The port bow anti-aircraft missile artillery emplacement locked onto, and launched two missiles at Razor Eight and Nine. Jedi Malakon immediately banked hard left, and turned to face the *Overlord*. Just as he got the nose to face the gigantic dreadnought, Razor Nine exploded. The glowing blue missile detonated inside the thrusters engines, causing it to rupture violently, and explode. The massive fireball rose into the air, and flaming twisted hull rained into the ocean.

"Frack!" Jedi Malakon screamed in frustration.

Suddenly, Razor Eight flew right in front of him, moving away from the *Overlord*; the glowing blue missile was tracking him perfectly, threatening to kill him too. A trail of dark grey exhaust followed in the wake of the missile. Immediately, Jedi Malakon turned hard left, and fell behind the tracking missile. Razor Eight was jinking and juking wildly, trying to evade the homing missile; meanwhile his rear gunner was trying to fire at the missile with its light laser cannons. Meanwhile, another onslaught of laser cannon and turbolaser fire filled the airspace, threatening to shoot them all down. Jedi Malakon followed the path of the missile; its pathway was wild too, following Razor Eight's.

"Razor Eight, this is Razor One." Jedi Malakon spoke, "Cease fire, and keep straight."

*"Are you fracking kidding!"* Razor Eight screamed.

"Razor Eight, keep straight for just a second." Jedi Malakon ordered, "I'm right on its tail."

Reluctantly, Razor Eight levelled out, and flew straight. The glowing blue missile gained ground, and was closing fast. Immediately, Jedi Malakon lined up his targeting reticule, and squeezed the trigger for half a second. Five blue energy bolts shot forward, and hit the missile, causing the explosive material inside to rupture and explode. The fireball was big, and the explosion was too close to Razor Eight; the engines on his CF9 Crossfire were damaged, and black smoke now poured out of the stern. The explosion was close to Jedi Malakon as well, forcing him to fly through the explosion. The flame singed the transparisteel windshield, temporarily blinding him. As Jedi Malakon flew through the explosion, he saw the crippled Razor Eight.

"Razor Eight, this is Razor One." Jedi Malakon spoke, "Your main and portside engines have been crippled. Get out of here, there's nothing more you can do!"

*"Razor One, this is Razor Eight. Negative, I have zero control from my cockpit!"* Razor Eight informed, *"I am descending at an uncontrolled rate! I can't hold her!"*

Jedi Malakon followed Razor Eight from off its portside, trailing behind. Razor Eight's starfighter was rapidly descending towards the ocean's surface. The starfighter was rolling on its side left-to-right at violent intervals. Jedi Malakon could hear that Razor Eight was fighting the yoke, trying to bring it into control; he was grunting and growling.

"Razor Eight, eject!" Jedi Malakon screamed.



Suddenly, Razor Eight's starfighter pitched violently forward, and nosedived into the ocean. The front S-foils tore off violently as they struck the water, followed by the cockpit. The viewports shattered, and water poured into the starfighter. Water splashed into the air over five metres. As Jedi Malakon flew past the crashed starfighter, he saw no sign of survivors, or his pilots trying to get out.

*Frack!* Jedi Malakon thought, "Razor Eight is down! Repeat, Razor Eight is down! Need immediate pick up!"

He immediately broke hard right to face the *Overlord* again. He saw the rest of his Razor's; there weren't many left. Some were already shot down by either the *Overlord's* laser cannons or turbolasers, or by the *Predator*-class starfighters flying circles around the gigantic dreadnought. He saw the impossibility of the battle.

"*Reliance*, this is Razor One. New contact, the *Overlord*." Jedi Malakon informed, "Threat is extremely high. Need immediate reinforcements, or risk losing the squadron and the strike teams."

"*Razor One*, this is *Reliance control*." *Reliance control* reported, "*We're taking a pounding up here too*."

"This entire plan is lost if we can't hold the city!" Jedi Malakon screamed, "We just need some more fighters with proton torpedoes to take this fracker down."

"*Razor One*, I'll see what we can do." *Reliance control* replied.

Suddenly, a torrent of red blaster cannon fire erupted on Jedi Malakon's rear shield. He immediately looked over his right shoulder, and saw a *Predator*-class starfighter on his tail.

"Frack!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

Suddenly, he rapidly decelerated, and pitched his nose upwards. The inexperienced Imperial pilot flew underneath Jedi Malakon. Immediately, Jedi Malakon dropped his nose, and fell behind the Imperial pilot's tail. With a furious anger, Jedi Malakon squeezed and held the trigger for at least three seconds. The highly energized laser cannon bolts perforated and shredded the spherical cockpit, and tore off the left wing completely. Thick, black smoke poured out of the wounds in the Imperial starfighter. The *Predator*-class starfighter began to roll, then suddenly, decelerated.

"Oh—" Jedi Malakon screamed.

Flying too fast, Jedi Malakon had hardly any time to act. The *Predator*-class starfighter slammed into the nose of Jedi Malakon's fighter; the nose got crushed, the cockpit transparisteel windows were cracked, and the right wing got clipped by the crippled Imperial starfighter. The impact was jarring, slamming his body from side-to-side. The X-83 TwinTail starfighter started to pitch downward towards the ocean surface. Jedi Malakon fought hard against the yoke, pulling it into his gut.

"C'mon!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

The starfighter started levelling off, but not before slamming into the water's surface momentarily. Water sprayed and showered the cracked windshield; the waves crashed onto the starfighters wings and fuselage, allowing some water to pour into the cockpit. Jedi Malakon's pants got soaked in saline water, but most of his attire was already drenched in sweat, so it didn't really matter. Jedi Malakon barely got the starfighter out the water, when from above, another *Predator*-class starfighter fired at him with its laser cannons. The red energy bolts missed, barely, and caused jets of water and steam to shoot out of the rough ocean surface. Jedi Malakon barely got a chance to look up at the diving *Predator*-class starfighter, when suddenly, it exploded in a massive fireball. He flinched from the explosion, and his heart was racing. Flaming debris rained down all around Jedi Malakon, splashing into the ocean; he just barely missing the bigger chunks of flaming durasteel.

"Razor One! Are you alright?" Cosh Sonter shouted.

"Just great, Cosh. Thanks." Jedi Malakon replied.

Jedi Malakon pitched his starfighter up, and rose above the waves. His starfighter was barely flying now. The controls felt sluggish and unresponsive, while at irregular intervals, the fighter would pitch downward suddenly, and it now tended to want to roll over to the right.

"Razor One, your starboard engine is smoking." Cosh Sonter informed.

"I know Cosh." Jedi Malakon replied; he then ordered the astromech droid, "Computer, see if you can clamp the starboard engine."

The integrated astromech droid shut off the starboard engine; the white trail of smoke disappeared, but now the starfighter had only half its power. Jedi Malakon knew his starfighter was dying, but he still needed to complete his mission. Against the advice from the integrated astromech droid, Jedi Malakon banked hard right, and prepared for an attack run against the *Overlord*.

"We need to take out the hull!" Jedi Malakon ordered, "Forget the fighters, and forget the guns. Launch everything you have against the starboard side hull!"

Alone, and in a crippled starfighter, Jedi Malakon sped towards the gigantic dreadnought. Speeding towards the *Overlord* at a surprisingly fast speed, Jedi Malakon locked in a target on the starboard side hull.

"Computer, link proton torpedoes to hit the same place on the hull." Jedi Malakon ordered, "Put shields to double front."

He locked in the targeting reticule, and saw the readouts from the integrated astromech droid. The integrated astromech droid indicated at there was not enough power to run the engines and the shields at the same time. Ignoring everything else, he charged forward.

"Forget it! Full forward!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

Jedi Malakon flew full forward just above the water's surface; occasionally, some water would spray onto the cracked transparisteel windshield, temporarily obscuring his vision. Suddenly, a salvo of energy bolts exploded nearby. The red energy bolts streaked passed Jedi Malakon, mere metres away. The water all around him was peppered with energy bolts, sending jets of water into the air. The flash from the salvo, and the static it caused on his readouts, made the attack run much more difficult. His starfighter wasn't as responsive as before, so his evasive manoeuvres weren't as effective; nevertheless, he did manage to thread through the barrage without taking a hit. As Jedi Malakon got closer, the intensity of the salvo increased. Sweat poured down from his forehead, his knuckles were white from holding the yoke with a tight grip, and his heart was pounding out of his chest. Suddenly, when he got close enough to the massive dreadnought, he squeezed and held down the trigger.

"Fire everything!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

The seven remaining proton torpedoes left the tubes, one right after the other. The glowing red proton torpedoes streaked through the air, almost at water level. Before they could reach their target, Jedi Malakon was forced to bank right, and flew over the bow of the *Overlord*. Jedi Malakon, still dodging red energy bolts from the gun emplacements on the deck of the dreadnought, circled around to watch the seven proton torpedoes impact the armoured hull of the *Overlord*. The seven proton torpedoes struck the armoured hull in exactly the same place, one right after another. The shaped charge effect from the proton torpedoes focused the explosive energy forward, allowing

it to punch through the hull. The explosions were aimed right above the waterline; after each strike, a massive column of water and steam, plus the explosion itself, shot upward and rained down on the hull. After seven proton torpedoes impacted, the hull was literally torn apart; the hull was bent inward, glowing white-orange around the edges, with a huge gaping hole over ten metres across allowing water to pour in. A massive plume of dense, black smoke rose from the wound, and into the sky. A black scorch mark surrounded the entire gaping hole.

Jedi Malakon laughed, "Yes! Alright Razor's, you know what to do!"

*"Way to go, Razor One!"* Razor Four screamed in excitement.

*"Nice move, Razor One!"* Cosh Sonter added, *"Now we've got to top that!"*

Suddenly, from above, over thirty more CF9 Crossfire starfighters descended through the atmosphere, and emerged from out of the clouds. The CF9 Crossfire starfighters streaked across the atmosphere at an incredible speed, heading straight for the *Overlord*. Jedi Malakon smiled at the sight.

*"Razor One, the Calvary has arrived!"* One of the pilots screamed in excitement, *"Courtesy of the Reliance."*

"Are you guys full armed?" Jedi Malakon inquired.

*"Fully armed and ready, Razor One."* The pilot answered.

"Glad to hear it." Jedi Malakon answered, "Just follow my Razor's, they'll show you what to do."

*"And you?"* Cosh Sonter asked.

"I'm bingo fuel, and flying a crippled starfighter..." Jedi Malakon replied, "I'm taking her in."

Jedi Malakon immediately turned around, and headed back towards Ahto City. After a few moments, Jedi Malakon looked over his left shoulder to see how the battle was progressing. He watched as the CF9 Crossfire starfighters performed their attack runs, launching salvo after salvo of proton torpedoes into the starboard hull of the massive dreadnought. The explosions of light, and jets of water that resulted, were visible even from afar. Surprisingly, the *Predator*-class starfighters weren't as numerous as they once were; only a few were circling the gigantic vessel now, futilely trying to prevent more attack runs.

As he turned back around, he stared at the ruined Ahto City. The once wispy white clouds that filled the crisp blue sky earlier in the day had turned into a dark, grey and gloomy one. Black smoke, from several sources, rose into the atmosphere; fires raged, and several buildings had collapsed. The *Barricade* was surprisingly low to the surface, hovering only thirty kilometres above the city now. The Alliance fleet was also at that altitude, pummelling the Star Destroyer with barrages of green energy bolts from turbolasers and laser cannons. The aircraft carrier he saw earlier was no longer visible.

*Probably towards the north by now*, Jedi Malakon thought.

Suddenly, the starfighter pitched downward, violently. Jedi Malakon immediately yanked the yoke backwards, trying to pull the starfighter upwards. The starfighter started shaking uncontrollably, and tried to roll over towards the right. Suddenly, the upper right wing of the X-83 TwinTail starfighter tore off. Smoke poured out of the torn wing, leaving a long trail behind. The starfighter started to roll, and yaw towards the right.

"Frack!" Jedi Malakon screamed, "Computer, activate repulsorlifts and stabilizers!"

Those measures didn't seem to work. Jedi Malakon fought against the yoke hard, trying to prevent the starfighter from rolling over into the water. He was still falling at an incredible speed. Jedi Malakon looked up, and the water's surface was approaching rapidly. He finally realized there was no possible chance of recovering the starfighter.

"Razor One, bailing!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

Without thinking he grabbed the handle underneath his seat, and pulled. The cockpit viewports shot off and flew into the air, followed by the rocket seat. Within milliseconds, Jedi Malakon was flying above his starfighter, watching it crash into the ocean. The X-83 TwinTail starfighter rolled over onto its back as it pitched downward into the water. It smashed into the water at full speed, literally torn to pieces. A gigantic jet of water rose into the air as the starfighter smacked into the water. The S-foils tore off the fuselage, while the fuselage ripped in half. Water poured in, and the starfighter sank like a brick.

Jedi Malakon fell back towards the water. Because the fighter was a starfighter, it wasn't equipped with a parachute, something he hadn't thought about before the mission. As Jedi Malakon fell, he focused on the water, never taking his eyes off of it. As

Jedi Malakon got closer and closer to the water, he prepared himself for impact. At the last possible moment, he used a Force Wave attack to break the surface tension before he dove in. Jedi Malakon smashed into the water, unharmed.

Jedi Malakon rose out of the water, "Slag it!" He shouted as he slapped the water.

The water was chilly, maybe only eight degrees centigrade. His teeth chattered, and his muscles weakened. He treaded water, and stared out onto the horizon. Ahto City was only about eight hundred metres away. He looked back at the battle; it was still raging on. *Predator*-class starfighters were still dogfighting with the CF9 Crossfire starfighters, while they tried to bring down the *Overlord*. He turned his attention back to Ahto City, and started to swim towards it. The saline water got into his eyes and mouth; the taste was disgusting, while it burned his eyes. Within only a few minutes, he reached the durasteel eggshell-like hull of Ahto City, and climbed on top. He crawled on the durasteel hull, climbing upward; his attire was completely soaked in water, weighing him down. Finally, he reached a rubble pile, formally a spaceport docking bay. He laid on the permacrete rubble, gasping for air. His breathing was laboured, and his heart beat was racing. His muscles were cramped and exhausted from the swim, and his joints ached. His body wouldn't stop shaking from the cold. He turned over onto his back, and stared up into the dark grey sky.

He watched the naval battle above rage on. The *Barricade*, only about twenty kilometres above the surface, was firing relentlessly against the Alliance fleet. The Alliance fleet, despite its superior numbers and numerous starfighters, was having a difficult time landing a killing blow against the Star Destroyer. Jedi Malakon could see the individual energy bolts streaking through the atmosphere, while starfighters fly circles around each other. Explosions, either from turbolaser blasts or exploding starfighters, littered the sky. Occasionally, a *Predator*-class starfighter would streak across the sky, circling the city just above the tops of the buildings.

After a few moments of rest, Jedi Malakon picked himself up. He carefully walked over the piles of permacrete rubble, and twisted beams of durasteel. The fires had been put out, but the smoke still lingered in the air. Fine dust from the permacrete filled the air. Jedi Malakon walked to the end of the ruined docking port, and followed the collapsed corridors until he reached the main city. Jedi Malakon came out on the Ahto East Central region, where a small skirmish between Alliance commandoes and the Selkath rebels, and Imperial stormtroopers was already underway. Jedi Malakon ran behind one of the walls, taking cover from the blaster bolts flying by.

He ran over to one of the Alliance commandoes, a young male, "What's the situation?"

The commando looked Jedi Malakon up and down, and said, "What happened to you?"

"Long story, what's the situation?" Jedi Malakon repeated.

"The Imperials are dug deep in the Eastern sector." The Alliance commando informed, "We've taken everything west of here, but the Imperials are still fighting to the last man!"

Jedi Malakon could feel the fear in the Alliance commandoes, and the rage in the Imperial stormtroopers through the Force. Jedi Malakon looked into Ahto East Central; it was a wide open space, with transparisteel ceilings, allowing the sky to be seen. There were two rectangular fountains in the center of the space, with beams stretching over from one side to the other. The walls and floor were light grey, probably made of brushed durasteel and other plastoid material. Across the open expanse were the Imperial stormtroopers, firing wildly into the Alliance lines. The Alliance were fighting for every metre they took; screams of rage, or terror, filled the room. Above, Jedi Malakon could still see the naval battle raging. The *Barricade* filled the sky; explosions on its hull could be clearly seen. The Star Destroyer cast a shadow over the city, plunging into darkness.

Jedi Malakon turned to the Alliance commando, "Who's in charge?"

The Alliance commando looked at Jedi Malakon, "You are."

Jedi Malakon peeked around the corner, and watched the battle for a moment. He took a deep breath, activated his blue-bladed lightsaber, then ran around the corner. Immediately, he deflected two blaster bolts, sending them back at the stormtroopers who fired them. He ran as fast as he could, sliding and diving behind cover as he charged forwards. As he ran from cover to cover, he batted away several blaster bolts. He finally fought his way into the middle of the open space, behind one of the fountains. He slid on his chest, sliding behind cover. He sat back up, and peeked around the corner.

*Maybe Commodore Kynnovan was right,* Jedi Malakon thought.

He saw that the stormtroopers were wearing the typical white plastoid armour, the previous generation of stormtrooper armour. They were also armed with only ARC-

9965 blaster rifles, and Merr-Sonn BB-23 heavy blaster cannons. Although still a formidable force, not nearly as much as Onderon. In cases where the Empire was stretched too thin, they commonly resorted to using the last generation of weapons and armour. Only a handful of Alliance commandoes reached it to the center of the sector. Laying on the ground were dead bodies of fallen Alliance commandoes, and Imperial stormtroopers. Their chests were riddled with blaster holes, smoking from the wounds.

He turned to look at one of the Alliance commandoes, "Sergeant!"

The Sergeant ran over, "Boy, am I glad to see a Jedi."

"Report!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

The Sergeant pointed towards the stormtroopers, "They're holding firm. The Imperials still occupy the Eastern sector. They've dug in, and we can't pry them out!"

Jedi Malakon shook his head, "You gotta go after these guys, with everything you've got!"

"Jedi, we can't get enough men up here to effectively make a push!" The Sergeant shouted.

Jedi Malakon took another peek around the corner of the fountain. The number of stormtroopers weren't that many, he thought, they just had a superior position and adequate cover. It definitely wasn't the worse situation he'd been caught in. Suddenly, the stormtroopers went wild, firing blindly at anything that moved.

*Undisciplined*, he thought. Jedi Malakon turned back around, and looked at the Sergeant, "Make an opening!"

"What?" The Sergeant asked.

"Throw your grenades!" Jedi Malakon ordered, "I'll pry them out!"

Jedi Malakon reactivated his blue-bladed lightsaber; the *snap-hiss* resonated in the room. The Sergeant turned around and ordered the men to throw their grenades and thermal detonators into the Imperial lines. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon came out around the corner, and charged at the stormtroopers. Immediately, the stormtroopers fired their blaster rifles at him. Jedi Malakon let himself go into the Force, allowing it to control his actions; on instinct, he deflected several blaster bolts. Jedi Malakon, using the Force to augment his movements, stormed the Imperial frontline.

Meanwhile, the grenades flew through the air, and landed in front of the stormtroopers barricade. The grenades exploded, forcing the stormtroopers to take cover. The few moments the grenades bought him were enough; Jedi Malakon leapt into the air, and landed behind the stormtroopers. Jedi Malakon landed on his feet, then rolled on the brushed durasteel floor. He rose, and started hacking and slashing, wildly, at the stormtroopers. The stormtroopers, acting on instinct, fired wildly at the Jedi. Expertly, Jedi Malakon fell into a defensive stance, Soresu, and started deflecting all the blaster bolts fired at him. His movements were quick and accurate; his blade made contact with the energy bolts at perfect angles, allowing the blaster bolt to ricochet back at the shooter. The energy bolt would shatter the cheap plastoid armour, passing right through into the being inside, killing him. Jedi Malakon used the Force to enhance and quicken his movements; he stabbed and slashed at the stormtroopers, often killing them with a single stroke. Jedi Malakon, also an expert in martial arts, punched and kicked the attacking stormtroopers, using them in conjunction with his lightsaber. Jedi Malakon shattered the plastoid armour, and severed limbs and heads from their bodies. Within moments, the remaining stormtroopers, only about a dozen left, fled into the East sector of Ahto City.

Jedi Malakon turned back towards the Alliance commandoes, and shouted, "C'mon!"

Suddenly, Jedi Malakon felt a tightness in his chest and arms. His body started to lift up off the ground, and his tightness turned into a crushing sensation. Jedi Malakon looked over his shoulder, and saw a black cloaked Sith Lord standing at the entrance corridor to the East sector, with his hand raise in front of him. The Sith Lord was a Selkath, with white, bluish-green skin marked with black tattoos. His hands had menacing razor-sharp claws extended, while his mouth was lined with serrated, triangular teeth, like those of a shark. Mustering all the power he could, Jedi Malakon unleashed a powerful Force Wave attack against the Sith Lord.

Jedi Malakon dropped to the floor, gracefully, and charged at the Sith Lord. The Sith Lord recovered from the attack, and took out a curved-hilt crimson-bladed lightsaber. He activated the energy blade, and parried the onslaught of attacks. The Sith Lord was tall, much taller than Jedi Malakon; the Sith Lord's muscles were gigantic, with arms like tree trunks, and huge pectoral muscles. Jedi Malakon let loose on the Sith Lord, smashing and slashing at the massive Selkath Sith Lord. His attacks were rapid, a mere blur to everyone else; although fast, they were still powerful. Suddenly, the Sith Lord kicked Jedi Malakon in the chest, causing him to stumble backwards.

*Not again,* Jedi Malakon thought.

Suddenly, Jedi Malakon found himself on the defensive. The Sith Lord's attacks were slower, but extremely powerful. Each smash with the crimson blade sent Jedi Malakon stepping backwards, trying to regain his balance. Jedi Malakon grunted and growled at each smash. His arms were still tired from the swim, and his body ached all around. Suddenly, the Sith Lord ceased his attack, and screamed at the Jedi Knight. A Force augmented scream, Sonic Scream, resonated within the East Central sector. Jedi Malakon fell to his knees, and clutched his ears in pain. He screamed in pain, although he couldn't hear it. Blood started trickling down the side of Jedi Malakon's face, originating from his ear. Finally, after a few seconds, the Sonic Scream stopped, and the Sith Lord approached to deal the final blow.

Suddenly, the Alliance commandoes, recovering from the Sonic Scream, fired their blaster rifles at the Sith Lord. The blaster bolts flew by the Sith Lord, lighting up the room around them. The Sith Lord quickly turned to face the Alliance commandoes, and batted away the energy bolts. With a Force assisted leap, the Sith Lord sailed over the barricade, and charged at the Alliance commandoes. The Alliance commandoes fired wildly at the crazed Sith Lord. Stopping short, the Sith Lord unleashed another Sonic Scream. The incredible scream shook the floor and walls, while disabling the Alliance commandoes. The Alliance commandoes clutched their ears in pain; while others were killed by the tremendous sonic energy. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon, having recovered from the previous attacks, leapt behind the Sith Lord, and plunged his blue-bladed lightsaber into the right shoulder of the Selkath Sith Lord. The Sonic Scream ceased, and the Sith Lord reeled in pain. The Sith Lord swiped at Jedi Malakon with its venom-tipped razor-sharp claws. Jedi Malakon ducked under the attack, then charged at the Sith Lord. With lightning fast movements, and fancy footwork, Jedi Malakon managed to get inside the Sith Lord's defences, and thrust his lightsaber into his chest. The blue blade pierced through his rib cage, and exited through the back. The Selkath Sith Lord roared in pain, then Jedi Malakon tore the blue energy blade from his body. The Sith Lord collapsed onto the brushed durasteel floor with a thud.

Jedi Malakon gasped for air as he stood in front of the dead body of the Selkath Sith Lord. The Alliance commandoes hesitantly approached, along with some of the Selkath rebels. Jedi Malakon looked at the Selkath, "I had no choice."

"Darth Serpain." One of the Selkath rebels said in a raspy, growly voice as he looked at the dead body of the Sith Lord, "We understand."

"They were corrupted by the Sith when they annexed the city." Another Selkath rebel explained.

"They?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"The Order of Shasa." The Selkath rebel answered, "A society of Force-sensitive Selkath based on Manaana."

Jedi Malakon nodded, and watched as the rest of the Alliance commandoes started preparing for the storm into Ahto City's Eastern sector. The stormtroopers had closed the blast door leading into the Eastern sector; the Alliance commandoes were just starting to cut through the gigantic blast door. Suddenly, the Sergeant ran up to Jedi Malakon.

"Sir, you need to come see this." The Sergeant informed.

The Sergeant led them back into the West Central sector, and brought him to one of the balcony's. Just off into the horizon, the aircraft carrier was situated about ten kilometres away from the city, and moving further out. He gave Jedi Malakon a pair of electrobinoculars. Jedi Malakon took them, and stared out towards the ocean.

The Sergeant pointed, "Over there."

Jedi Malakon looked out into the ocean where the Sergeant had pointed. Jedi Malakon only saw the *Overlord*, which was still afloat although billowing black smoke from various wounds, with several dozen starfighters flying around the gigantic vessel.

"I only see the *Overlord*." Jedi Malakon informed.

"Look farther." The Sergeant insisted.

Jedi Malakon intensified the zoom, and looked farther down the horizon. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon saw it.

"Damn." Jedi Malakon whispered.

"Exactly." The Sergeant replied.

An armada of Imperial maritime vessels, over fifty ships in total, were approaching Ahto City. The vessels, hard to discern at this distance, were most likely destroyers, frigates and battleships. Each vessel looked similar, but they performed different roles within naval combat. Made in the typical Imperial fashion, they were triangular in shape, although more slender than Star Destroyers. They had sharp angles,

making them appear more aggressive, and were heavily armed with numerous turbolasers and blaster cannon emplacements.

"If those ships get here, then we've lost this city." Jedi Malakon informed.

"I know." The Sergeant answered, "We have nothing that could possibly repel that."

"Get me on the horn with *Reliance* command." Jedi Malakon ordered; the Sergeant handed him a comlink, "*Reliance* command, this is Jedi Malakon, we need immediate assistance approximately fifty kilometres west of Ahto City."

"*Jedi Malakon, we have our hands tied up here!*" *Reliance* command informed in an anxious voice.

Jedi Malakon looked up towards the grey sky, and watched the massive naval battle above. He used the electrobinoculars to take a closer look. The *Barricade* was heavily damaged, with huge scorched craters riddling the hull; the Alliance fleet had lost many ships, while the *Reliance* was starting to fall apart. Huge explosions erupted on all the ships in the battle; starfighters were dogfighting relentlessly. The battle, more of a brawl or a scrap now, was winding down; both sides were exhausted of munitions, and energy.

"*Reliance* command, we have an armada of Imperial vessels baring down on us! Fifty vessels, consisting of destroyers, frigates and battleships!" Jedi Malakon informed, "If we lose this city, then it was all for nothing!"

Suddenly, a massive explosion lit up the sky. A huge expanding spherical orb of light, smoke and shrapnel filled the sky. Suddenly, horror set in. The explosion came from the Alliance side. Jedi Malakon looked up with the electrobinoculars, and observed the explosion. Flaming wreckage started raining through the crisp atmosphere, moving in almost slow motion. Suddenly, frantically trying to prove himself wrong, but failing, he realized what ship had just exploded.

"*Reliance!*" Jedi Malakon shouted, "*Reliance*, come in! *Reliance!*"

"What happened?" The Sergeant asked in a worried, "What was that?"

"The *Reliance*... she's gone." Jedi Malakon answered.

The Sergeant was filled with fear, "Well... what the hell do we do now?"

Before Jedi Malakon could answer, the comlink sounded, "*A general evacuation of Manaan has been ordered! Repeat, all Alliance personnel must evacuate Manaan immediately! This is a general evacuation!*"

"Hello! Hello!" Jedi Malakon screamed into the comlink, "We can't evacuate now!"

Surprisingly, one of the Alliance officers replied, "*We can't stay here! The battle up here is lost!*"

"The battle is not lost!" Jedi Malakon screamed, "We almost have the entire city! Just give us time!"

"*Time we don't have, Jedi Malakon!*" The Alliance officer informed, "*The Reliance has been destroyed! We can't hold them here! I'm ordering all Alliance personnel to evacuate, now!*"

"Frack!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

Jedi Malakon stared up at the sky once more, and saw the few remaining *Sabertooth*-class Rescue & Assault Vessels descending through the atmosphere. Flaming hull started raining down into the southern part of the ocean, out of Jedi Malakon's sight. Suddenly, the Sergeant tapped Jedi Malakon on the shoulder.

"What is that?" The Sergeant asked.

Jedi Malakon turned back to face the ocean, and stared out towards the ocean. He used his electrobinoculars to enhanced the image. The *Overlord*, surprisingly still afloat despite having been struck by fifty proton torpedoes, seemed to be glowing. The forward triple-barrel planetary turbolaser started to move, and angled the barrels to fire into the naval battle being fought above them.

Jedi Malakon's eyes went wide, "Calling all Alliance ships, the—"

Suddenly, Jedi Malakon was cut off by an incredibly loud boom emanating from the *Overlord*. Jedi Malakon watched in horror as the massive red energy bolts streaked across the sky; the planetary turbolasers fired three gigantic energy bolts, capable to taking down a *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer with a single volley. Jedi Malakon followed the energy bolts as they travelled through the sky. Surprisingly, the energy bolts struck the portside of the *Barricade*. The impacts lit up the hull, tearing enormous chunks out of its armoured hull.

"What the hell?" Jedi Malakon said in confusion.

"What are they doing?" The Sergeant asked.

Jedi Malakon shook his head. Suddenly, another boom resonated from the ocean. Another planetary turbolaser fired from the bow of the *Overlord*. The three massive energy bolts streaked across the sky again, and struck the *Barricade* on the portside stern engines. The impact cause a massive eruption that lit up the sky with an orange glow. Pieces of hull rained down from the impact site. Suddenly, the *Barricade* pitched downwards, headed straight into the city.

"Oh crap!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

Jedi Malakon immediately leapt off the balcony, and into the water. The water smacked him in the face like a paddle, temporarily dazing him. He dove into the water just in time. The massive *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer crashed into the Eastern sector of Ahto City, tearing it apart. Metal grinded on metal, and explosions engulfed the city. The impact cause the entire westside of the city to raise above the water, only to have it break off, and come crashing back into the water. The buildings covering the entire city crumbled and collapsed from the impact; nothing was spared. The massive Star Destroyer pierced through the entire floating city, causing the city to fill with water and sink. Ahto City was in ruins, broken in half, and slowly sinking.

Jedi Malakon rose out of the water just in time to see the aftermath. A gigantic wave crashed on top of his head, followed by another one. The strong currents were slowly bringing him out into the open ocean. The city was engulfed in flames, and completely ruined. The West Central sector was sinking into the fidget waters. Jedi Malakon swam back towards the durasteel structure, and climbed on top. Drenched in water, petrified with fear, and utterly exhausted, he futility tried to stand up. The waves crashed onto the structure, and spilled over and flooded the low-laying areas. Jedi Malakon crawled on the brushed durasteel floor, trying to make it more interior, away from the water's edge. He looked over to his right, and saw the dead body of the Sergeant.

He grabbed the comlink, "Alliance fleet, this is Jedi Malakon! Need immediate pick up on the West Central sector of Ahto City, north."

Jedi Malakon collapsed onto the ground, and remained there, motionless, for several seconds. *Sabertooth*-class Rescue & Assault Vessels had already been dispatched for the evacuation. Within seconds, they were circling the sinking city; they homed in

on Jedi Malakon's comlink signal, and hovered above him. Several rescue operatives repelled down from the spires hanging underneath the vessel, and landed next to Jedi Malakon. Two rescue operatives picked Jedi Malakon up, while a third checked out the Sergeant. Jedi Malakon was going in-and-out of consciousness, so the two rescue operatives had to carry him under his shoulders.

"We... can't... leave..." Jedi Malakon slowly said.

The rescue operatives ignored Jedi Malakon. They tied a harness around his waist, and pulled him up into the vessel with a winch. The wind was picking up, so Jedi Malakon swayed while they were pulling up with the winch. Finally, after a few seconds on the wire, the crew pulled Jedi Malakon into the vessel. They laid him down on the diamond-plated durasteel panelled floor.

"Anyone else down there?" A rescue operative asked.

"*Negative.*" Another rescue operative on the ruined city replied.

"Alright, let's get the hell out of here!" The rescue operative ordered; he turned to Jedi Malakon, "You'll be fine! We're getting you out of here!"

# *Retaliation*

*The fire was all consuming. It engulfed the entire forest. Mathias ran as fast as he could, away from the flames, but the raging inferno was too fast. It quickly surrounded him. He was trapped. Suddenly, he heard a scream coming from the forest. Hesitantly, he ran towards scream. As he approached, he realized the scream wasn't a scream, but rather a shout. Mathias ran as fast as he could, but the intense heat from the flames was always right behind him. He stopped to look behind him. Suddenly, the flames lashed out, and engulfed Mathias. His robes were on fire.*

*"No!"*

*Mathias dropped to the ground, and started rolling. He patted the fire, trying to put it out as fast as possible. The flames weren't going out. Fear and terror filled his heart. The flames were burning him; the heat was intense. Desperately, he tore the robes from off his body. The black sky above him was filled with embers, swirled by powerful winds. Lightning crackled across the smoke-filled sky, followed by the deep rumbling thunder.*

*He immediately got back onto his feet, and started running towards the shouting again. As he got closer, he heard the familiar clash of lightsabers. The noise surprised him. He quickened his pace, until he finally came across a clearing. The inferno was still raging behind him, but Mathias ignored that. He saw a tall dark figure, draped in a heavy cloth black robe, holding a crimson-bladed lightsaber. The tall dark figure wore a hood, obscuring his face. Fighting the unknown figure, was Master Lii. Master Lii was straining to continue fighting; he was utterly drained of energy. Fear and terror once again filled his heart.*

*"Master!"*

*The dark figure attack Master Lii again. With great effort, Master Lii blocked the attack. The dark figure followed the attack with a series of powerful overhead smashes, that brutalized Master Lii. Immediately, Mathias activated his blue-bladed lightsaber, and charged at the figure. Mathias ran as fast as he could, but Master Lii always seemed to be just out of reach. Suddenly, and shockingly, the dark figure stabbed Master Lii in the chest, killing him instantly.*

*"No!"*

*The dark figure turned to face Mathias. Mathias was too petrified to move. The dark figure stared at Mathias for a moment. Fear rose within him; he clutched his lightsaber, anticipating an attack. Suddenly, he remembered who the dark figure was.*

*"Tyrannid."*

*Mathias suddenly woke up; he sat up from his bed with his eyes wide open. He screamed from fear, then realized it was only a dream. He was drenched in sweat, and his breathing was hard and laboured. Suddenly, he realized he was in the medical bay*

of one of the Alliance ships. He looked over to his left, and saw the medical readout display; his heart rate was through the roof. Mathias tried to calm himself down through the Force, taking long, deep breaths. Suddenly, Cosh Sonter appeared in front of him.

"Where the hell did you come from?" Mathias asked.

"I'm always around." Cosh Sonter replied, "How you feeling?"

"Like an anvil fell on me." Mathias answered.

"Well, than I'd say that was an improvement." Cosh Sonter joked.

Mathias chuckled, "How long was I out?" Mathias asked.

"Ten hours." Cosh Sonter answered, "Took your sweet time, I guess."

Mathias laughed, "Where am I?"

"The *Dauntless*." Cosh Sonter answered.

The *Dauntless* was one of the *Tri-Scythe*-class frigates that accompanied the Alliance fleet into Manaan. Suddenly, Mathias realized he really hadn't answered the question, "Where am I exactly?"

Cosh Sonter hesitated for a moment, "Navlaas."

Mathias shook his head in anger, "That bastard fled!"

"He had no choice." Cosh Sonter defended.

Mathias looked up at Cosh Sonter, and noticed that he had a rather sad expression on his face, "How many Razor's did we lose?"

"Six." Cosh Sonter answered, "Seven bit the dust from the gun emplacements on the *Overlord*, Three got shot during the first strafing run, Nine got shot down by a missile, Eight crashed into the ocean, and Four and Eleven were shot down in subsequent attack runs."

Mathias shook his head slowly, "Damn." He took a moment to compose himself, "How many made it off Ahto City?"

"You." Cosh answered.

Mathias shook his head again, "Unbelievable."

"You're telling me." Cosh Sonter replied, "Listen, you've been requested on the bridge when you're ready, so—"

Mathias cut him off, "I'm ready."

Mathias quickly got out of bed, and put on his Jedi attire. He followed Cosh Sonter down the narrow corridors of the *Dauntless*. The corridors were nearly empty, but occasionally they would pass someone; they would usually bow their heads, or salute. The corridors were scorched with burn marks from the assault, and sparks rained down from exposed wires. Finally, they reached the bridge. Jedi Malakon walked in, but Cosh Sonter stayed behind.

"You coming?" Jedi Malakon asked.

He shook his head, "No. I'm going to check up on the rest of the guys."

Jedi Malakon nodded, "Alright."

He watched as Cosh Sonter turned around, and headed down the narrow corridor. On the bridge, very few personnel were working. Most of them were engineers, trying to repair the damage done during the assault. At the end of bridge, three Alliance officers stood staring out the forward viewports; Captain Sibar Fre'kay, Lieutenant Vuul Corr, and Ensign Garin Ashdown. Jedi Malakon saw they were orbiting the gas giant, and he shook his head. Jedi Malakon approached the three, who were quietly talking amongst themselves.

"Gentlemen." Jedi Malakon spoke.

The three Alliance officers turned around, and gazed upon Jedi Malakon. Captain Sibar Fre'kay smiled, showing off his large canines, "Jedi Malakon, glad to see you've recovered from your injuries."

"Thank you, Captain." Jedi Malakon replied, "What exactly are we doing all the way out here?"

The three Alliance officers looked to one another, with Sibar Fre'kay finally speaking, "We had no other choice."

"So I've heard." Jedi Malakon immediately replied.

"Manaan was lost, Jedi Malakon." Captain Sibar Fre'kay replied.

"We had that city! We had it!" Jedi Malakon shouted, "With a little more time, we would've had the entire city at our control!"

"That concussion to your head must have caused some short-term memory loss." Ensign Garin Ashdown replied, "Ahto City was completely destroyed."

"I recall, Ensign." Jedi Malakon replied, "But we had the Imperials in our grasp, then you fled!"

Lieutenant Vuul Corr shook his head, "The Empire played us. It's Empress Amelia; since she took power, we've never been able to get the upper hand."

"We've never been able to get the upper hand, because we keep on running away!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

"Jedi Malakon—" Captain Sibar Fre'kay started.

"No! Not this time!" Jedi Malakon disobeyed, "I'm sick of this! Every time the Empire pushes forward, we take a step back. Are we ever going to take a stand? When are we going to draw the line and fight?"

"If I recall correctly, Jedi Malakon, we just fought the Empire, and lost." Captain Sibar Fre'Kay answered.

"No. We pushed a little, but when things turned south, you suckered out on us!" Jedi Malakon

"Bite your tongue, Jedi Malakon!" Captain Sibar Fre'kay shouted.

There was a moment of tense silent, then finally, Ensign Garin Ashdown spoke, "Jedi Malakon, we understand your frustration; we feel it as well. But you must understand, that battle was lost the moment we jumped to Manaan."

"They played us for fools, and we just went along with it." Lieutenant Vuul Corr added.

"There was no way we could win." Captain Sibar Fre'kay finally said, "We lost too much already! We cannot afford to be so reckless!"

The gravity of the statement hit him like a sledgehammer; it was true that the Galactic Alliance Remnant had very limited military resources, and even fewer personnel. They started out small, consisting of just Admiral Gar Stazi and the Galactic Alliance Core Fleet, but slowly grew in size over the years as deserters and resistance

fighters trickled in; most were former-Galactic Alliance personnel fleeing Imperial retribution. Although new personnel were trickling into the fleet, they in no way off-set the losses experienced throughout the numerous battles; with no major support, supply lines, or shipyards, the Galactic Alliance resorted to raiding supplies and materiel simply to continue operations. Several missions had been undertaken to steal Imperial weaponry, or even steal back Galactic Alliance battleships, just to keep them fighting.

"How much did we lose?" Jedi Malakon humbly asked.

"The *Reliance* was completely destroyed, no survivors; four *ShaShore*-class frigates, and a *Tri-Scythe*-class frigate were destroyed, along with two *Sabertooth*-class vessels." Captain Sibar Fre'kay listed, "In total, we lost maybe... seventeen thousand souls, probably more."

Jedi Malakon shook his head, "Damn."

"The naval assault... the city assault... they were all ineffective." Captain Sibar Fre'kay replied, "They knew we would come, and they hit us hard."

"If we just had more time—" Jedi Malakon started.

"No!" Captain Sibar Fre'kay shouted, "No amount of time would have allowed us to defeat the Empire."

"They were waiting for us, with the *Overlord* no less." Lieutenant Vuul Corr added, "That dreadnought can destroyed entire fleets single-handedly. *Entire* fleets! It wins battles, that's what it was designed to do."

"Not to mention the other maritime naval fleet you reported coming in." Ensign Garin Ashdown added, "Even if you would have taken the city, we had nothing left that could have destroyed another Imperial fleet."

"The *Overlord* was going down." Jedi Malakon stated.

"You're Razor's hit that ship with over fifty proton torpedoes, and it was still afloat." Captain Sibar Fre'kay informed, "We would have run out of munitions long before that ship sank."

"Even if we could sink her, we would still need to contend with that other fleet." Ensign Garin Ashdown added, "And even if we somehow defeated that fleet, you could bet there would be Imperial sharks in the water."

Imperial sharks was a term used to describe an underwater fighter, similar to the TIE/In Interceptors of The First Galactic Civil War, but submerged. They were fast, and vicious, and utterly deadly.

Jedi Malakon nodded, "I'm just sick of running." He grudgingly stated, "We were so close to taking the city."

"Why would the Empire destroy Ahto City?" Lieutenant Vuul Corr asked, "They have to understand that with Ahto City gone, exporting kolto will become ten times more difficult."

"Not to mention their war-machines." Ensign Garin Ashdown added.

"More difficult, but not impossible." Captain Sibar Fre'kay explained, "The Imperials have complete control of Mana'an, with no vulnerabilities now. When Jedi Malakon managed to take most of the city, Admiral Cypher Pohar must have realized that Ahto City was a stepping-stone for total invasion."

"Destroying Ahto City prevented us from taking the rest of the planet." Jedi Malakon concluded.

"Now the only way to take Mana'an is to take back every single underwater city, one-by-one." Ensign Garin Ashdown replied.

"Each probably crawling with Imperial sharks." Lieutenant Vuul Corr added.

"The Empire now has a complete monopoly on kolto, despite losing Ahto City." Captain Sibar Fre'kay finished.

"We needed those supplies." Ensign Garin Ashdown replied.

"We need that world." Jedi Malakon corrected.

Suddenly, one of the few other Alliance personnel on the bridge stood up and screamed, "We have an urgent incoming message from the Hapes Consortium!"

Captain Sibar Fre'kay stepped forward, "What is it?"

"The Empire has crossed the Transitory Mists, and is currently bearing down on Hapes!" The Alliance officer informed, "They request immediate aid!"

"The Hapans? The Empire has finally done it; they've turned against everyone." Lieutenant Vuul Corr replied.

"Where did the Imperial fleet originate?" Captain Sibar Fre'kay asked.

"Onderon." The Alliance answered.

"Onderon? Master Lii was right!" Jedi Malakon replied.

"What?" Captain Sibar Fre'kay asked.

"My Master and I were on Onderon when the Empire invaded the system." Jedi Malakon informed, "He predicted this would happen."

"What is the composition of the Imperial fleet?" Captain Sibar Fre'kay asked.

"Five *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers, unknown rest." The Alliance officer reported.

"What do the Hapans have in terms of fighting power?" Captain Fre'kay asked.

The Alliance officer read the information on her screen, "A dozen Enhanced Battle Dragons, another dozen *Nova*-class battle cruiser; estimated seven hundred Advanced Miy'til starfighters, and a handful of assault bombers."

"That's nowhere near enough firepower to stop five Star Destroyers!" Ensign Garin Ashdown replied.

Jedi Malakon looked confused, then turned to the Alliance officer, "What about the *Enslaver*?"

"What about it?" The Alliance officer asked.

"Where is it?" Jedi Malakon sternly asked.

The Alliance officer looked at the readouts, "There is no report that the *Enslaver* is among those who crossed into Hapan space."

"What? What are you thinking?" Captain Sibar Fre'kay asked, "Another trap?"

Jedi Malakon thought for a moment; he looked back at the Alliance officer, "Use all your resources to find the *Enslaver*! I want to know where it is, now!"

Captain Sibar Fre'kay placed his paw on Jedi Malakon's shoulder, "What is it?"

"I don't think Hapes is the true target." Jedi Malakon answered.

"What are you talking about?" Ensign Garin Ashdown replied, "Five Star Destroyers isn't a tease! That's an assault fleet, and Hapes is the target!"

"Listen! When I was on Onderon, the *Enslaver*, Lord Tyranid's flagship, appeared out-of-nowhere and attacked the Dxun moon." Jedi Malakon explained, "My Master thought they annexed Onderon as a stepping-stone towards the Hapes Consortium. It made sense at the time, but now look. The *Enslaver* isn't even heading towards Hapes."

"You don't know that!" Ensign Garin Ashdown countered, "The reports are scattered at best!"

"Lord Tyranid is Empress Amelia's Fist, and supreme commander!" Jedi Malakon countered, "He has hunted down and murdered countless high-ranking beings over the years; the remaining members of the Triumvirate, Senators, Imperial Moffs, Alliance Generals and Admirals, monarchs, the list goes on. Wherever he goes, the Empire goes."

"Sir, an Alliance reconnaissance scout team reported last seeing the *Enslaver* two standard days ago heading Core-ward." The Alliance officer reported.

"Pull up a holographic map of the galaxy." Jedi Malakon ordered.

Suddenly, a blue cone emanated from the holographic projector, and the galactic disk appeared, along with the major star-systems and planets. The holographic projection slowly rotated about the vertical axis, and major star-systems were highlighted.

"Plot the vector and known positions of the *Enslaver*." Jedi Malakon ordered.

A triangular image appeared, along with waypoints, originating at Onderon, moving Core-ward. Another waypoint appeared near Balmorra, and the last appearing near Kuat. Jedi Malakon thought for a moment, trying to envision the movements of the *Enslaver*. He imagined the warship travelling further Core-ward, passed Kuat.

Finally, he came to a realization, "Empress Teta."

"What?" Ensign Garin Ashdown commented.

"The *Enslaver* is heading for the Empress Teta system." Jedi Malakon repeated.

"There is no way you can know that!" Ensign Garin Ashdown countered, "The *Enslaver* passed by Kuat. Maybe it stopped there for repairs."

Jedi Malakon shook his head, "The *Enslaver* left Onderon undamaged."

"Maybe she engaged in another battle since Onderon." Ensign Garin Ashdown suggested.

"None the reports indicate." Jedi Malakon noted, "The *Enslaver* arrived on Onderon, then left immediately afterward, heading towards the Core. Now why would Lord Tyranid do that? If the Empire's objective was to conquer the Hapes Consortium, Lord Tyranid would be the one Empress Amelia sends."

"This is nonsense!" Ensign Garin Ashdown shouted, "We should head for Hapes immediately! Maybe we can get in front of them, and prevent the Imperials from advancing any further."

"Attacking Hapes doesn't make any sense!" Jedi Malakon screamed, "The Hapans have remained neutral throughout the Insurgency!"

"The Hapans possess one of the largest fleets in the galaxy." Ensign Garin Ashdown informed, "And since they haven't acted on any military campaigns, it remains completely intact."

"Not to mention that the Hapans have been aiding the Alliance in secret." Lieutenant Vuul Corr added, "The Empire always knew, but never could prove it."

"Attacking Hapes would only invite one more enemy for Empress Amelia to fight." Jedi Malakon explained, "The Imperial Navy is already stretched thin. There is no way they could afford to fight on another front."

Before Ensign Garin Ashdown could say another word, Captain Sibar Fre'kay cut in, "Although I agree with most of Jedi Malakon's assessment, I cannot afford to abandon the Hapans. I am ordering the fleet to jump to Hapes immediately!"

"Captain! This is a mistake!" Jedi Malakon protested, "The Empire is leading you on a wild bantha chase, directing our fleet away from the Core, and away from their true objective."

"The Tetans?" Ensign Garin Ashdown replied.

"Yes." Jedi Malakon answered.

"What makes the Tetans so special?" Ensign Garin Ashdown asked.

"The Tetans have been fighting the Empire since the beginning of the Insurgency." Jedi Malakon explained, "They've continued fighting them, alone, and have survived battle after battle." He turned to the Captain, "Sir, if anyone can defeat the Empire, it's the Tetans."

Captain Sibar Fre'kay thought about it for a moment, "Is there any increased activity around the Core?"

The Alliance officer replied, "None reported, sir."

Captain Sibar Fre'kay turned to Jedi Malakon, "I'm sorry, but I can't take the risk if you're wrong." Captain Sibar Fre'kay sighed, "Assemble the fleet! We're jumping to Hapes immediately!"

"You can't do this!" Jedi Malakon replied.

"As the most senior officer present, I command the fleet! Not Jedi!" Captain Sibar Fre'kay countered.

"Then let me go!" Jedi Malakon suggested.

"Excuse me?" Captain Sibar Fre'kay asked.

"Let me take a shuttle, and I'll go to Empress Teta myself." Jedi Malakon suggested.

"Out of the question." Captain Sibar Fre'kay replied, "You'll be needed in the battle. I can't afford to lose you."

"Captain—" Jedi Malakon started.

"You're dismissed, Jedi Malakon." Captain Sibar Fre'kay cut in; he turned to the Alliance officer, "Prepare the jump to Hapes."

"Sir, it will take at least an hour to calculate jump trajectories with the computer down." The Alliance officer replied.

Captain Sibar Fre'kay nodded, while Jedi Malakon turned to walk out of the bridge. Jedi Malakon was furious, but powerless to change the minds of the three Alliance commanders. The Jedi, although traditionally been associated and allied with the Galactic Alliance, have no military or political power within its system. Jedi Malakon stormed through the narrow corridors of the *Tri-Scythe*-class frigate, passing numerous personnel. He headed to the hangar bay, where the rest of Razor Squadron was busy repairing and reloading their CF9 Crossfire starfighters. The hangar was full of damaged starfighters, most of them too badly damaged to be repaired.

Cosh Sonter caught site of Jedi Malakon, "Hey, Mathias!"

Jedi Malakon looked over, and saw Cosh Sonter, "Cosh, is there a vacant starfighter it could... borrow."

"Plenty, but we're short on munitions." Cosh Sonter answered.

"That's fine. I just need to get out of here, fast." Jedi Malakon informed.

"Why, what's wrong?" Cosh Sonter asked.

"The new captain has decided we should jump to Hapes. Five Imperial Star Destroyers were reported to have crossed the Transitory Mists, heading for Hapes." Jedi Malakon informed.

"Well, shouldn't we go to Hapes?" Cosh Sonter asked.

Jedi Malakon shook his head, "No. I think the real attack will be at Empress Teta."

"Empress Teta? Why?" Cosh Sonter asked.

"It's a long story, and I don't have much time." Jedi Malakon replied, "I need that fighter, and I need it now."

"Okay, okay." Cosh Sonter replied, "It's over here."

Cosh Sonter started to lead Jedi Malakon to the vacant starfighter, when suddenly, the rest of Razor Squadron came around from another starfighter in front of them. They stared at both Jedi Malakon and Cosh Sonter.

"We heard everything you said." Razor Five said.

"And we want in." Razor Ten finished.

"No way guys." Jedi Malakon immediately answered, "This is my risk, not yours."

"Frack that, One." Razor Twelve replied, "Where you go, we go."

Jedi Malakon hesitated, "If you do this, a court martial will be in order."

"We trust you." Razor Six answered.

Jedi Malakon sensed their resolve in the Force; it radiated light like a beacon. Finally, he nodded, "Alright. We have no time to waste. Let's go."

Jedi Malakon ran over to the empty CF9 Crossfire starfighter, and strapped himself in. Before he fully got in, he took a last look around the hangar. The other members of Razor Squadron ran to their respective starfighters, and climbed aboard. Jedi Malakon started running through the pre-flight checks.

Suddenly, over the communication system, "*Pilot, you don't have authorization to leave.*"

"This is Razor One; Razor Squadron has been given permission to leave on an important Alliance operation." Jedi Malakon stated.

"*I have no report of—*" Air-traffic control started.

"It was just issued to us. The mission is of top priority, and of immediate concern! Let us take off now!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

"*I can't allow—*" Air-traffic control started.

"Then you can explain to the captain why a flight controller held up an important mission because of a communication error!" Jedi Malakon shouted.

Jedi Malakon was unsure if the speech would work; he had never tried it before, but heard of other starfighter pilots that had, with mixed success. There was a moment of silence, then the hangar doors started opening, "*You're clear for takeoff, Razor One. Good hunting.*"

"Thank you. Razor One out." Jedi Malakon finished.

The hangar door was only partially opened, but he couldn't waste any time. A blue atmospheric containment field surrounded the hangar opening, keeping the atmosphere from escaping. He immediately took off, and flew towards the hangar door. Jedi Malakon rolled the CF9 Crossfire starfighter onto its side, and threaded through the semi-opened door. Following right behind him were the five remaining members of Razor Squadron. Jedi Malakon punched in the coordinates for Empress Teta from memory, and sent it to his squadron mates.

"Alright boys, punch it!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

Jedi Malakon initiated the jump to hyperspace. The stars stretched into strings of white light, then merged together to form a sheet of bluish-white light. Following right behind were the rest of Razor Squadron.

**Two Standard Days Later: Ronika, Empress Teta system:**

Orbiting the orange-tan rocky desert planet was the entire Tetan fleet, consisting of thirty-six *Valkyrie*-class Battlestars, and ten *Ares*-class fighter platforms. Over the years, the Tetans have been fighting the Empire within their own system. Large naval battles were not common, but rather smaller skirmishes. Nevertheless, the Tetans lost many Battlestars over the years. What was left for the day's operation was all Princess Jade could gather throughout the entire system.

Jedi Malakon waited anxiously within the massive hangar onboard one of the *Ares*-class fighter platforms. The gigantic hangar was one of two onboard each fighter platform. Each hangar could support over fifty starfighters, most of them were the Tetan-made *Viper*-class starfighters, and over fifty bombers, all of them consisted of the *Raptor*-class bombers. The Vipers and Raptors were some of the best spacecraft in the galaxy. Jedi Malakon stood next to his CF9 Crossfire starfighter, alongside the other five in the entire hangar, all part of Razor Squadron. Jedi Malakon could feel the tension among all the Tetan pilots, as well as within himself. The Tetans have deliberately avoiding large battles because the Empire specialized in fighting large-scale battles; after all, look at the size of their Star Destroyers.

Cosh Sonter walked up to Jedi Malakon, and worriedly asked, "Hey, so what's the word?"

Jedi Malakon shook his head, "Don't know yet. All I've heard is that the advanced strike fleet just jumped above Empress Teta."

Cosh Sonter was biting his nails, "Uh huh, and?"

"And we don't jump until they tell us that the *Enslaver* has arrived." Jedi Malakon explained, "It's been spotted within-system, but the Blackbird's lost track of it."

"So we wait?" Cosh Sonter asked.

"Yup." Jedi Malakon answered, "It shouldn't be too long, though. Knowing the Sith, they'll want to crush the Resistance as soon as possible. Lord Tyranid won't be long now."

Cosh Sonter nodded his head, and slowly started walking away. He walked down the rows of Tetan *Viper*-class starfighters, passively observing their condition and armaments.

\* \* \*



Princess Jade, wearing her hardened-gold battle armour with a white cape, waited apprehensively on the bridge of her flagship, the *Empress Gem*, a custom-built *Valkyrie*-class Battlestar. The Battlestar was more heavily armoured, and sported a superior hyperdrive system, as well as better power generator to power all the turbolasers and other guns. Princess Jade, the sovereign ruler of the Empress Teta system, had been fighting the Sith and the Empire since they were first forced to flee Cinnagar, capital city of Empress Teta, nearly five years ago. Since then, she has led the Resistance against the Empire by employing guerrilla-tactics, ambushes, skirmishes, and other small-scale battles. The battles, usually quick, lightning-fast bouts, were meant to slowly bleed the Empire of resources, and man-power. However, over the years, Princess Jade has lost a lot of Battlestars, and even worse, more Tetan soldiers.

Princess Jade stared out the window, gazing upon Ronika. In the past, over four thousand years ago, the rocky desert world was used as a prison planet. Prisoners were forced to mine out the metal ore that made the world such a hotly fought-over planet. Unfortunately, Ronika was a desolate world, a never ending sea of desert and rock. Ultraviolet radiation bombarded the surface constantly, making the surface of the planet almost uninhabitable. Nevertheless, Ronika was a hotly warred over world during the Imperial occupation of Empress Teta. Only just recently had Princess Jade fought the Empire and the Sith back from the outer regions of the Empress Teta system. The Empire was forced to flee towards the inner regions of the Empress Teta system. Now, they mostly concentrate around Empress Teta herself.

"Princess, we have a transmission from the strike fleet!" A Tetan officer reported, "The *Enslaver* has just dropped out of hyperspace above Empress Teta."

"How many do the Imperials have?" Princess Jade asked.

"The *Enslaver*, eleven *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers, and four *Ardent*-class fast frigates." The Tetan officer calmly reported, "All expected to be fully armed."

"Larger than we expected." Princess Jade said to herself; she thought for a moment, then shouted, "Order the jump! Let's bring the fight to these frackers!"

The Tetan officers on the bridge immediately began calculating and distributing the jump vectors and coordinate for Empress Teta. Gunners were issued go-alarms, and the *Ares*-class fighter platforms were given the standby-alarm. A nervous energy seemed to permeate the air; the coming assault on Empress Teta would be the largest military operation the Tetans conducted since the initial fall of Empress Teta nearly five years ago.



\* \* \*

Sirens blared within the massive hangar of the *Ares*-class fighter platform; yellow and red lights flashed on and off throughout the hangar. Pilot's ran to their starfighters, and climbed aboard. The mechanics and engineers retreated into the inner portions of the fighter platform, leaving only pilots within the gigantic hangar. Jedi Malakon looked around for any sign of why, then he finally realized:

*It's go time*, Jedi Malakon thought.

Suddenly, Cosh Sonter came running towards him, along with the rest of Razor Squadron. They all had expressions of confusion or anxiety. Jedi Malakon could feel their unease through the Force.

"Alright Razor's, it's showtime." Jedi Malakon replied, "The *Enslaver* must have been spotted over Empress Teta, so the mission is a go." The Razor's nodded, but were still anxious, "Listen, you've done this dozens of times. We've faced worse odds, and came out the victors. Just keep calm, watch your six, and shoot straight, and we'll all make it home."

The Razor's nodded, and immediately ran to their starfighters. Cosh Sonter was the last one to leave. He stared at Jedi Battlestars, and nodded; Jedi Battlestars reciprocated, and smiled. Cosh Sonter then ran over to his starfighter, right behind Jedi Battlestars's. Jedi Battlestars began climbing into his starfighter, but before he closed the canopy, he stared out into the massive hangar. He watched as the pilots anxiously awaited battle with the Imperials, and the Sith. He could feel their emotions; fear, hate, anger, and most of all, vengeance. Jedi Battlestars nodded, then sat in the pilot's seat of the CF9 Crossfire starfighter. Although there were two seats for the CF9 Crossfire starfighter, he didn't have a rear gunner.

*I won't need it anyways*, Jedi Battlestars thought, *I hope*.

"Princess, all starships have been updated!" A Tetan officer informed.

"Proceed to jump." Princess Jade ordered.

The Tetan officer immediately initiated the countdown sequence. A mechanical male voice rang out over the communication system, "*Jump sequence initiated. Five, four, three, two, one... jump.*"



Suddenly, the stars streaked into long white lines, then meshed together forming a sheet of bluish-white light. The sudden jolt almost knocked Princess Jade over, but she stood firm. Less than a second later, the bluish-white sheet of line started to fade back into long white light, then back into point sources of light. The microjump was very fast. Princess Jade never took her eyes off the forward viewport. Twelve Battlestars from the Tetan fleet jumped behind one of the three moons that orbited Empress Teta. The fleet immediately started to pitch upward to fly over the desolate moon. Suddenly, the rear engines of two *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers appeared in front of her, with the massive engines of the *Enslaver* behind the two Star Destroyers. Princess Jade had strategically jumped behind the Imperial strike fleet.

"Give all long-ranged turbolasers firing solutions to those Star Destroyers!" Princess Jade ordered, "Keep us back, and target those engines!"

Almost immediately, the long-ranged turbolasers, a special type of turbolaser battery that fires energy bolts in such a way that the energy doesn't dissipate as quickly, on the dorsal arms fired. The three arms above, and the three arms below started rotating counter-clockwise, allowing all the guns to fire against the Star Destroyers, while the bridge remained stationary. The energy bolts, although not as powerful as heavy turbolaser fire, struck the engines of the two *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers with great force. Huge explosions rang out all across the stern of the two *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers.

"Take down those engines!" Princess Jade ordered.

The fleet slowly crept towards the Imperial fleet. Suddenly, the long-ranged turbolaser ceased, and the batteries turned over to conventional heavy and medium turbolaser fire. A flurry of energy bolts streaked across the blackness of space, and struck the engines of the two Star Destroyers. Massive fireballs erupted out from the hull. The two *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers immediately started to turn around, and face the *Valkyrie*-class Battlestars pounding them from behind. The stream of turbolaser bolts was endless. Suddenly, one of the Star Destroyers exploded from the combined fire of twelve Battlestars. A massive explosion emanated from the interior of Star Destroyer, tearing the hull in half. A collective cheer rang out from the Tetan officers on the bridge; Princess Jade, however, was less enthusiastic. She continued to stare out into the battle, watching as one Star Destroyer turned to face her fleet, while a *Ardent*-class fast frigate on the right flank did the same.

\* \* \*



The *Ares*-class fighter platform arrived out of hyperspace, and behind one of the moons orbiting Empress Teta. Almost immediately after arriving out of hyperspace, the large hangar doors started to open. Jedi Malakon was anxiously waiting to get into the battle. Jedi Malakon sat in the pilot's seat, tapping his fingers on his legs, nervously waiting to get the 'all-clear' from the air-traffic controller.

"*Razor One, you're all clear.*" Air-traffic controller informed, "*Kick some ass.*"

Immediately, Jedi Malakon took off and exited the gigantic hangar of the *Ares*-class fighter platform, followed by the five other starfighters of Razor Squadron. They were immediately faced with the largest moon of Empress Teta; the moon was a desolate rock that was so large, it sported its own set of rings. Jedi Malakon pitched his starfighter up, and rose above the large moon. As soon as he cleared the horizon of the large moon, he saw the extent of the battle; already, two of the *Valkyrie*-class Battlestars that were part of the initial strike fleet were destroyed, along with one of the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers orbiting above Cinnagar. He saw the *Enslaver*, surrounded by *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers and *Ardent*-class fast frigates, moving against the Tetan Battlestars, all firing against the relatively smaller cruisers. Jedi Malakon watched as the Imperials filled the space with red energy bolts, each pelting the Battlestars relentlessly. Explosions, on both the Battlestars and the Star Destroyers, rocked the hulls, causing fireballs to erupt into the hard vacuum of space. The planet of Empress Teta was in the background; the green and blue world seemed so serene, but he knew it would soon become a battlefield. Jedi Malakon quickly looked over his left shoulder, and saw that the eighteen *Valkyrie*-class Battlestars accompanying him, along with six *Ares*-class fighter platforms, had just cleared the moon.

"Alright, Battlestars have targeting solutions." Jedi Malakon informed, "Clear their line of fire."

A series of clicks of the microphone indicated that they all received the order. The CF9 Crossfire starfighters, along with the deployed Tetan *Viper*-class starfighters immediately spaced out, allowing for energy bolts to pass between them. Suddenly, a torrent of long-ranged turbolaser fire streaked passed Jedi Malakon, and struck the two closest *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers on the left flank. The long-ranged turbolaser fire was relentless, constantly streaking through the blackness of space. Meanwhile, Jedi Malakon looked over to his right, and saw that the other starships of the Tetan fleet had successfully positioned themselves behind the Imperial fleet, and begun attacking. Jedi Malakon turned back to the two *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers in front of him; they were beginning to turn towards him. Suddenly, the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers began

firing heavy turbolaser bolts at the Battlestars behind him. A flurry of green turbolaser fire from the Battlestars struck the two Star Destroyers, while the red turbolaser fire struck the Battlestars. Fireballs rocked the hulls of both ships, but the Star Destroyers were taking more damage; the collective targeting from all eighteen Battlestars on only two Star Destroyers was heavily uneven.

"We're in turbolaser range!" Jedi Malakon shouted, "Space out!"

Jedi Malakon immediately started jinking and juking left and right to avoid being shot at by the incoming turbolaser fire. Jedi Malakon pitched his starfighter downward, diving below the plane the two Star Destroyers were on. He charged forward, dodging the various laser cannons, light turbolaser batteries and other point-defence platforms designed to shoot down starfighters. He banked hard left, then hard right, trying to be as unpredictable as possible.

"Go for the solar ionization reactor on the ventral bow!" Jedi Malakon ordered, "It may be our only hope of taking them down!"

The solar ionization reactor was essentially the power source for the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers. The reactor was large enough on the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer, that a large bulbous structure located on the ventral bow protruded from the hull, making for an easy target. Although an obvious target, it was well defended, making attacking the solar ionization reactor tricky. Before they could get into firing range of the Star Destroyer, a flurry of *Predator*-class starfighters poured out of the ventral hangar.

"Eyeballs, incoming!" Jedi Malakon shouted, "Lock S-foils in attack position, Razor's"

The S-foils on the CF9 Crossfire starfighter locked into their cross-position. Jedi Malakon sped forward, towards the two Star Destroyers, while the others started banking left and right, avoiding the laser fire all around them. Explosions from the turbolasers and laser cannons flashed in front of Jedi Malakon, temporarily blinding him; explosions of fire ripped through the hull of the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer above him. Suddenly, two *Predator*-class starfighters flew above him, mere metres above his own starfighter, at top speed. Jedi Malakon looked over his left shoulder, and saw that they started to turn around. The incredibly manoeuvrable and fast *Predator*-class starfighter made the tight turn in moments, and started to chase Jedi Malakon. The two *Predator*-class starfighters fired their laser cannons at Jedi Malakon; a torrent of laser

cannon bolts streaked past his viewport, and immediately, he broke hard left, narrowly avoiding them.

Jedi Malakon grunted as he made the hard turn; his knuckles turned white from the strain, and he clenched his teeth together tightly. Reactively, the two *Predator*-class starfighters pitch upward, and climb towards the Star Destroyer above. Jedi Malakon saw the two *Predator*-class starfighters, and immediately chased after them. Jedi Malakon slammed on the thrusters, closing the gap between him and the Imperial fighters. Jedi Malakon immediately lined up his targeting reticule, and squeezed the trigger. A shower of laser cannon bolts rained out from the CF9 Crossfire starfighter's wings, and struck one of the *Predator*-class starfighters in the spherical cockpit. The spherical cockpit got perforated and shredded by the laser bolts; a black trail of smoke streamed out from the cockpit, then it slowly corkscrewed and dove downward towards the planet.

"One down." Jedi Malakon said to himself.

Jedi Malakon lined up the targeting reticule on the other *Predator*-class starfighter. He got a good lock on his computer, and squeezed the trigger. Suddenly, the Imperial fighter dove downward, towards the planet; the laser bolts just missed the right wing of the *Predator*-class starfighter.

"Damn it!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

In a rage, Jedi Malakon dove down towards the fleeing *Predator*-class starfighter. Jedi Malakon wildly fired his laser cannons; the Imperial fighter jinked and juked from side-to-side wildly, making it incredibly hard to hit. Jedi Malakon kept on his tail, never letting up on the pressure. Suddenly, the Imperial fighter banked hard right; the more agile fighter made an almost impossibly sharp turn. Instantly, Jedi Malakon banked hard right, trying to match the tight turn. Knowing full well that his starfighter couldn't, he pitched the starfighter upwards, then pitched downwards again. After the manoeuvre, Jedi Malakon appeared behind the four ion engines of the *Predator*-class starfighter.

"I've got you now!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

Jedi Malakon squeezed the trigger for a second, letting loose a torrent of laser cannon bolts. Immediately, the Imperial fighter banked left, avoiding the laser bolts. Jedi Malakon matched his moves, banking hard left, trying to get his nose in front of the

Imperial fighter so he can shoot at him. Every time Jedi Malakon would get his nose in front of the *Predator*-class starfighter to shoot at him, the Imperial fighter would reverse direction. The dance was infuriating.

"C'mon! Stay put!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

Suddenly, a torrent of laser cannon and turbolaser fire erupted above Jedi Malakon. He looked up, and saw that the Star Destroyer was firing at him now. Jedi Malakon was taken completely by surprise; he hadn't realized he had drifted so close to the Star Destroyer. Immediately, Jedi Malakon dove away from the Star Destroyer, narrowly avoiding the barrage of red energy bolts. Jedi Malakon located the Imperial fighter again, and gave chase. The *Predator*-class starfighter rolled over his left hinged-wing, and started to pull up and out.

Jedi Malakon, anticipating the manoeuvre, pulled hard on the yoke, and screamed, "Not this time!"

Jedi Malakon managed to get his nose in front of the fighter, and let lose a few energy bolts. The energy bolts missed the Imperial pilot by mere metres. Jedi Malakon pulled back on the yoke with all his strength, trying to pull his starfighter into a tighter turn than the *Predator*-class starfighter. The Imperial fighter finally levelled out, and began to dive again. Jedi Malakon pitched upward, and squeezed the trigger again. The torrent of energy bolts land its mark, perforating the cockpit of the *Predator*-class starfighter. The *Predator*-class starfighter corkscrewed and spun wildly, and finally crashed into the side of one of the Star Destroyers in a great big explosion. The fireball rose into the void of space, tearing through the hull.

Jedi Malakon laughed from the exhilaration. He quickly looked over his right shoulder, and saw the Battlestars had come closer into the battle. Suddenly, the eighteen Battlestars fired their ion cannons; the Battlestars fired six ion cannons each, all hitting a single Star Destroyer. The blue ion bolts struck the Star Destroyer, immediately taking down the shields, leaving it completely vulnerable to attack. The hull of the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer sizzled and sparked from the hot electric plasma that struck it; the bluish-white sparks seemed to dance across the hull.

"Shields are down on the Frenzy!" A Tetan officer reported, "Commence your attack on the solar ionization reactor!"

"Alright boys, let's go!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

Jedi Malakon immediately started climbing upwards, towards the crippled, unshielded *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer, the *Frenzy*. He quickly looked over his shoulder, and saw several other *Raptor*-class bombers, escorted by *Viper*-class starfighters, climbing up behind him. The barrage of turbolaser fire erupted in front of Jedi Malakon; the flashes and explosions were nearly blinding, but Jedi Malakon charged through. Just dodging left and right enough to avoid the energy bolts, Jedi Malakon continued on course. Suddenly, one of the *Viper*-class starfighters on his portside exploded when struck with a turbolaser bolt; the explosion rocked Jedi Malakon's starfighter, and pelted it with durasteel shrapnel.

"Spread out!" Jedi Malakon ordered, "Give them nothing to shoot at!"

Jedi Malakon turned back to the gigantic ventral side of the *Frenzy* in front of him. He lined up the targeting reticule onto the solar ionization reactor, and locked in the target. The targeting reticule locked on, and glowed red. Jedi Malakon squeezed the trigger, letting loose three proton torpedoes. The glowing red proton torpedoes streaked through the emptiness of space. Jedi Malakon banked hard right before he could see if the proton torpedoes hit their mark. Jedi Malakon turned to look over his left shoulder, and saw the three proton torpedoes strike the reactor. The explosion rocked the domal structure, but didn't rupture it.

"Damn it!" Jedi Malakon whispered to himself.

He continued to watch as the *Raptor*-class bombers fired a salvo of proton torpedoes and cluster missiles. The cluster missiles was a group of six low-powered concussion missiles that fired simultaneously from a single missile tube; each had the ability to home-in on a target, making them incredibly useful in dogfighting. The salvo of glowing red proton torpedoes, along with the white-tailed concussion missiles struck the dome on the ventral bow of the *Frenzy*. Suddenly, the solar ionization reactor exploded, sending a massive fireball into the vacuum of space.

"Alright!" Jedi Malakon cheered, "Reactor's finished!"

Jedi Malakon immediately banked hard right again, avoiding the onslaught of turbolaser fire coming from the eighteen Battlestars. The other *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer, finally identified as the *Ironhide*, relentlessly pounding and hammered its guns against one of the Battlestar's. Suddenly, the six-armed Battlestar erupted from within; the explosion tore the Battlestar apart, killing everyone aboard.

"Holy crap!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

The explosion seemed to happen in slow-motion; the arms, lined with guns, slowly started to tear away from the cylindrical body, then started plummeting into the atmosphere of Empress Teta. The crippled *Frenzy* was now helpless; with no solar ionization reactor, and therefore no power, it couldn't fire any of its direct-energy weapons, which include turbolasers and laser cannons. In desperation, Jedi Malakon saw the crippled *Frenzy* launch its proton torpedoes from the numerous torpedo tubes that lined the base of the hull. Jedi Malakon immediately banked hard left, and turned to face the crippled *Frenzy*. Suddenly, a barrage of over twenty-five glowing red proton torpedoes were launched at a single *Valkyrie*-class Battlestar.

"Oh my—" Jedi Malakon barely managed to say.

Jedi Malakon tried to hail the Battlestar, but it was too late; the twenty-five proton torpedoes struck the Battlestar almost simultaneously, overwhelming its shields, rupturing the hull, and tearing it apart piece-by-piece. The crippled *Frenzy* continued to fire its remaining one hundred and fifty proton torpedoes at any target it could hit. The *Ironhide* did the same, while firing its turbolasers relentlessly against the Tetan Battlestars. The space between the two fleets filled with glowing red proton torpedoes, and turbolaser fire. *Valkyrie*-class Battlestars were being destroyed left and right, while the tough and sturdy *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers continued to take the beating being delivered.

Suddenly, the warning light turned on in the cockpit, and a readout indicated that one of the proton torpedoes had locked onto his starfighter. Jedi Malakon instinctually banked hard right, trying to avoid being hit by the proton torpedo. Proton torpedoes were incredibly powerful weapons, able to penetrate hardened armour with its baradium shaped-charge; they were also known for their ability to make incredibly sharp turns. Jedi Malakon slammed on the thrusters, and tried to outrun the proton torpedo; he slammed the yoke hard left, then hard right, trying to out-manoeuvre it as well.

*Now I could use that back gunner,* Jedi Malakon thought.

Jedi Malakon jiked and juked from left to right, slamming the yoke side-to-side hard. Fear crept into Jedi Malakon's thoughts; his teeth were clenched, his knuckles were white from the strain, and his heart was beating out of his chest. He immediately banked hard right again, trying to make as sharp a turn as possible. He headed straight

for the crippled *Frenzy*, towards the heavily cratered and singed hull. He flew under the bow of the *Frenzy*, barely skimming the armoured hull. The proton torpedo struck the armoured hull of the *Frenzy*, causing a massive explosion, tearing more chunks of debris out of the warship.

Jedi Malakon sighed in relief, "That was too close."

"All fighters, we're getting pounded back here!" A Tetan officer reported, "Fire your proton torpedoes at the bridge of the *Frenzy*, now!"

Jedi Malakon immediately came up from under the crippled *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer, and pitched over onto the dorsal side. He was screeching through space, charging directly at the vulnerable bridge of the crippled *Frenzy*. Jedi Malakon lined up his targeting reticule, and locked on. Turbolaser fire hit the hull of the Star Destroyer all around him, causing flares and explosions to ripple and rock the hull. As soon as the targeting reticule turned red, and locked on, he squeezed the trigger. Immediately, three more glowing red proton torpedoes left the tube, and streaked straight for the bridge. Jedi Malakon banked right before he could see if the proton torpedoes hit their mark. He looked over his left shoulder, and watched as all three hit the bridge, but failed to take it out.

"Frack!" Jedi Malakon screamed, "Negative impact! I'm out of proton torpedoes!"

"Copy that, Razor One. Tetans got the ball." A Raptor pilot replied.

Jedi Malakon continued turning right, turning to face the crippled Star Destroyer. He watched as three *Raptor*-class bombers flew up from the nose of the bow, towards the bridge. They simultaneously launched proton torpedoes and cluster missiles before breaking off to the side. The torrent of armaments struck the bridge with a single great explosion. The bridge was consumed by flames and shrapnel from the massive explosions.

"Good job Raptors!" Jedi Malakon screamed, "Couldn't have done it better myself."

The *Frenzy*, now fatally crippled, started plummeting towards the planet of Empress Teta. Explosions erupted from within the warship, blowing through the armoured hull, sending flames and debris into the vacuum of space. The fatally crippled *Frenzy* was fortunately positioned off to port of the *Ironhide*. As the nose of the *Frenzy* started plunging downwards towards Empress Teta, it drove itself into the

*Ironhide*. The nose of the *Frenzy* pierced the hull of the *Ironhide*, slowly, but forcefully, tearing it apart. Explosions rocked both Star Destroyers, until finally, they both were torn in half.

"Yes!" Jedi Malakon screamed with joy.

A collective cheer rang out of the microphones as pilots and officers watched the two Star Destroyers being torn apart while plummeting towards the atmosphere of Empress Teta. The gigantic hulls of the two broken *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers started burning up in the upper atmosphere of Empress Teta, until finally crashing into one of the vast oceans on the planet. Jedi Malakon immediately looked back at the Tetan fleet; he saw that five *Valkyrie*-class Battlestars had been destroyed, and their debris was floating amongst the surviving ones. Jedi Malakon immediately snapped back into the battle, and scoped out the battlespace. Large chunks of debris floated in space. The *Predator*-class starfighters retreated back towards the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer and two *Ardent*-class fast frigates left on the Imperial left flank.

The Tetan Battlestars immediately charged forward, firing relentlessly against the last remaining *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer, identified as the *Thundercracker*, and *Ardent*-class fast frigates, one identified as the *Shockwave*, while the other was identified as the *Sunstorm*. The turbolaser fire was awesome, and powerful. Jedi Malakon charged against the *Thundercracker* on the Imperial left flank at full speed; he watched as the rest of the Tetan *Viper*-class starfighters, and *Raptor*-class bombers did the same. Heavy turbolaser fire struck the armoured hull of the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer. The *Raptor*-class bombers just got in range of the *Thundercracker*, and fired a salvo of proton torpedoes. The glowing red proton torpedoes streaked across the blackness of space, and struck the armoured hull of the *Thundercracker*. The proton torpedoes failed to penetrate the thick armoured hull however, and rather only left a surface scratch.

Suddenly, Jedi Malakon noticed that two *Predator*-class starfighters were tailing the *Raptor*-class bombers, and was firing upon them. Red laser cannon bolts streaked passed the *Raptor*-class bombers; they responded by attempting to evade the highly manoeuvrable and speedy starfighters. Immediately, Jedi Malakon rolled over onto his left wing, and pitched downward towards the two *Predator*-class starfighters. The high-g manoeuvre pressed Jedi Malakon into his seat; he pulled back on the yoke hard, levelling out directly behind the two *Predator*-class starfighters.

"You're mine!" Jedi Malakon shouted.

Jedi Malakon pushed the thrusters onto full, speeding forward, trying to catch up to the two *Predator*-class starfighters. He charged forward, but the two *Predator*-class starfighters were always just outside of range. They were firing wildly at the *Raptor*-class bombers, threatening to shoot them down. In desperation, Jedi Malakon squeezed the trigger, and let loose a torrent of laser cannon bolts. The laser cannon bolts flash across the two *Predator*-class starfighter's bow, and they immediately broke off the attack. The Imperial fighters broke hard left; Jedi Malakon banked with them. The CF9 Crossfire starfighter couldn't turn as tightly as the *Predator*-class starfighter, so Jedi Malakon pitched his nose upward to climb for a moment, then pitched back downward. This way, his starfighter could make a much tighter turn. As Jedi Malakon pitched his nose downward, he fired wildly at the two *Predator*-class starfighters. The bolts just missed the two *Predator*-class starfighters.

Jedi Malakon growled in frustration. Jedi Malakon levelled out his starfighter behind the two fleeing *Predator*-class starfighters. Erroneously, one of the *Predator*-class starfighters tried to make a climbing escape, showing his broadside to Jedi Malakon.

"Rookie mistake." Jedi Malakon replied.

He squeezed the trigger, and perforated the underside of the *Predator*-class starfighter. The Imperial starfighter exploded in a ball of flame, pelting Jedi Malakon's CF9 Crossfire starfighter with shrapnel. The deflector shield sparkled as the durasteel hit the energy shield. Jedi Malakon looked up through the windshield, and saw the other *Predator*-class starfighter banking hard left.

"Oh, so this is how it is?" Jedi Malakon taunted.

Jedi Malakon broke hard left, keeping pace with the *Predator*-class starfighter. The Imperial fighter continued to pull left, trying to shake Jedi Malakon off his tail. Jedi Malakon pulled up, trying to make a tighter turn, then pitched downward again. Jedi Malakon ended up right behind the *Predator*-class starfighter; its four red ion engines blazed in front of him. Jedi Malakon pulled left, then squeezed the trigger. A flurry of laser cannon bolts were sent out in front of the *Predator*-class starfighter, and then perforated it. The *Predator*-class starfighter exploded with a flash of flame, and black smoke. Unfortunately, the Imperial fighter was too close to Jedi Malakon for him to safely bank away, and the flaming cockpit of the *Predator*-class starfighter slammed into his cockpit. The windshield cracked from the impact, but remained whole.

Jedi Malakon sighed in relief, "Holy frack!"



Jedi Malakon turned back towards the *Thundercracker*; the ten remaining *Valkyrie*-class Battlestars were pounding the massive *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer with torrents of heavy turbolaser fire. Meanwhile, *Raptor*-class bombers on various strafing runs released proton torpedoes, and cluster bombs into the armoured hull. The energy bolts, coupled with the torpedoes, missiles and bombs, cratered the surface of the *Thundercracker*. Suddenly, a barrage of glowing blue ion bolts streaked across the blackness of space, and struck the *Thundercracker*. The blue plasma pelted the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer, causing the shields to go down.

"Shields are down!" A Tetan officer reported, "Fire everything you've got!"

The *Thundercracker* deployed its fighters and bombers out of the ventral hangar. Jedi Malakon dove in, and fired relentlessly at the outgoing fighters. He destroyed two *Predator*-class starfighters before being forced to break away. Meanwhile, the ten remaining Battlestars continued to rain down hammer blows onto the hull of the *Thundercracker*. Each hit from the heavy turbolasers created a huge glowing orange crater on the Star Destroyers hull, with scorch marks surrounding it.

"Urgent! All fighters return to Battlestars!" A Tetan officer screamed over the microphone, "We're being attacked!"

Jedi Malakon immediately broke hard right, and swung his starfighter around, bearing down on the ten remaining *Valkyrie*-class Battlestars. From a distance, he saw a group of *Neutralizer*-class bombers, probably no more than ten, swoop in and release a cluster of glowing red proton bombs onto the hulls of one of the *Valkyrie*-class Battlestars. The proton bombs, powerful bombs with a proton detonator and baradium charge, devastated the Battlestar's hull, cratering it. The bombing run completely disabled the arms of the Battlestar. Jedi Malakon punched the thrusters, trying to make up the ground as quickly as possible.

"We can't take another hit like that!" A Tetan officer onboard the crippled Battlestar screamed, "Take down those bombers!"

Suddenly, the *Neutralizer*-class bombers turned around, and swooped in for another attack run. The Battlestars tried futilely to shoot down the incoming bombers, but the turbolasers were too slow to hit the fast moving *Neutralizer*-class bombers. Jedi Malakon was too far away to do anything about it; he watched with anticipated fear as the bombers got closer to the Battlestars. The *Neutralizer*-class bombers let loose another

shower of proton bombs; the proton bombs were devastating, annihilating the entire Battlestar. The Battlestar exploded with a great flame that tore it to pieces.

"No!" Jedi Malakon screamed, "Damn sons of bitches!"

Jedi Malakon watched as the group of *Neutralizer*-class bombers headed for their next target. The space around them was filled with turbolaser fire from the Battlestars; the turbolasers just barely missed hitting the incoming bombers. Jedi Malakon just got within range of the bombers, and started firing his laser cannons wildly. The bombers didn't break-off their attack, and instead, dove sharply and picked up speed. The *Neutralizer*-class bombers lined up for another attack run; Jedi Malakon was hot on their tails, firing his laser cannons wildly. Every energy bolt just barely missed the bombers.

"C'mon!" Jedi Malakon screamed in frustration.

The *Neutralizer*-class bombers were incredibly fast, faster than his starfighter, and was nearly as manoeuvrable; however, they had weaker armour. He watched in agony as the *Neutralizer*-class bombers let loose another payload of proton bombs on another Battlestar. The explosions ruptured the hull and crippled the Battlestar; vents of atmosphere shot out from the gaping wound, followed by several personnel and debris.

"*Hull breach! Hull breach!*" Another Tetan officer onboard the Battlestar screamed, "*We're venting atmosphere! Take them down now!*"

Suddenly, the *Viper*-class starfighters arrived, and started firing at the *Neutralizer*-class bombers. The triple laser cannons were enough to break the *Neutralizer*-class bombers formation, and send them in different directions. Jedi Malakon seized the opportunity, and fired at the sharply banking bomber. Jedi Malakon squeezed the trigger, letting loose a torrent of green energy bolts. The laser cannon bolts perforated the right hinged-wing of the *Neutralizer*-class bomber, causing it to tear off from the cockpit. The *Neutralizer*-class bomber started to smoke up, then spiral out of control.

"About damn time!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

Jedi Malakon quickly looked over his left shoulder to see the damage the Battlestar had sustained; the hull had ruptured, and was severely compromised, but thankfully stopped venting atmosphere. Half the arms that sported the guns were completely destroyed or disabled from the explosions, and a stream of smoke rose out from the wounds on the hull. The hull was perforated by large craters, still glowing orange from the heat with black scorch marks surrounding it.

"*Razor One! Where are you?*" The Tetan officer pleaded, "*We need immediate assistance!*"

Jedi Malakon turned his attention back towards the *Neutralizer*-class bombers, still circling the crippled Battlestar. He saw one of the *Viper*-class starfighters shoot one bomber down, but there were still eight more bombers still circling around the crippled, flaming Battlestar. Suddenly, the bombers dove again, and lined up for an attack run. Jedi Malakon immediately dove to attack them. The bombers were right in front of him, flying perpendicular to his flight path, flying right-to-left. Jedi Malakon squeezed the trigger, letting lose a few energy bolts. Two bombers broke formation, while one of the energy bolts ricocheted off another bombers left hinged-wing. The others were not deterred, and let loose another payload of proton bombs. The gigantic explosion that resulted engulfed the crippled Battlestar, tearing into pieces. He felt the deaths of everyone onboard.

"Damn it!" Jedi Malakon screamed in anger, "All fighters, we've got to take down these bombers before they completely destroy us!"

A swarm of *Viper*-class starfighters appeared, and fired wildly at the *Neutralizer*-class bombers. Jedi Malakon was right on their tails, firing at the bombers every chance he could. The highly manoeuvrable bombers, however, dodged all his energy bolts. Suddenly, the *Neutralizer*-class bombers folded their wings back, and banked hard left. Jedi Malakon immediately broke hard left, trying to follow the bombers as closely as he could.

Jedi Malakon suddenly realized what the bombers were doing, "Alright guys, the bombers are bugging out!"

The *Neutralizer*-class bombers were retreating back towards the *Thundercracker*. As Jedi Malakon charged at the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer, he noticed that the Star Destroyer was completely crippled, and near death. The hull was venting atmosphere, and occasionally, a stream of fire would erupt from within its hull. Almost the entire portside hull was cratered, still glowing orange from the heat, with black scorch marks surrounding the wounds. The Star Destroyer's shields were brought down by the remaining Battlestar's ion cannons, and the hull was pelted and bombarded with turbolaser fire. The Star Destroyer futilely tried to fight back, firing its heavy turbolasers back at the Battlestars, only doing minimal damage. Only seven *Valkyrie*-class Battlestars remained, with five *Ares*-class fighter platforms playing supporting roles.

Jedi Malakon looked over to his right, and saw the *Shockwave*, an *Ardent*-class fast frigate, charging into one of the rear flanks of Battlestars. Four Battlestars bombarded the surface of the *Shockwave* with heavy turbolaser fire, while the fast frigate tried to out-manoeuver and counter-attack. Meanwhile, over to the left, the *Sunstorm*, another *Ardent*-class fast frigate was charging into the left-most flank of the Tetan fleet. It too was being heavily bombarded by turbolaser fire.

"*Stay clear of the Thundercracker!*" A Tetan officer informed over the communication sensor.

Jedi Malakon looked forward, and saw the final bombardment on the *Thundercracker*. The barrage of heavy turbolaser fire struck the hull of the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer, causing the reactor to explode. The explosion rocked the entire Star Destroyer, tearing it in half. The explosion was massive, and the fireball that resulted consumed the entire Star Destroyer. Suddenly, the remains of the *Thundercracker* started to plummet into the atmosphere of Empress Teta. Chunks of flaming hull, and twisted metal filled the space above Empress Teta.

Jedi Malakon cheered in joy, and laughed, "Alright!"

A collective cheer rang out over the microphone; Jedi Malakon was overjoyed by the sight. Jedi Malakon was getting eager to take on the *Enslaver*. Jedi Malakon immediately turned his starfighter towards the *Enslaver*, and charged forward. The bloodlust started to swell up inside him. His awareness of the battle heightened, and his focus was linear; all that was on his mind was the *Enslaver*.

Suddenly, of the microphone cleared of cheers, and new orders were issued, "*All fighters, stand clear of the Enslaver. Repeat, all fighters, stand clear of the Enslaver.*"

Jedi Malakon was confused by the order, "What was that? You want us to stand clear?"

"*Razor One, stand clear of the Enslaver. The Battlestars will take care of her.*" The Tetan officer ordered, "*All fighters are to remain in defensive formation around the Battlestars. Over.*"

Jedi Malakon looked around, and saw the other *Viper*-class starfighters pull back behind the Battlestars. Jedi Malakon reluctantly broke hard left, and turned his starfighter around. The windshield was cracked, obscuring his vision slightly, but he was more worried about the *Enslaver*. Before he even reached the Battlestars, they

started firing salvo after salvo of heavy turbolaser fire against the hull of the massive *Imperious*-class Advanced Star Destroyer, the *Enslaver*. Jedi Malakon looked over his right shoulder, and watched as the salvos struck the thick armoured hull of the *Enslaver* with little to no effect. The Tetan Battlestars from the rear, including Princess Jade's flagship, the *Empress Gem*, fired upon the *Enslaver*. All seventeen *Valkyrie*-class Battlestars were firing upon the massive *Enslaver*. The *Enslaver* lashed back, and fired its own salvos of heavy turbolaser fire against the much smaller Battlestars. The Battlestars struck by the powerful heavy turbolasers were jarred and rocked hard.

Suddenly, a flight of *Predator*-class starfighters was released from the *Enslaver*, and any other remaining warships in the Imperial fleet. The Imperial fleet, still going strong despite the surprise Tetan attack, now consisted of only the *Enslaver*, three *Ardent*-class fast frigates, including the *Sunstorm* and the *Shockwave*, and five *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers. The *Shockwave* charged towards the rear Tetan fleet; the Tetan Battlestars fired upon the *Ardent*-class fast frigate, but it continued charging. Jedi Malakon attempted to bank hard left to go after the *Shockwave*, but suddenly, the space around him lit up with laser cannon bolts.

"Holy frack!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

Immediately, Jedi Malakon went into a defensive stance, jinking and juking his starfighter side-to-side wildly. He slammed the yoke left and right as hard as he could, trying to avoid the laser cannon bolts erupting all around him. Suddenly, from behind, a CF9 Crossfire swooped in, and shot down the *Predator*-class starfighter on Jedi Malakon's tail.

"You know, if you're ever in trouble, don't hesitate to call for help." Cosh Sonter replied, "You'll live longer."

Jedi Malakon chuckled, "Thanks for the advice, Cosh."

Cosh Sonter moved behind Jedi Malakon's right wing. Suddenly, streaking across his cracked windshields, travelling from left-to-right, a *Viper*-class starfighter was giving chase against a *Predator*-class starfighter. Both Jedi Malakon and Cosh Sonter banked hard right, aiding the pursuing *Viper*-class starfighter. The *Viper*-class starfighter fired its three double medium laser cannons, perforating the spherical cockpit of the *Predator*-class starfighter. The cockpit exploded, sending chunks of debris raining down upon both Jedi Malakon's and Cosh Sonter's CF9 Crossfire starfighters. Unfortunately, the *Viper*-class starfighter was too close to the explosion, and his dorsal

wing got clipped by a rather large chunk of twisted metal. The *Viper*-class starfighter started behaving erratically, and smoke started trailing out from behind it.

"Viper pilot! Hailing Viper pilot!" Jedi Malakon hailed.

"*My fighters been hit by—*" The Viper pilot began.

"I know! Get out of here!" Jedi Malakon ordered, "That's an order!"

"*I can still—*" The Viper pilot protested.

"You're not going to be any good to anyone if you're dead." Jedi Malakon cut in, "Now get out of here!"

Jedi Malakon watched as the Viper pilot broke hard left, and headed towards one of the *Ares*-class fighter platforms. Suddenly, another torrent of laser cannon fire erupted all around Jedi Malakon.

"*We've got two on our tail!*" Cosh Sonter shouted.

"I know!" Jedi Malakon screamed back, "Break right!"

Cosh Sonter immediately broke right, while Jedi Malakon broke hard left. The two *Predator*-class starfighters followed Jedi Malakon, and wildly fired their laser cannons at him. Jedi Malakon slammed the yoke hard from left-to-right, gripping the yoke so hard that his knuckles turned white. Jedi Malakon looked over shoulder, trying to see where the *Predator*-class starfighters were. Suddenly, Cosh Sonter swooped in, and fired at the two Imperial fighters from the right. The green energy bolts shredded the two *Predator*-class starfighters, causing them to fall out of flight.

"Thanks, Cosh." Jedi Malakon sighed in relief.

Suddenly, other pair of *Predator*-class fighters appeared in the corner of Jedi Malakon's eye. The pair of Imperial fighters were coming at Jedi Malakon from the left at top speed. Jedi Malakon and Cosh Sonter immediately pitched their starfighters upward, and banked right. The two *Predator*-class starfighters flew beneath the CF9 Crossfire starfighters, and overshot them. Jedi Malakon gave chase, with Cosh Sonter following closely behind. The two *Predator*-class starfighters jinked and juked wildly, trying to get Jedi Malakon and Cosh Sonter off their backs.

"C'mon you bastard!" Jedi Malakon screamed in frustration.

He squeezed the trigger, but the energy bolts went wide. Suddenly, another torrent of red laser cannon fire erupted in front of them. Jedi Malakon quickly looked over his shoulder, and saw two more *Predator*-class starfighters tailing them.

"We've picked up two on our tail!" Jedi Malakon informed.

"I got 'em." Cosh Sonter replied.

He watched as Cosh Sonter banked hard right, and pitched his nose upward. The two Imperial fighters behind him remained on his tail. Jedi Malakon turned his attention back onto the two *Predator*-class starfighters in front of him. They were jinking and juking all over the place, trying to shake Jedi Malakon off their tails. Suddenly, another torrent of red laser cannon bolts flew passed his cockpit. The two *Predator*-class starfighters behind him were closing fast, while Jedi Malakon found it harder and harder to keep up with the two in front of him. Jedi Malakon squeezed the trigger once more, and managed to land a solid hit on one of the *Predator*-class starfighters left hinged-wing. The wing was shredded, and then tore off from the spherical cockpit, sending the Imperial fighter spiralling out of control. Jedi Malakon continued to pursue the last *Predator*-class starfighter in front of him, while evading the wildly firing Imperial fighters behind him.

"Damn it, Cosh! Where are you?" Jedi Malakon screamed.

Suddenly, Cosh Sonter appeared behind the two *Predator*-class starfighters pursuing Jedi Malakon, and fired. The torrent of green energy bolts scared one Imperial pilot off of Jedi Malakon's tail, while the other continued his pursuit. Jedi Malakon jinked and juked from left-to-right, evading the energy bolts streaking passed his cockpit. Finally, Cosh Sonter shot down the pursuing *Predator*-class starfighter, freeing Jedi Malakon from danger.

"Miss me?" Cosh Sonter sarcastically asked.

"Took you long enough!" Jedi Malakon screamed back.

Cosh Sonter followed closely behind Jedi Malakon, falling back behind his right wing. Jedi Malakon lined up his targeting reticule, and squeezed the trigger. A torrent of energy bolts streamed out in front of Jedi Malakon, and pierced the spherical cockpit of the *Predator*-class starfighter. The cockpit exploded into flames, and black smoke streamed out. Instantly, Jedi Malakon dove under the flaming cockpit, while Cosh Sonter climbed above it.

"Nice hit, Razor One." Cosh Sonter replied.

Jedi Malakon then banked right, facing the *Enslaver*. The *Enslaver* was taking a pounding from the seventeen remaining *Valkyrie*-class Battlestars. Suddenly, one of the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers orbiting Empress Teta exploded. The *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer tore itself apart; explosion after explosion rocked the massive warship, causing it to plummet into the atmosphere of Empress Teta. The *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer broke apart as it fell into the thickening atmosphere. Burning durasteel debris rained down onto Empress Teta, most of it crashing into Cinnagar. The destruction of one of the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers was followed by the destruction of one of the advanced strike fleet Battlestars. The massive explosion tore the vessel into pieces, causing the flaming debris to rain down into the Tetan atmosphere as well. The *Enslaver* didn't seem to let up; it charged forward, determined to destroy Empress Teta once and for all.

"We've got to take it out before it takes us all out!" Jedi Malakon replied.

"There's nothing we can do right now." Cosh Sonter replied.

Suddenly, the Battlestars began firing their ion cannons at the massive *Imperious*-class Advanced Star Destroyer. The blue plasma struck the hull of the *Enslaver*, causing its shields to go down temporarily. The hull sizzled and sparked as the ions from the plasma discharged electricity into the *Enslaver*. The turbolaser emplacements continued to work, and fired relentlessly at the surrounding Battlestars.

"Shields are down!" Jedi Malakon screamed in excitement.

"Razor One, don't even think about it!" Cosh Sonter replied.

"Sorry, Cosh. I have to." Jedi Malakon answered.

Immediately, Jedi Malakon punched the thrusters, and sped forward towards the *Enslaver*. Jedi Malakon was travelling at an incredible speed, trying to dodge turbolaser and laser cannon fire, while trying to make it towards the *Enslaver* as fast as possible. *Predator*-class starfighters flew around him everywhere, but they seemed to be concentrated behind him, flying around the Battlestars, trying to bring them down. Jedi Malakon was acting recklessly, weaving in-and-out of danger. Diving under large chunks of debris, while evading incoming turbolaser fire was quite a task, even for a Jedi Knight. Suddenly, parts of the exposed hull of the *Enslaver* exploded when struck by a heavy turbolaser bombardment from the Battlestars.

"*Razor One, this is the Empress Gem, stop what you're doing, and return to the Battlestars!*" The *Empress Gem* hailed.

"Sorry *Empress Gem*, I didn't copy that last transmission." Jedi Malakon replied.

"Stop—" They attempted to say again, before Jedi Malakon turned off his communication sensors. He still had the one in his earpiece, which was linked to the other members of Razor Squadron, but that was silent at the moment.

Jedi Malakon dove underneath the *Enslaver*, and skimmed the armoured surface, mere metres off of the durasteel hull. The laser cannons, and other point-defence systems were firing wildly at him. Jedi Malakon, using the Force to enhance his reflexes and battle-awareness, dodged the ducked the incoming energy bolts. Jedi Malakon charged directly at the ventral hangar bay, which was opened with only an atmospheric containment field surrounding it. Jedi Malakon charged forward, but then was suddenly struck by a laser cannon bolt. The laser cannon bolt pierced one of the S-foils, on his starfighter. His starfighter started spiralling out of control, careening forward through sheer momentum. Jedi Malakon tried to fight the wild spin by slamming the yoke in the opposite direction, but it was futile.

"Oh frack!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

Jedi Malakon was out-of-control, and his starfighter was going to crash into ventral hangar of the *Enslaver*. He passed through the atmospheric containment field, and ejected himself out of the cockpit. The bolts on the CF9 Crossfire starfighters cracked windshield shot upward, and the pilot seat ejected out of the cockpit. Jedi Malakon flew through the air, and landed onto the hard permacrete floor of the hangar. He rolled on the floor, and came back up onto his feet, just in time to see his CF9 Crossfire starfighter crash into an entire launch rack of *Predator*-class starfighters. Several stormtroopers, armed with assault blaster rifles, and armoured with the new plastoid-ceramic composite material, flooded the ventral hangar.

"Some welcoming." Jedi Malakon said to himself.

The stormtroopers ran towards him, with their assault blaster rifles ready to fire. The launch rack that the CF9 Crossfire starfighter hit exploded into flames, consuming most of the durasteel that made it up; thick black smoke rose into the air until it billowed and accumulated on the ceiling. Jedi Malakon immediately activated his blue-bladed lightsaber; the *snap-hiss* resonated within the hangar. He charged forward,

towards the burning wreckage. Immediately, the stormtroopers fired their assault blaster rifles at him. Expertly, he deflected the energy bolts that were fired at him, while running towards the blast doors leading into the main body of the warship. He ran passed the inferno; the intense heat from the raging flames scorched his skin, until it was bright red. The stormtroopers relentlessly charged forward.

"Don't you guys ever learn!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

He pierced the heart of the first stormtrooper that approached him, while dodging an energy bolt fired at his head. Jedi Malakon quickly ripped the lightsaber out of the fallen stormtroopers chest, and decapitated another who was right behind him. The waves of stormtroopers seemed endless. Jedi Malakon fell into a trance, hacking and slashing at the waves of stormtroopers that charged towards him. His movements were incredibly fast, fuelled by his emotions; the glowing blue energy blade was a mere blur to the stormtroopers. Jedi Malakon let himself go into the Force, allowing it to guide his movements. Jedi Malakon spun quickly, cleaving stormtroopers in half with a slice of the lightsaber. His body movements moved in tandem with their surroundings; he expertly dodged energy bolts, while decapitating or amputating limbs. Every stormtrooper he killed seemed to make him stronger, faster, and more motivated; he was feeding off the Force, allowing it to fuel him. He was focused at the task at hand; he knew exactly what needed to be done, and how to accomplish it. The stormtroopers continued to pour into the hangar, however, and hindering his ability to move forward, towards his target.

Suddenly, Jedi Malakon reared upward, roared in a fit of rage, and screamed "Let me pass!"

With a sudden outburst of emotion, Jedi Malakon unleashed an epic Force Wave. The stormtroopers flew through the air, metres away from where they once stood. Some of the stormtroopers flung into the air lost their helmets; others lost other pieces of armour. They all hit the permacrete floor hard; some broke bones, while others were killed outright. Jedi Malakon stood still for a moment; his breathing was laboured, and his heart was pounding out of his chest. Sweat poured down his face, and he stared at the fallen stormtroopers in front of him. The inferno raged behind him, giving him an odd orange-yellow glow.

Jedi Malakon rose his blue-bladed lightsaber beside him, and said, "What must be, will be."



Jedi Malakon took a step forward, towards the blast door. Some of the stormtroopers started getting up beside him, however. With incredible focus, Jedi Malakon threw his lightsaber through the air, slicing a number of stormtroopers were they stood. The blue-bladed lightsaber spun in the air, too fast to actually see. The lightsaber zipped all around Jedi Malakon, flying through the air through pure concentration and will. Suddenly, a stormtrooper rose behind him, and fired an energy bolt from his assault blaster rifle. The lightsaber immediately returned to Jedi Malakon's hand just in time for him to deflect the energy bolt. The energy bolt ricocheted off the energy blade, and hit the permacrete floor beside him. Harnessing the Force to augment his movements, Jedi Malakon charged at the stormtrooper with incredible speed. In an instant, Jedi Malakon was in front of the stormtrooper, and with perfect accuracy, cleaved the stormtrooper in half just above the waist.

Jedi Malakon turned back around to face the blast door. Suddenly, the hangar shook violently, causing parts of the durasteel ceiling to fall. *The bombardment*, Jedi Malakon thought.

More stormtroopers started to rise and attack Jedi Malakon. He willed the Force to his benefit, using it to enhance his reflexes, thus adding defence, while drawing off of it to give him greater strength; Force Armour and Master Valour. Once again, he charged at the stormtroopers; he was quick, and efficient. Within moments, and through a rapid series of lightsaber slashes and stabs, he dispatched most of the stormtroopers surrounding him. He looked around the hangar once more; there was nothing else amiss. A few *Predator*-class starfighters remained intact, the inferno in the middle of the hangar still raged, and a few dozen stormtroopers laid dead on the cold permacrete floor. He still felt life in some of the stormtroopers.

*I don't have time for this*, Jedi Malakon thought. Instead of extinguishing it, they decided to inhibit them, using a Force technique known as Stasis Field.

He walked over to one of the stormtroopers, and put on some of the plastoid-ceramic composite armour. He wore everything, except the helmet, and placed his robe overtop. Quickly, he deactivated his lightsaber, and ran through the blast door. Again, the entire vessel shook violently, almost knocking Jedi Malakon over. *The bombardment is intensifying*, Jedi Malakon thought, *I must hurry*.

Jedi Malakon ran though the black and grey corridors of the *Enslaver*. Surprisingly, the corridors weren't nearly as packed with Imperials as he had originally thought; for added caution, he surrounded himself with a false aura, tricking the minds

of those around him. Most Imperials simply ran passed him, not giving him a second thought. Jedi Malakon was more determined and motivated then ever; he was focused on his mission, and nothing would deter him. His mind was racing, thinking of the moment that will soon be. Everything he desired, everything that has haunted him since Onderon, will soon be coming to an end.

*Soon, the nightmares will end, Jedi Malakon thought, and peace will be restored.*

Although the *Enslaver*, an *Imperious*-class Advanced Star Destroyer, was gigantic, Jedi Malakon got to the bridge in little time. The blast door leading into the bridge was locked. Jedi Malakon gazed at the blast door for a moment. He immediately tore off the stormtrooper armour he had been wearing, and took a deep breath. Without hesitation, Jedi Malakon took out his lightsaber, and activated the blade. He plunged the blue energy blade into the blast door, and started cutting vertically where the two halves of the door met. The process was slow going, but working. The thick armoured durasteel that made up the door melted where it made contact with the lightsaber blade; a thin, linear line of glowing yellow-orange molten metal surrounded the gouge. Sparks rained down from the lightsaber as it slowly cut through. Finally, after only a few moments, Jedi Malakon successfully cut through.

"Here goes nothing." Jedi Malakon said to himself.

Jedi Malakon took two steps back, and unleashed a powerful Force Wave attack. The blast door bent and buckled from the intense Force attack; the door was pried open enough to allow Jedi Malakon to walk through. Immediately, two stormtroopers, one on either side of him, approached.

"Halt!" One of the stormtroopers ordered.

Instinctually, Jedi Malakon stabbed the stormtrooper in the chest with his lightsaber; the blue energy blade pierced the stormtroopers sternum. The other stormtrooper immediately raised his assault blaster rifle at Jedi Malakon. Before he could even fire a single energy bolt, Jedi Malakon tore the lightsaber out of the stormtrooper's chest, and decapitated the other. The helmet, with the head inside, rolled on the command deck. All the Imperial officers on the bridge looked up at Jedi Malakon in terror; he felt their fear through the Force, and thrived in it. Jedi Malakon stared at other end of the bridge, where a tall, black cloaked figure stood.

"Tyranid!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

The black clad figure turned; he was wearing a black, thick cloth Sith robe that covered nearly his entire body. Jedi Malakon noticed his legs, however; they were mechanical. Not a prosthetic, but rather cybernetic. Lord Tyranid turned to face Jedi Malakon. He couldn't see the features of his face; instead, there were only two glowing red eyes. The hood on the thick cloth robe obscured half the face, leaving the other half in shadow. His chest was partially exposed; the loose, light cloth garments he wore were black and dark grey, but were torn and ripped, probably from all the battles he fought in over the years. Most of his arms weren't exposed, but his hands were. The skin that covered his fingers was grey, and cracked, not quite rotten, but close. At the ends of Lord Tyranid's fingers were razor-sharp claws; more menacing than threatening. Lord Tyranid was bathed in dark-side energies; he flooded the Force with the enormity of the dark-side. It almost overwhelmed Jedi Malakon.

Suddenly, five more stormtroopers on the bridge started moving towards Jedi Malakon with their assault blaster rifles drawn. An Imperial officer, a human male wearing the typical monotone grey uniform, also approached with his blaster pistol drawn. The Imperial officer looked odd; his face was greyer and paler than expected, and his skin was flaky and cracked. The iris' in his eyes also seemed blacker than normal.

"Stop!" Lord Tyranid shouted in a mechanical voice, "The Jedi is mine."

The stormtroopers and Imperial officer backed off, and retreated to the other end of the bridge. Lord Tyranid took a few steps forward; his footfalls clanked on the durasteel floor. The talons for feet were enormous, and razor-sharp. They dented the durasteel floor every time he took a step.

Jedi Malakon readied his lightsaber, "You remember me?"

Lord Tyranid stopped, and stared at Jedi Malakon, "All Jedi look alike."

"Onderon. The Dxun moon." Jedi Malakon informed, "You killed my Master, Yuun Lii. I am here to finish you!"

"Foolish Jedi! Are you here for revenge?" Lord Tyranid asked.

"A Jedi doesn't take revenge." Jedi Malakon explained.

"And yet, here you are." Lord Tyranid answered.

Jedi Malakon didn't speak for a moment; his mind was racing through all his memories, and all his thoughts. His heart was racing, and sweat poured down his face profusely.

"I sense your inner turmoil, Jedi." Lord Tyranid replied, "You must understand, all you will receive here... is death."

"You underestimate my power, Lord Tyranid." Jedi Malakon replied, "That'll be the last big mistake you'll ever make."

Lord Tyranid laughed in a mechanical voice, "I've hunt you Jedi for five years. Masters. Knights. All have fallen by my blade. You are no different: arrogant, and foolish."

"You're nothing but a murder, Lord Tyranid!" Jedi Malakon twirled his lightsaber, and fell into an aggressive stance, "You can't kill us all!"

Lord Tyranid laughed again, "Of course I can!" Lord Tyranid countered.

Suddenly, Lord Tyranid leapt into the air, and lunged toward Jedi Malakon. Lord Tyranid landed just in front of Jedi Malakon, and grabbed Jedi Malakon with his claw. Lord Tyranid lifted him into the air with only one arm, and growled. Jedi Malakon immediately attacked the forearm of Lord Tyranid; the lightsaber struck the forearm holding him, causing sparks to shower from the metal bones. Lord Tyranid immediately let go, and activated two lightsabers, one silver bladed, the other a crimson bladed. The silver-bladed lightsaber had the hilt of an Imperial Knight, while the hilt of the crimson-bladed lightsaber was black, and made of durasteel. Lord Tyranid reared up, and smashed Jedi Malakon with both lightsaber blades coming downward. Instinctually, Jedi Malakon blocked the two energy blades. Lord Tyranid was incredibly strong, forcing his blades down on Jedi Malakon's. Jedi Malakon strained against the two lightsaber blades being forced down upon him; sweat poured down his face, and he clenched his teeth together. Sparks showered down from the contact of the energy blades, and the explosions of light was nearly blinding. The lightsabers made a sizzling sound, and crackled when they made contact. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon unleashed a powerful Force Wave attack directed at the chest of Lord Tyranid. The Force attack hit with a thud, sending Lord Tyranid backward for a couple of steps.

"You have much strength within you, Jedi." Lord Tyranid taunted, "But it will be of no use to you here!"

Jedi Malakon dropped into a Djem So stance, an aggressive and offensive lightsaber technique, and attacked. Jedi Malakon's attacks were incredibly fast, and vicious; every swipe with the lightsaber, or every stab, was well timed and well executed. Nevertheless, Lord Tyranid either blocked and parried, or side-stepped and dodged all the attacks with ease. With every attack Jedi Malakon performed, he seemed to be going faster and faster; his power within him grew with every assault. Jedi Malakon made small cutting motions, followed by long slashes, and powerful overhead smashes. The attacks were pushing Lord Tyranid backwards, towards the forward viewports of the *Enslaver*. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon jumped into the air, and came down on Lord Tyranid. Their lightsabers met, and Jedi Malakon engaged Lord Tyranid in a sabre-lock.

"Impressive, young Jedi." Lord Tyranid replied, "You have great emotions within you. It gives you strength... makes you focused."

"A Jedi knows only to control his emotions." Jedi Malakon replied while straining against the lightsaber blades.

"Yet you use them!" Lord Tyranid countered.

Suddenly, Lord Tyranid broke the sabre-lock, and unleashed a devastating Force Wave attack that sent Jedi Malakon flying across the bridge. Jedi Malakon slammed into the durasteel floor, shoulder first, and slid for a couple of metres before coming to a complete stop. Jedi Malakon immediately picked himself up, and charged at Lord Tyranid. Surprisingly, Lord Tyranid stood his ground, and started tearing pieces of the durasteel floor up. The panels of durasteel hovered in the air for a moment, before flying towards Jedi Malakon at an incredible speed. Jedi Malakon sliced through the first piece of durasteel with his lightsaber, but the second slammed directly into him. The durasteel panel struck him on the left shoulder, sending him tumbling downward. A sudden jolt of pain surged through Jedi Malakon's body when the durasteel panel struck him. Jedi Malakon laid on the cold durasteel floor of the command deck for a moment. Suddenly, Lord Tyranid flew through the air, with both lightsabers poised to strike him. Jedi Malakon rolled out of the way, just in the nick of time, and watched as the two blades pierced through the durasteel panel that he was laying on a moment earlier. Instinctually, Jedi Malakon lashed out with his blue-bladed lightsaber and cut the hilt of the silver-bladed lightsaber in half, destroying it.

Lord Tyranid roared in anger, and lashed out at Jedi Malakon with a few quick swipes of his crimson-bladed lightsaber. Jedi Malakon rolled on the ground, narrowly

avoiding the crimson energy blade. The tip of the lightsaber blade gouged a linear groove in the durasteel floor, with orange glowing molten metal surrounding it. Jedi Malakon rolled onto his feet, and prepared for another lightsaber slash. Instead, Jedi Malakon found himself hovering above the durasteel ground. Suddenly, he felt a great strain exerted onto his body. His bones started to bend, and his organs felt as if they are being squeezed.

*Force Crush*, Jedi Malakon thought.

Jedi Malakon screamed in pain as his bones and organs are being torn apart from within. His bones started creaking as the strain became greater and greater. His organs started to fail as the pressure exerted on them became too great. His joints started separating, and he could feel his bones start to pop. Jedi Malakon screamed in pain again as the strain increased. Mustering all the strength he could, Jedi Malakon activated his lightsaber, and threw it towards Lord Tyranid. The sudden attack was surprising, as the lightsaber twirled and spun in the air. The lightsaber struck Lord Tyranid in the left shoulder, causing him to release his grip on Jedi Malakon. Lord Tyranid growled from the sudden surge of pain; the lightsaber caused sparks to rain down from the metallic shoulder blade of Lord Tyranid for a moment. Jedi Malakon fell to the durasteel floor hard, but managed to return the lightsaber back into his grasp.

Jedi Malakon immediately got back onto his feet, and charged Lord Tyranid. Before Lord Tyranid could even react, Jedi Malakon kicked him in the chest, sending him backwards. With a fury, Jedi Malakon attacked Lord Tyranid. His attacks are swift, and agile, with powerful and strong. Lord Tyranid fell back to a single-handed lightsaber technique, Makashi, that was more fluid and elegant, but designed specifically for lightsaber combat. Jedi Malakon's attacks were relentless; he smashed his opponent, while taking long swipes and powerful lunges. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon struck Lord Tyranid with a powerful overhead smash. They engage in a sabre-lock, with Jedi Malakon trying to force his lightsaber blade into Lord Tyranid's body.

"You should just surrender, Lord Tyranid." Jedi Malakon strained to say, "It will be a lot faster, and more merciful a death than you deserve!"

Lord Tyranid laughed, "You Jedi all have this misplaced sense of self-righteousness." Lord Tyranid rebutted, "You are doomed, Jedi."

Suddenly, Lord Tyranid's crimson-bladed lightsaber charged with an enormous electrical energy that surged into Jedi Malakon. Jedi Malakon was shocked backwards

from the sudden discharge of electrical energy. Another lightning bolt was sent his way, causing Jedi Malakon to back up even further. The pain from the lightning bolts was surprising, and his fingers tingled afterward. His muscles twitched uncontrollably from the electrical discharge, and his chest felt tight.

"Make your peace with the Force, young Jedi." Lord Tyranid taunted, "It will be your last chance."

Jedi Malakon's eyes widened. Suddenly, the entire bridge lit up with flashing blue-white lightning bolts; Force Surge. A torrent of lightning bolts shot out from the claws of Lord Tyranid, and into Jedi Malakon. The first few lightning bolts struck Jedi Malakon directly in the chest, causing him to drop to one knee, and reel in pain. Jedi Malakon managed to raise his blue-bladed lightsaber to deflect and block the rest of the lightning bolts however. His chest felt tighter, and his heart started to beat erratically; his breathing became laboured, and he was beginning to see stars. The lightning bolts were relentless; Lord Tyranid intensified the electrical attack with every moment that passed. The heat from the electrical discharge was intense, almost scorching; he felt as if his skin was on fire, and light grey smoke billowed out from Jedi Malakon's robes. The lightning flashed in front of Jedi Malakon with brilliant intensity; the lightning was almost blinding, and the roar from the electrical discharge was deafening. Jedi Malakon screamed and growled, trying to resist the onslaught of lightning. Jedi Malakon forced himself to stand back on two feet, although it felt as if there was a tonne of durasteel on top of him.

"One Jedi cannot stop the darkness that is to come!" Lord Tyranid screamed over the roar of the lightning.

Jedi Malakon strained against the force from the lightning bolts. Jedi Malakon began harnessing the Force to absorb and discharge the lightning bolts that were crackling his way; Force Immunity. Jedi Malakon began discharging the electrical bolts back at Lord Tyranid. The entire bridge raged with lightning bolts; he sensed the fear in the other Imperial officers and stormtroopers in the room. The lightning bolts starting hitting Lord Tyranid in the chest and shoulders; he started losing his concentration, and the lightning attack started to diminish slightly.

"One Jedi is all it takes!" Jedi Malakon screamed in frustration.

Suddenly, the torrent of lightning bolts that was directed at Jedi Malakon, was redirected and started striking Lord Tyranid. Jedi Malakon successfully redirected and

deflected the lightning bolts away from him. Jedi Malakon continued walking forward, keeping the pressure on Lord Tyranid. The Force surged through Jedi Malakon, and the electrical discharges became more intense. Lord Tyranid now strained to contain the electrical energy in the room; the lightning bolts, attracted to his metal skeleton, immediately discharged and struck him with incredible force. Jedi Malakon growled and roared with intensity as he started to manipulate and control the electrical discharges. Finally, Lord Tyranid lost control of the lightning bolts, and they all struck him simultaneously. The immense electrical discharge threatened to stop his artificial heart and lungs, but miraculously, didn't. Lord Tyranid fell onto one knee, and started reeling in pain; through his mechanical vocabulator, Lord Tyranid breathed heavily. Parts of Lord Tyranid's heavy black cloth Sith robe caught on fire, burning and searing his already cracked, scarred and pale grey flesh. Lord Tyranid suddenly roared in pain; the sonic discharge cracked the thick transparisteel windows on the trapezoidal viewports on the bridge. Jedi Malakon quickly covered his ears until the scream dissipated.

"How far you've fallen." Jedi Malakon quietly replied.

Jedi Malakon stared at the cracked and scarred body of Lord Tyranid as the cloth slowly started burning away, slowly revealing the extent of the reconstruction he endured. His flesh was grey, and discoloured; almost alive, but not quite either. His body was in a state of undeath; an abomination that only existed through corruption and perversion of the dark-side of the Force. Jedi Malakon could almost sense the agony and pain felt by Lord Tyranid. He watched, and sensed the life-force within his cybernetic body dwindling. Suddenly, Lord Tyranid rose from the burning ashes of his robe, and roared with a great might; the roar was long, deep, and loud. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon felt a surge in dark-side energies that was overwhelming; never in his life had he ever heard or experienced such immense dark-side energies of great magnitude before. The surprise was jarring, causing him to almost lose his balance, and almost drop his lightsaber.

"You cannot triumph over me, Jedi!" Lord Tyranid screamed, "I have learned from the Sith Lords of old to harness and manipulate pain! I have become immortal!"

The sudden realization that his statement might very well be true was frightening. He had heard rumours of dark-side practitioners being able to manipulate the dark-side of the Force to extend life, possibly even resurrect it; he never believed the stories before, but now he was reconsidering. Suddenly, the half burnt Lord Tyranid reactivated his crimson-bladed lightsaber, and charged forward with a great might.



Lord Tyranid's attacks weren't particularly fast, but they were powerful. Each strike with the crimson blade was jarring, knocking Jedi Malakon off-balance several times. The onslaught of attacks forced Jedi Malakon to retreat backwards while blocking and parrying the lightsaber strikes.

Suddenly, the bridge started to shake violently, knocking Lord Tyranid off his feet and sending him careening into the durasteel wall. He slammed into the wall with a great thud, shaking the forward viewports above him. Jedi Malakon was almost knocked off his feet as well, but used the Force to stick himself onto the durasteel floor. The Imperial officers in the pit were knocked off their feet, and sent smashing into one another. Jedi Malakon looked up through the cracked transparisteel viewport, and saw the hull erupting in giant explosions. Several heavy turbolaser blasts struck the hull, rupturing it, and causing it to vent atmosphere into the hard vacuum of space.

"Hull breach!" One of the Imperial officers reported, "We're losing atmosphere!"

"The hull is falling apart!" Another Imperial officer reported, "We can't keep taking hits like that!"

Lord Tyranid slowly picked himself up, and stared at the fearful Imperial officers on the bridge. His gaze was full of hate, rage and anger. He emanated a tremendous amount of dark-side energy; Jedi Malakon could feel it overwhelming his thoughts and feelings. Jedi Malakon stared directly at Lord Tyranid with a strong will and determination.

"Evacuate the ship!" Lord Tyranid ordered.

"My Lord—" One of the Imperial officers beginning to protest.

Lord Tyranid quickly snapped his neck to face the disobedient Imperial officer, "Now!" Lord Tyranid screamed in a fit of rage.

The Imperial soldiers immediately began leaving the bridge. They all had expression of fear and terror. After a while, Jedi Malakon and Lord Tyranid were the only ones on the bridge. The bridge shook violently again, jarring both of them from left and right. Electrical wires tore from the computer equipment, sending showers of sparks onto the durasteel floor. Small fires broke out all around them, and chunks of ceiling and wall started to fall. Explosions rang out from the hull of the *Enslaver* every time a heavy turbolaser would strike it. Each explosion sent another violent reverberation throughout the bridge.

Suddenly, his earpiece started to talk, "*Razor One! Get out of there!*" It was Cosh Sonter, "*It's going down! Get-*"

Jedi Malakon tore the earpiece out of his ear, and threw it aside. He stared at Lord Tyranid; his stare pierced the scorched flesh of the Sith Lord. Jedi Malakon stretched out with the Force; he could sense the great pain Lord Tyranid was in. Jedi Malakon's breathing was deep, and his heart was pounding. His vision narrowed, and focused only on Lord Tyranid. Emotions flooded his mind, and thoughts; nothing else mattered.

"I've been waiting too long for this... just to let it slip out between my fingers." Jedi Malakon replied.

"Good, Jedi." Lord Tyranid answered, "Use your aggressive feelings. Give in."

Jedi Malakon charged at Lord Tyranid with all his might. Lord Tyranid immediately switched to Soresu, a more defensive lightsaber technique. Jedi Malakon continued his onslaught of attacks using Djem So, the more aggressive lightsaber stance. Jedi Malakon went wild, haphazardly swinging and smashing his opponent. Jedi Malakon completely lost it; overly aggressive, he left himself open to counter-attack several times. In those moments, Lord Tyranid punched or smacked Jedi Malakon with his hands. The short punches didn't faze Jedi Malakon however, and he continued his relentless attack. Their lightsabers clashed with incredible force, and with enormous speed; each time, a shower of sparks rained down, and a small explosion of light emanated from their contact. In a fit of rage, Jedi Malakon jumped into the air, and kicked Lord Tyranid in the chest, using the Force to enhance the strike. Lord Tyranid was sent backwards, off-balanced, and momentarily fazed.

Lord Tyranid laughed, "Very good, Jedi." He replied, "Very Sith-like."

Jedi Malakon roared in anger, and charged at Lord Tyranid. Using the Force to enhance and augment his movements, Jedi Malakon ran across the command deck on the bridge. Suddenly, Lord Tyranid threw his lightsaber at the charging Jedi. The lightsaber spun in the air; the blade moved so fast, it was a mere blur. Instinctually, Jedi Malakon jumped in the air, and twisted out of its way. Jedi Malakon landed on his feet just as the crimson-bladed lightsaber returned to the hand of Lord Tyranid.

"You will fail Jedi." Lord Tyranid taunted, "The Sith have already won."

"No!" Jedi Malakon screamed.



Jedi Malakon charged at Lord Tyranid with his lightsaber raised. He lunged forward with the tip of his blue-bladed lightsaber pointed towards Lord Tyranid's face. Lord Tyranid immediately side-stepped and blocked the attack. Lord Tyranid struck Jedi Malakon, but he easily blocked the attack. Jedi Malakon went mad, crazier than usual. He immediately smashed and swung his lightsaber wildly. Lord Tyranid used all his skill to block and parry the attack, but he was almost helpless to do so. Jedi Malakon, filled with a bloodlust, wildly and relentlessly attacked Lord Tyranid with vicious strikes. They swung their lightsabers from side-to-side like mad-men. The emotions within Jedi Malakon poured out of him, and with each swing of the lightsaber, he became stronger. His attacks became faster, and were a blur to Lord Tyranid.

Desperately, Lord Tyranid punched Jedi Malakon, and smacked his lightsaber off to the side. Jedi Malakon, temporarily fazed, stepped backwards from the attack. Lord Tyranid charged at Jedi Malakon with the tip of crimson-bladed lightsaber drawn out in front of him. On instinct, Jedi Malakon unleashed a powerful Force Wave attack that sent Lord Tyranid reeling backwards. Jedi Malakon recovered from the uppercut, while Lord Tyranid slowly picked himself up off the cold durasteel floor.

"You may have been a proud warrior once, but now you're just a pawn in Empress Amelia's game." Jedi Malakon taunted.

Finally standing upright, Lord Tyranid screamed, "I wield great power!"

"And that power came at the price of your soul!" Jedi Malakon answered.

Jedi Malakon charged at Lord Tyranid once again, wildly swinging and smashing against Lord Tyranid's crimson-bladed lightsaber. Every time Jedi Malakon would smack his lightsaber against the Sith Lord's, the bones in his forearms would reverberate. Nevertheless, Jedi Malakon continued his onslaught of attacks. He could feel Lord Tyranid's will slowly being broken, and dwindling. Jedi Malakon had the momentum, and used it to the full extent he could. Jedi Malakon roared and growled every time he would strike against Lord Tyranid. Lord Tyranid was helpless against the powerful attacks. All he could do was take steps backwards, and block the attacks as best he could.

Out of nowhere, Lord Tyranid counter-attacked by grabbing Jedi Malakon by the throat; he crushed his throat for a moment, and before Jedi Malakon could free himself, the Sith Lord slammed Jedi Malakon onto the durasteel floor. Jedi Malakon hit the floor

hard, knocking the wind out of him; Lord Tyranid reared his talon-like foot up, posed to crush Jedi Malakon underneath them. Jedi Malakon rolled out the way, just in time, back onto his feet, and lashed out at the thigh of Lord Tyranid. Although the Sith Lord's legs were completely mechanical, powerful Sith Alchemy made the metallic bones not only powerful enough to resist lightsabers, but also possess sensation. Lord Tyranid fell onto one knee, and raised his lightsaber up above his head to block the incoming onslaught of smashes. Uncompromisingly, Jedi Malakon smashed his blue-bladed lightsaber against the Sith Lord's. Each time their lightsabers would make contact, a bright explosion of light, followed by a sharp sizzle, would emanate from the impact. Although exhausted, and in pain, Jedi Malakon continued his onslaught of lightsaber smashes. Finally, after a few moments, Jedi Malakon destroyed Lord Tyranid's crimson-bladed lightsaber by cutting it in half. The blue energy blade also scorched the palm of Lord Tyranid, causing him to reel in pain. Lord Tyranid fell onto all fours, and stared at the durasteel floor; his breathing, although mechanical in nature, was laboured.

Jedi Malakon stood over the fallen Sith Lord, and pointed the tip of his lightsaber at him, "You've haunted my dreams ever since Onderon." Jedi Malakon replied, "Now it's time to end you."

Jedi Malakon reeled upward, and rose his lightsaber above his head. Then, with a sudden burst of energy, he thrust the lightsaber downward upon Lord Tyranid's head. Surprisingly, with lightning fast reflexes, Lord Tyranid rose from off the palms of his hand, and caught the blue energy blade in his hands. The flesh on Lord Tyranid's palms and fingers seared off, giving off a disgusting smell. Nevertheless, Lord Tyranid held onto the blue energy blade with his hands, preventing the tip of the lightsaber from piercing his chest. Jedi Malakon screamed in frustration and anger, as he persistently tried to force the energy blade into his opponent. Lord Tyranid roared in pain as the metallic bones in his hands burned and scorched from the intense heat of the energy blade. Slowly, the blue energy blade started slipping out of the vice-like grip of Lord Tyranid. Suddenly, the tip of the lightsaber just pierced the flesh surrounding the ribcage of Lord Tyranid. Lord Tyranid growled in a synthesized and mechanical voice. The flesh started to sear off and burn; pain surged through Lord Tyranid, but he only harnessed it to become stronger.

Suddenly, Jedi Malakon kicked Lord Tyranid in the side, and ripped the lightsaber out of the Sith Lord's hands. Jedi Malakon rose the lightsaber above his head again, and prepared to thrust the energy blade into the heart of Lord Tyranid. A flurry

of emotion poured over Jedi Malakon; his eyes stared to flow with tears, and his hands shook from the sudden adrenaline rush.

"Go to—" Jedi Malakon growled before being cut off.

Unexpectedly, the hull of the massive *Imperious*-class Advanced Star Destroyer exploded in a shower of flames after being struck by several salvos of heavy turbolaser fire; the bridge shook violently, and sparks and jets of flame showered down all around them. Before Jedi Malakon lost his balance, he looked out the cracked transparisteel forward viewport, and saw that all six Tetan *Valkyrie*-class Battlestars, and the original three *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers orbiting the city of Cinnagar had been destroyed. All that remained were large chunks of twisted metal and debris from the gigantic warships, floating in inner space like a ring around the planet. Suddenly, the *Enslaver* pitched downward, careening towards the surface of the planet Empress Teta. Both Jedi Malakon and Lord Tyranid were sent flying through the bridge, finally slamming into the forward viewport. Both slammed into the durasteel wall or transparisteel window back first, preventing any major injuries.

*Frack!* Jedi Malakon thought, *I've got to get out of here!*

Jedi Malakon immediately started climbing the durasteel floor, which was almost vertical now because the ship was plunging into the upper atmosphere of Empress Teta. Jedi Malakon looked behind him, and saw Lord Tyranid unconscious, laying motionless on the durasteel wall; through the cracked transparisteel window, the city of Cinnagar was in view.

*Oh frack!* Jedi Malakon thought.

Jedi Malakon climbed up the durasteel floor as quickly as he could, using the Force to stick himself onto the smooth surface as best as possible. Finally he reached the pried open blast door, and crawled through it. He quickly got to the turbolift, and climbed aboard. He exited on the lower floor, where the corridors were eerily empty. For such a massive vessel, emptiness was unexpected, even though the ship was crashing into the atmosphere of a planet. Jedi Malakon slid along the smooth, tiled, durasteel floor, using the Force to control his moments. He slid from door frame, to door frame. The floor was at a steep angle, sloping downward. Jedi Malakon used all his skill to prevent him from slipping, and sliding uncontrollably though the long, and straight corridor.

Jedi Malakon finally made to the hangar bay. Sliding towards the blast door, he grabbed onto the slightly pried opened door. Using all his might, he crawled through the blast door, and entered the massive ventral hangar bay. Surprisingly, some of the *Predator*-class starfighters remained intact, still attached to their launch racks. The hangar was in ruins; fires raged on the right side of the hangar, where debris had accumulated after the *Enslaver* pitched downward towards the planet. The ceiling was cracked, and dust and smaller chunks of debris rained downward. The walls and floors were also cracked, but surprisingly, held strong. The glowing blue atmospheric containment field at the other end of the hangar was still operational.

*Everyone else must have gone to the escape pods,* Jedi Malakon thought.

Using the Force, he leapt into the air, and grabbed hold of the hinged-wing of one of the *Predator*-class starfighters still in the hangar. Using whatever strength he had left, he climbed over the spherical cockpit of the Imperial starfighter, and climbed aboard. Before fully entering the cockpit of the *Predator*-class starfighter, he looked out of the atmospheric containment field. Great flames were raging outside, consuming most of the hangar entrance.

*Must be going through the mesosphere now,* Jedi Malakon thought.

Jedi Malakon climbed aboard, and sat in the pilot's seat. He strapped himself in, and began the start-up sequence. The great thing about Imperial starfighters was that they were, more-or-less, designed for idiots. Almost anyone could fly one of their starfighters. Immediately, Jedi Malakon was up and running, and ready to launch. Suddenly, the hangar shook violently, and large, boulder-sized chunks of permacrete and twisted durasteel rained down in the hangar. Jedi Malakon immediately disengaged the security clamps, and flew through the crumbling hangar. The deflector shields were up and running; small pieces of permacrete struck the energy shield, vaporizing upon impact. Jedi Malakon sped through the hangar at top speed; the hangar around him was breaking apart. He roared out of the hangar, through the atmospheric containment field, and into a towering inferno.

"Holy frack!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

The intense flames jarred the tiny *Predator*-class starfighter violently. Jedi Malakon was knocked from side-to-side aggressively; the straps across his chest dug into his flesh, causing great pain. Jedi Malakon tried to speed through the incredible inferno as fast as he could. The incredible jarring made that exceedingly difficult,

however. Suddenly, his energy shields were peeled off, and the armoured durasteel hull was exposed directly to the incredible heat and intensity of the flames all around him. His cockpit viewport was completely engulfed in flames. Jedi Malakon felt the heat from within the spherical cockpit; sweat, both from fear and from the heat, started beading and pouring down his face. His Jedi robes were soaked in sweat.

"C'mon damn it!" Jedi Malakon screamed in frustration.

Finally, he pulled himself out of the great inferno, but the starfighter was heavily damaged. Jedi Malakon pitched the starfighter downward, heading towards the surface of Empress Teta, and the city of Cinnagar. Jedi Malakon flew down towards the surface, parallel to the *Enslaver*. He looked out the cockpit viewport once more, and gazed at the flaming *Imperious*-class Advanced Star Destroyer, as it plunged through the thickening atmosphere of Empress Teta. The entire nose of the wedge-shaped Advanced Star Destroyer was engulfed in flames, spreading outward, consuming the entire vessel. The cratered hull occasionally burst with vents of flames as well. Suddenly, the craters and cracks from the constant bombardment of heavy turbolaser fire from the Tetan *Valkyrie*-class Battlestars coalesced, and tore the *Enslaver* in half. The bow of the Advanced Star Destroyer buckled, and shattered, then began tearing itself away from the rest of the plunging ship.

"Uh oh." Jedi Malakon replied.

Debris exploded off of the *Enslaver*, and rained down as fiery rubble. Suddenly, the entire bow of the *Enslaver*, just forward of the ventral hangar, broke off, and started to fall away from the rest of the ship. The bow corkscrewed and twisted as it fell through the atmosphere, finally slamming into the stern of the vessel. Debris exploded everywhere, and rained down all around Jedi Malakon's starfighter. Jedi Malakon tried to pull away from the plummeting warship, but it was too late. The fast falling flaming debris hit the left hinged-wing of his *Predator*-class starfighter, causing it to become incredibly unstable. Jedi Malakon fought against the yoke, trying to keep the starfighter under control. The forces acting against him were too great, and Jedi Malakon knew the effort would be in vein. Jedi Malakon strained against the yoke, relentlessly trying to fight for control. Flaming debris was falling all around him. Suddenly, the left hinged-wing of his starfighter broke off completely, causing the *Predator*-class starfighter to spiral downwards towards the surface.

"Damn it!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

The surface of Cinnagar was fast approaching. He was already passing through the stratosphere; clouds now obscured his vision, but Jedi Malakon fought against gravity, and the centripetal forces anyways. The clouds were relatively thin, so Jedi Malakon wasn't completely blind to what altitude he was at. Jedi Malakon looked over at his speedometer; he was falling at an incredible speed.

*Got to pull up,* Jedi Malakon thought.

Jedi Malakon grabbed hold of the yoke with a tight grip, and pulled back on it with all his might. The yoke was buried into his gut, but the starfighter seemed unresponsive. Jedi Malakon's knuckles were white from his powerful grip, and sweat poured down his face. His breathing was laboured from the over-exertion, and his heart was pounding out of his chest. Jedi Malakon strained and growled, forcing the starfighter to level out. The starfighter continued to spiral downwards towards the surface. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon came out from the clouds, and into clear blue skies.

*Troposphere,* Jedi Malakon thought.

Jedi Malakon looked through the forward viewport, and saw the plummeting *Imperious*-class Advanced Star Destroyer. The two halves of the *Enslaver* were falling separately, and were no longer on fire; the hull glowed orange from the intense heat however. Larger chunks of debris rained down alongside the massive war vessel. Jedi Malakon turned his attention back towards the cockpit viewport; the city of Cinnagar was directly in front. The crumbled buildings were coming into view. The altimeter was winding down rapidly; he was decreasing far too quickly. Jedi Malakon fought the starfighter for control, pulling the yoke into his gut. Finally, the starfighter seemed to respond, and started to level out. The starfighter was still out of control; with only one wing still attached to the cockpit, the starfighter spun and rolled through the air at irregular intervals. The constant spinning started to make Jedi Malakon dizzy, and he felt nauseous.

"C'mon! Pull up!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

The ground was coming at him quickly; he was only a few kilometres above the surface of the city by now. Flaming debris was still raining down all around him; if another were to strike his starfighter now, it would mean certain death for Jedi Malakon. Jedi Malakon, pulling back on the yoke as hard as he could, slammed the yoke from side-to-side trying to prevent the uncontrolled spinning and rolling. The starfighter, having lost its left hinged-wing, tended to want to roll over to its left,

making it incredibly difficult to fly the crippled starfighter. The starfighter slowly started to respond to Jedi Malakon's actions. The wild spinning and rolling started to dissipate, and the starfighter started to fly straighter. It also started to level off, and start on a horizontal vector, but it was still plummeting towards the ground too fast. Just a kilometre above the surface, Jedi Malakon felt the starfighter level off.

"Yes! Yes!" Jedi Malakon screamed in delight, then started laughing.

The starfighter finally seemed to be under his control, but was still travelling at a rapid velocity. Jedi Malakon saw the shattered and ruined transparisteel and durasteel structures that made up most of the city of Cinnagar. Most of the buildings had crumbled to the ground from the numerous ground and street wars; some had remained destroyed since the initial assault on Empress Teta almost five years previous. There were still some fires raging within the city, with thick black columns of smoke billowing up into the atmosphere. Jedi Malakon streaked across the crisp, blue sky, with a trail of grey-white smoke following behind the crippled starfighter. Jedi Malakon aimed the starfighter for the outskirts of the city, trying to avoid any potentially populated areas.

Jedi Malakon looked down at the altimeter again. It read only an altitude of five hundred metres. Jedi Malakon had the crippled *Predator*-class starfighter, more-or-less, under his control at this point. The starfighter still jarred back and forth every once in a while, making for an unpleasant ride, but at least he wasn't careening directly into the ground at terminal velocity. Some of the taller skyscrapers started appearing off towards the distance; the skyscrapers were incredibly tall, transparisteel and durasteel structures that were beautifully built. The unique quality with all Tetan architecture was that there were no straight lines on any of the buildings. Jedi Malakon flew passed some of the taller skyscrapers, hurdling downwards, towards the ground. Jedi Malakon quickly looked down at the rear-view monitors and saw the *Enslaver* crashing into the city. He couldn't tell which part of the city the gigantic warship had crashed into, but he hope it was far enough from any populated areas. Buildings toppled and collapsed from the impact, and the lithospheric crust seemed to crack from the subsequent shockwave. A huge column of smoke and fire rose into the sky. The massive warship crumbled and fell apart from the impact as well, raining humungous chunks of armoured hull and other debris onto the nearby area. Jedi Malakon looked back up, and was completely taken by surprise.

"Oh—" Jedi Malakon screamed in terror.

The bottom of the crippled *Predator*-class starfighter smashed into the top of one of the buildings. The starfighter ricocheted off the building, heavily denting the bottom of the fragile spherical cockpit. The sudden violent jarring made Jedi Malakon lose control for just a moment. That moment was long enough, unfortunately. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon found himself staring down directly at the stone brick streets. Less than a second passed, then the cockpit slammed into the street. The forward viewport shattered into a thousand, razor-sharp shards of transparisteel and twisted durasteel. The spherical cockpit crumpled under the incredible force, and the right hinged-wing snapped off like a twig. The restraints holding Jedi Malakon in the chair cut into his flesh, causing slight bleeding. Debris flew all around him, cutting him. The impact was incredibly loud, deafening him to everything else around him. He rose his hands above his face, and shut his eyes to protect them. He was tumbling all around, strapped into the seat of the starfighter. Suddenly, the crumpled spherical cockpit of the *Predator*-class starfighter slammed into the side of one of the transparisteel-durasteel buildings, bringing it to a stop. The sudden violent jar knocked Jedi Malakon unconscious.

Jedi Malakon awoke some time after the crash. He was groggy, and his vision was blurry. Everything appeared fuzzy and hazy, and he had trouble focusing on distant objects. His body ached all over, but especially his shoulders and head. His fingers felt tingly, and an odd chill ran up his spine. Jedi Malakon couldn't move for the first few waking moments. He feared he had been paralyzed during the crash. All he could hear was a raging fire nearby, and the sound of twisted metal, and broken transparisteel raining down around him. Jedi Malakon finally started to move his hands, and he clutched his head in pain. The constant throbbing, persistent pain was killing him.

Jedi Malakon groaned, *some landing*.

Jedi Malakon couldn't move very much while restrained in his seat. He tried to wiggle his toes; he did. Relief washed over Jedi Malakon; *at least I didn't break my legs*.

Jedi Malakon tried to unbuckle his restraints. Blindly trying to unbuckle the restraints was surprisingly difficult. His muscles were incredibly sore, and exhausted; his fingers didn't seem to have any energy left in them. Jedi Malakon feared he would slip back into unconsciousness, so he tried to work harder and faster. After a minute or so, he finally unbuckled the restraints. Jedi Malakon fell hard onto the durasteel hull of the crumpled starfighter. His face smacked against the hard surface hard.

"Damn it!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

Jedi Malakon clutched his shoulders in pain. His vision was slowly returning, and closer objects seemed to be relatively focused. He looked over to his shoulders, and saw they were cut in deep and were now persistently bleeding. Jedi Malakon laid on his back for a couple of moments, trying to catch his breath. His heart was pounding out of his chest, and his breathing was greatly laboured. Jedi Malakon coughed; the fine dust in the air irritated his lungs. Jedi Malakon tried to sit up, but found that his gut sent out a sharp and sudden pain. Jedi Malakon reeled in pain, and laid back down. His hands roamed over his gut, trying to ascertain what was causing the pain. Suddenly, he found it; it was a sharp piece of durasteel that embedded itself into his side.

"Oh frack." Jedi Malakon said to himself.

Jedi Malakon closed his eyes, and bit down on his teeth, hard. With all the willpower and strength that he could muster, Jedi Malakon started to pull out the razor-sharp piece of durasteel from out of his side. The piece of durasteel had embedded itself quite deep into his body, but miraculously missed all the organs. The piece of durasteel began to tear out slowly. Jedi Malakon screamed in pain and agony as he slowly tore the piece of durasteel out of him. The pain was almost overwhelming; his body was already so weak and hurt, this could very well push him over the edge. Finally, the razor-sharp piece of durasteel came out, and Jedi Malakon sagged in relief. He took a couple of long deep breaths to calm his body.

*Not enough time for a healing trance, Jedi Malakon thought, I'm going to have to seek aid.*

Jedi Malakon once again tried to pick himself up. The wound on his side was still painful, but manageable. He used the side of the cockpit to hoist himself up into a seated position. Even sitting up was a great effort for Jedi Malakon. His muscles were entirely exhausted. Every joint in his body was aching, and his muscles were twitching uncontrollably. Jedi Malakon kept on trying to stand up, but his legs would always give out on him, causing great pain. Jedi Malakon felt dizzy, and everything was spinning. Realizing that he wouldn't make it a metre if he didn't enter a healing trance, he finally stopped struggling. In order to calm his body, he closed his eyes, and delved deeper into the Force. He felt the Force start to meld the wounds from within. He almost instantly felt better, although he was still weak and in pain. After a few minutes in a healing trance, he felt good enough that he may be able to walk under his own power.

Slowly, and shakily, he stood up, using the durasteel wall of the crumpled cockpit as a support.

*So far, so good,* Jedi Malakon thought.

His knees were weak, and gave out almost immediately. But Jedi Malakon caught himself, and continued to rise. Slowly, he started to walk forward. His footing was unsure, but nevertheless, he moved forward. He ducked under the shattered cockpit viewport window, and exited the ruined starfighter. He tripped over the viewport, and fell onto his face. The sudden jarring pain hurt immensely. Instead of standing up again, he decided to crawl away from the broken starfighter.

*Not as graceful, but practical,* Jedi Malakon comically thought.

Jedi Malakon crawled over the stone brick street, which was covered in broken transparisteel and covered in twisted shards of durasteel, and slowly made it out of the starfighter. He crawled about two metres away from the wreckage until he finally rolled over onto his back in order to catch his breath. He looked back at the wreckage; the starfighter was partially on fire, and had crashed into the side of a building. Half the transparisteel wall of that building was destroyed as a result of the crash. The stone brick streets where the starfighter hit were cracked and shattered, with large craters where it once was flat. The two hinged-wings of the *Predator*-class starfighter tore off the fuselage completely, and were somewhere far away by now. The cockpit was showered in sparks, and filled with a dense black smoke that rose into the air.

Jedi Malakon coughed again, *my lungs must have been singed in the crash.*

Jedi Malakon remained laying on the street for another minute or so. He was plunged deep into a healing trance. Slowly, his wounds started to heal and mend, while his body took away the pain. He still felt the aching all over his body, especially his head and shoulders, but they were gradually starting to dissipate. His body was healing, but very slowly. He wasn't proficient enough in healing techniques to fully recover from all his injuries by himself; he desperately needed bacta. Jedi Malakon rolled over onto his chest, and tried to push himself up off the ground. The transparisteel shards cut into his palms, but Jedi Malakon persistently pushed. Slowly, he began to rise again, until finally, he was on his feet. He looked at the palms of his hand; they were bleeding, and small fragments of transparisteel managed to embed themselves into the soft flesh of his palms.

Jedi Malakon took another deep breath, and looked around the wreckage, *where the frack is my lightsaber?*

He took a step forward, and his left knee gave out. He immediately caught himself before completely falling face first into the stone pavement, and picked himself up. His steps were small and short, and with each step he took, his knees were shaking constantly. Every step he took hurt, but Jedi Malakon was determined to make it out. He walked back towards the broken cockpit, and peered through the shattered viewport. He looked for his lightsaber; after a few moments, he finally located it. He reached out with his hands, and tried to summon the lightsaber into his hands through the Force, but quickly realized that he was too exhausted to use the Force effectively. After, he simply kneeled in, and grabbed it. The lightsaber was completely intact, and seemed to work as normal.

He picked himself up off the brick stone street, and started walking away from the wreckage. Slowly, he headed towards the Iron Citadel, because that was where he knew most of the Tetan soldiers would wind up. He walked down the empty streets, slowly making his way towards the center of the city, where the Iron Citadel was situated. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon heard a great thud, and the ground shook. The ground shook enough that it took Jedi Malakon off his feet, and slamming into the curb.

"What the hell was that?" Jedi Malakon asked himself.

Another thud, followed by another shaking. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon heard the familiar mechanical clanking noise made by Imperial walkers. The ground shook too much for it to be a relatively smaller All Terrain Riot Control Transports, AT-RCTs, therefore it had to be the larger brethren, the All Terrain Armoured Heavy Transports, the AT-AHTs. The thuds seemed to be getting closer with every footfall, and the ground shook violently.

"Give me a break." Jedi Malakon whispered to himself.

Sitting on the curb, Jedi Malakon finally saw the black armoured behemoth, the AT-AHT. The AT-AHT was the successor to the infamous All Terrain Armoured Transport from The Galactic Civil War-era, the AT-AT. The AT-AHT was an engineering marvel; they stood over twenty metres tall, weighed over two tonnes, and could run at over eighty kilometres per hour. They were covered in extra-thick black armoured hull, and this one sported six light turbolaser cannons. They were, quite literally, mechanical behemoths.

The AT-AHT was walking in the same direction as Jedi Malakon, but about three or four streets down from him. Only the top portion of the AT-AHT was visible to Jedi Malakon, but he has seen enough to have memorized every rivet and every screw. Plumes of dust and debris rose into the air every time the AT-AHT took a step forward. He heard the buildings rattling around him, and the stone bricks crack underneath the immense weight of the Imperial walker. Fear permeated Jedi Malakon; he was in no shape to fend off stormtroopers, or any other Imperial enemies. Beads of sweat started accumulated on his forehead, and slowly ran down his face. Suddenly, from above, Jedi Malakon heard the familiar sound of CF9 Crossfire starfighters flying by. One flew right above him, and fired a proton torpedo into the side of the hulking AT-AHT. The glowing red proton torpedo exploded upon impact with the ultra-hard, ultra-tough armoured hull of the AT-AHT.

Jedi Malakon cheered in excitement, and relief.

The shaped-charge of the proton torpedo pierced through the AT-AHT's hull, but didn't bring it down. Following the fly-by, two more CR9 Crossfire starfighters flew above him, and fired two more proton torpedoes. The proton torpedoes streaked across the clear blue sky, and struck the AT-AHT dead-on. One struck the Troop Section of the hull, exploding inside, while the second struck the Command Section, taking down the head of the beast. Plumes of black smoke billowed out of both sections, and finally brought the AT-AHT down to its knees. The gigantic mechanical behemoth crashed into the street's of Empress Teta, shattering stone, and collapsing buildings as it fell.

Jedi Malakon laid down in the middle of the street, and took long deep breaths. His body was still in incredible pain, and every breath he took hurt like hell. He tried to catch his breath, but he never could. Not being able to breathe was a painful experience. His heart was racing; he honestly thought he might get a heart-attack. Suddenly, a gust of wind shot up through the street, and blew through his hair. The moving air across his wounds stung. He quickly looked up, and saw an airspeeder hovering above him.

"What now?" Jedi Malakon asked himself.

Suddenly, four lines dropped off the side of the airspeeder, and four Galactic Alliance commandoes repelled down from the hovering vessel. The GA commandoes, or GAC, were dressed in black and grey armour, stamped with the Galactic Alliance insignia on their shoulders, and wore transparisteel helmets. They landed on the brick stone street, blaster rifles holstered, and ran over to Jedi Malakon.

"Sir! Are you alright?" One of the GA commando's asked. The other three secured a perimeter, with blaster rifles drawn and ready to fire.

"I feel like a hammer struck me." Jedi Malakon answered.

"Where does it hurt?" The GA commando asked again.

Jedi Malakon shook his head, "Everywhere."

The GA commando turned upward, towards the airspeeder, and ordered, "We need a stretcher down here!"

Jedi Malakon grabbed the commando, and shook his head, "No! I'm alright. I can walk."

"Okay." The GA commando answered.

The GA commando lifted Jedi Malakon up off the curb, and over his shoulder. Jedi Malakon groaned in pain as he rose; every time he would move his joints and muscles protested.

Suddenly, Jedi Malakon realized what was happening, "Hey! Where the hell did you guys come from?"

"Courtesy of Captain Fre'kay, Jedi Malakon." The GA commando answered.

"What?" Jedi Malakon shouted in surprise. Suddenly, all he could do was laugh.

Suddenly, a landspeeder drove up from the street, and parked on the side of the road. One GA commando was driving the landspeeder. The landspeeder was an older model, but it had an open cockpit, and was quite spacious. In the back were various medical supplies, and weapons. The GA commando helped Jedi Malakon into the back seat of the landspeeder, and then got in after him. Jedi Malakon was, more-or-less, in constant pain at this point; his body protested the movement, but he fought against what his body was telling him.

"Alright, we're in!" The GA commando informed.

Suddenly, the three other GA commandoes grabbed hold of the repelling rope they descended on. They waved at the pilot above, and looked towards Jedi Malakon. They nodded, and then the ropes were pulled upward by a winch. Within moments, the

GA commandoes were back in the airspeeder, where it took off almost immediately. Immediately following the airspeeder, the landspeeder also took off, heading towards the Iron Citadel. The landspeeder hovered about a metre off the stone brick streets, and sped forward with incredible speed; the open cockpit filled with cool wind that blew over Jedi Malakon's bruised and battered body.

Immediately, the GA commando started working on Jedi Malakon. He tore open his shirt, and placed bacta patches all over his body. He wiped the cuts and bruises all over his face, taking out some transparisteel in the process. Jedi Malakon let him see his palms, where the GA commando very gently removed the shards of transparisteel. Jedi Malakon screamed in pain as the transparisteel shards were removed. Blood poured out of the wounds, so the GA commando had to bandage them up tightly. Another bandage was wrapped around his waist, and another on both his shoulders, preventing him from bleeding profusely. After he was all done, Jedi Malakon was feeling much better.

"I don't know how you survived all these injuries on your own." The GA commando replied.

"I'm a Jedi." Jedi Malakon answered, "We're a resilient bunch."

"I suppose." The GA commando replied.

After a few moments, Jedi Malakon asked, "So, why did Captain Fre'kay send you guys?"

"After we reached Hapes, we realized something must be wrong." The GA commando started, "The five Star Destroyers they sent were attacking, but just barely. Every time we attacked, they retreated."

"A ruse?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"That's what we thought." The GA commando answered, "It seemed that all they were sent to do was to keep us diverted away from their true intended target, and to prevent us from jumping out of system."

"So how did you guys get out?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"Five Star Destroyers are tough, but not impenetrable." The GA commando answered, "Once they spread out enough, we sent out our fastest frigate, and jumped out of Hapes."

"What happened to the rest of the fleet?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"We got scattered reports that the five Star Destroyers within the Hapes Consortium retreated back into Imperial territory shortly after we jumped." The GA commando answered, "As far as I know, the Alliance fleet is still above Hapes."

Jedi Malakon nodded his head, "Good."

"How're you feeling?" The GA commando asked.

Jedi Malakon nodded his head, "Better. Thanks."

The GA commando smiled, "No problem. Always happy to help out a Jedi."

Jedi Malakon laughed a little, then looked forward, through the windshield. The wind blew over their top of the windshield; it felt good to feel the wind again. They were approaching the Iron Citadel, where several other Tetan soldiers and GA army troopers were gathered. Several Tetan and GA starfighters performed fly-bys in the nearby area. Jedi Malakon was surprised.

"The street battle is over?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"You sound disappointed." The GA commando replied, "It turned out that the Imperials had a limited presence within Cinnagar. It was easy to dislodge them."

"Where are they now?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"Imprisoned." The GA commando answered.

The landspeeder came to a stop, and several more GA army troopers and Tetan soldiers came by to take out the supplies in the back. The GA commando helped Jedi Malakon onto his feet, and onto the street. His knees were still weak, and nearly gave out on him again. Jedi Malakon looked around and saw the faces of the soldiers that fought during the battle. They were tired and mournful, but underneath the surface, slightly happy. The city was still in ruins; fires still raged, and black smoke rose into the sky. Debris from the spacebattle continued to fall out of the sky, trailing fire behind. But the day was looking better after every passing minute. Jedi Malakon smiled.

Suddenly, he turned back to the GA commando, and asked, "Where is Princess Jade?"

The GA commando turned around, and pointed down the street, "Over there, somewhere."

Relief washed over Jedi Malakon, and he started walking in the direction the GA commando pointed towards. He walked for a few metres, frantically looking for her. Suddenly, she popped into sight, and happiness flooded his heart. He walked over to her as quickly as his legs would allow.

"Princess!" Jedi Malakon called.

Princess Jade, the twenty-six standard year old ruler of the Empress Teta system, turned around and saw Jedi Malakon. She screamed in delight, and ran over to him. Her long, flowing brown hair blew through the wind. She was wearing the traditional Tetan armour of her ancestors, made of hardened-gold. She also wore two short-swords that had the heads of birds on the hilt, along with a Mando-whip on her side. Her figure was amazingly fit and athletic. She gave Jedi Malakon a great, big hug.

"I'm so glad to see you!" Princess Jade greeted.

"Me too." Jedi Malakon reciprocated.

She looked into his eyes; he looked right back into her deep blue, beautiful eyes. Every time he looked at her, she seemed to be more beautiful than the last. He was still covered in bandages and bacta patches. She caressed his wounded shoulder, and scarred face.

"My heavens, what happened to you?" Princess Jade asked.

"Crash landing." Jedi Malakon answered.

She leaned in, and gave him a quick peck on the cheek. She leaned back, and smiled, "All better?"

Jedi Malakon blushed; he smiled and nodded, "All better."

Princess Jade grabbed Jedi Malakon by the arm, and started leading him towards the Iron Citadel. The streets were packed with Tetan soldiers and GA army troopers. They walked slowly, as Jedi Malakon's joints still ached.

"What happens now?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"For me? Rebuild, I guess." Princess Jade answered, "You?"

Jedi Malakon shook his head, "This war is still tearing the galaxy apart, and there is only one solution to stop it."

"Amelia?" Princess Jade asked.

"We need to remove her from power, permanently." Jedi Malakon answered.

Princess Jade came to a halt, "Wait just a moment. You can't just go after her and think everything will turn out nicely just because you hope they will." She cautioned, "Empress Amelia has remained in power for so long because she has something that no one else has... fear. Everyone fears her wrath, as they should." Princess Jade explained, "I've seen her wrath first hand. She killed my brother, and destroyed my people."

"I know, Princess." Jedi Malakon answered, "I remember."

"Then you better damn well think this through." Princess Jade ordered, "I don't want to have to bury you too."

Jedi Malakon gave her a hug, and she pressed herself against his chest, "You're not going to lose me. Not ever."

She looked back up to him, "If you go after her..." She stopped herself before breaking out into tears.

He gave her another hug, "I know, I know."

She returned to his side, and began walking again. She wiped a single tear from her off her cheek, "You need more allies. Plain and simple."

"We don't have many these days." Jedi Malakon informed, "The GA is almost broken, and Fel's Empire is falling apart at the seams."

The statement was true. The Galactic Alliance had never been at full strength, or full morale, since the death of Supreme Commander Gar Stazi almost five years ago. That battle, ironically fought just above their heads, was the single most devastating blow to the Galactic Alliance during the entire Anti-Sith Insurgency. The Empire-in-exile also experienced several blows to its leadership; Roan Fel, deposed Emperor, was killed during an assault on Orelon, a world within the Hapes Consortium. His daughter, Marasiah Fel, had gone missing shortly afterwards, along with Master

Antares Draco and Imperial Knight Ganner Krieg; they were presumed dead, and have never been seen since. Following those events, several more prominent figures of leadership, such as the surviving members of the Galactic Alliance Triumvirate, Nu Toreena and Bail Antilles, along with several Senators, were assassinated by Darth Tyranid. Because of the lack of leadership among the Galactic Alliance and the Empire-in-exile, waging a war against the Sith with a unified front had been incredibly difficult; many attempts at re-establishing a head of state failed. Fear percolated throughout both faction's military leadership, almost crippling it; no one wanted, or was willing, to stand up and take a leadership role because they feared Darth Tyranid's wrath.

Princess Jade finally answered, "Well, the Hapes Consortium has officially declared war against the Empire."

"That's good news." Jedi Malakon replied, "The Hapans have a powerful navy that we could draw upon."

The Hapes Consortium remained neutral throughout much of the Insurgency. Although they were potentially a great military threat to the Empire, they didn't engage the Hapans in open warfare due to lack of resources and manpower. Even though the Empire had a powerful war-machine at its fingertips, and recently, they had ordered massive-scale conscriptions into their army and navy, they were always strained for manpower. Therefore, the Sith and the Empire allowed the Hapans to remain neutral, and out of the conflict, as long as they didn't interfere too much with the Resistance.

Jedi Malakon thought about it for a moment, and pained to ask, "How many Battlestars remain in your fleet?"

Princess Jade saw that asking the question brought agony to the Jedi's heart. She answered truthfully, "Fifteen Battlestars remain from the battle, including the *Empress Gem*. I can call for more, but that will take time, and probably won't amount to too many."

*Fifteen Battlestars, out of the original thirty-six,* Jedi Malakon thought; he then painfully replied, "I'm sorry to ask."

"Don't." Princess Jade answered, "The Tetans will be glad to strike back at the Empire, and Amelia."

Jedi Malakon worked out the numbers, and finally came to a conclusion, "Even with the Hapans, we still won't have enough starships to take on Empress Amelia."

"You need another ally." Princess Jade replied.

"And where do you expect me to find one?" Jedi Malakon asked.

Princess Jade smiled, "Empress Amelia has many enemies, including some of her allies."

Jedi Malakon thought about the statement for a moment, "You mean... one of Amelia's allies might be... forced... to get along with her?"

"The Sith bend beings to their will. They manipulate, and corrupt." Princess Jade answered, "It wouldn't surprise me that one or more of her so-called allies would have a grudge against her."

Jedi Malakon thought about it for another moment, "But who?"

Princess Jade shook her head, "Oh, Jedi, I'm disappointed."

Jedi Malakon stared at her for a moment, "Alright, I submit to your vast intelligence. Who?"

"I can't just tell you." She said playfully; she then started to explain, "The Sith and the Empire don't work alone. They require outside influences in order to fuel their war-machines, or they couldn't sustain themselves for very long. Who might that be?"

Jedi Malakon thought about the question for a moment, and shook his head, "I was just in a crashed starfighter, give me a break."

Princess Jade laughed, "I thought Jedi could handle anything, including a slight bump to the head!"

"Bump on the head?" Jedi Malakon rebutted.

She laughed, "Alright, Jedi. I'll tell you." Princess Jade submitted.

"Thank you." Jedi Malakon thanked.

"Zann."



# *Allies*

### Three Standard Days Later: The Ryloth system:

Immediately following The Second Battle of Empress Teta, Jedi Malakon was put in a bacta tank for a day. His injuries, although quite sever, weren't life threatening. The bacta, coupled with a Jedi healing trance, allowed him to fully recover from the crash in only a single standard day. Since then, Jedi Malakon has been making his way into the Outer Rim, avoiding detection from Imperial spies, and patrols.

Princess Jade, monarch of the Empress Teta system, allowed Jedi Malakon to take one of her *Blackbird*-class stealth starfighters. These starfighters were marvels of engineering; the hull was made from a black-matte fiberplast material that rendered it almost invisible to the naked eye, but also absorbed any sensor signals, allowing it to hide from enemy sensors. The fusial engines also burned a special isotope of tibanna gas, designated TibannaX, whose efflux cooled milliseconds after fusion, making it almost invisible to detect. The *Blackbird*-class stealth starfighter was equipped with an impressive and state-of-the-art sensor package, advanced navicomputer, as well as a Class 0.5 hyperdrive engine, making it one of the fastest starfighters ever built. The viewports also utilized blast-tinted technology, where the transparisteel windows would vary in the degree of opaqueness depending on the incident light striking it. Although almost impossible to detect through conventional means, the *Blackbird*-class stealth starfighter is far from perfect. The impressive sensor package, and upgraded hyperdrive, forced the engineers to down-grade the deflector shields, and decrease the amount of energy its three double medium laser cannons can store. The communication package was specially encrypted with quantum cryptography, making it almost impossible to hack into and listen in on communications.

After two standard days of traveling in the cramped cockpit of the *Blackbird*-class stealth starfighter, Jedi Malakon was nearing the Ryloth system. Ryloth was the homeworld of the Twi'lek species, whom have had to endure countless enslavements and wars. Thrak Zann, a supposed brilliant engineer, recently acquired the five moons of Ryloth as part of his personal property, and built his facility on the first, and largest, moon, now dubbed Zann One. After a series of raids against Black Sun bandits and thugs, Thrak Zann organized a new intergalactic enterprise involving spice trade and other illicit activities; the Empire, under the Sith, have allowed Thrak Zann's operation to continue as long as they receive a percentage. Thrak Zann also had a reputation for having the largest personal navy in the entire galaxy, although mostly comprised of Clone War-era *Venator*-class Star Destroyers, and First Galactic Civil War-era *StarViper*-class attack platforms.

Jedi Malakon finally came out of hyperspace; the bluish-white sheet of light started to form long streaks of white light, which then retreated into single point sources of light. Jedi Malakon dropped back into realspace a sufficient distance away from the planet so Thrak Zann's sensors won't detect his arrival. The bright yellow-orange star of Ryloth shined brightly into the cockpit; the blast-tinted viewports darkened to decrease the incident light going through. Out in the distance, Jedi Malakon could see two *Venator*-class Star Destroyers in a geosynchronous orbit around the largest moon of Ryloth, Zann One. The two *Venator*-class Star Destroyers were grey and black in colour, and had a double-*del* symbol on the bow. Jedi Malakon gently tapped the thrusters, slowly moving the stealth starfighter closer to the planet. The two *Venator*-class Star Destroyers were orbiting Thrak Zann's facility, so Jedi Malakon flew his stealth starfighter away from the facility.

"Here goes nothing." Jedi Malakon said to himself.

As Jedi Malakon approached the atmosphere of Zann One, he shut off the engines to the stealth starfighter, and allowed gravity to bring him down. Meteors were common in this system, and Jedi Malakon hoped that they would interpret his arrival as nothing more than a meteor streaking through the atmosphere. The stealth starfighter tumbled and rolled as it fell through the thickening atmosphere. He was falling on the night-side of Zann One, making it hard to see how far the ground was. Suddenly, a shot of flame scorched across his viewport.

*The mesosphere*, Jedi Malakon thought.

The flames became more intense, and more frequent. Jedi Malakon fought the urge to grab the yoke and bring the stealth starfighter under control. Flames were streaking across his viewport in a continuous stream now. Jedi Malakon closed his eyes, and focused on calming his body and mind. The constant jarring and shaking of the cockpit, coupled with the persistent rolling of the stealth starfighter, made that difficult, however. After a few minutes of free fall, the flames dissipated, and Jedi Malakon could see the rocky surface of the moon. He looked over towards his altimeter:

*Twenty kilometres*, Jedi Malakon thought.

From what intelligence has on Thrak Zann, they noted that his sensor capabilities didn't extend that far from his complex, and that he mostly relied on patrolling Star Destroyers to catch or scare-off any intruders. Jedi Malakon thought it would be safe to restart his engines; he skipped over the pre-flight sequences, and headed straight for the

engine ignition button. Luckily, the engines started on their first try, and the fusial engines roared to life. Jedi Malakon sped towards the ground at a fantastic speed, until he came to rest on top of a flat outcrop of rock that was large enough to land his *Blackbird*-class stealth starfighter. The landing was smooth, and uneventful. Quickly, Jedi Malakon jumped out of the stealth starfighter and onto the rocky outcrop.

The air was cool, and the wind was strong. Jedi Malakon felt a little chilly, and wrapped his Jedi robe around his chest for an extra layer of clothing. Slowly, he started walking towards Thrak Zann's complex, about ten kilometres away.

About a standard hour later, Jedi Malakon finally made his way into the complex. The security was disappointingly simple to bypass, but Jedi Malakon wasn't going to complain. Jedi Malakon dropped onto the landing pad of the complex. On the landing pad was a *Nune*-class Imperial shuttle, and a *StarViper*-class attack platform. The landing pad was a huge circular open space, with crates and other gear lining the rocky walls. The landing pad itself was made of permacrete, and was painted black. He saw no beings, or droids on the landing pad, and proceeded into the complex. He opened the huge blast door, and walked in.

Almost immediately, Jedi Malakon had to duck and roll into the corridor; Thrak Zann's air-traffic control room was just adjacent to the landing pad, and there were transparisteel windows lining the corridor where droids could peer through. Jedi Malakon pressed his back towards the wall, just under the transparisteel window. He calmed himself by breathing deeply, and started to crawl under the windows. Finally, after he passed the windows, Jedi Malakon decided to peek through the windows. He saw two BX-series droid commandoes, painted black and dark-grey and armed with assault blaster rifles, inside the air-traffic control room. The BX-series droid commandoes were another staple of The Clone Wars; although not commonly used, they were employed by the Confederation of Independent Systems for assassination and infiltration missions. They didn't seem to know that he had entered the facility, so he decided to leave them be.

Jedi Malakon got back onto his feet, and started walking down the long, narrow corridor. To Jedi Malakon's right was a security room, where various security guards, organic or droid, would patrol and watch the various sensors throughout the facility. To his left was the armoury, packed full of various blaster rifles, and blaster pistols. Jedi Malakon peeked around the corner, and peered into the security room; he saw two

security guards, both watching the viewscreens, talking amongst themselves. Jedi Malakon, not wanting to be detected, used the Force to make a slight sound behind them. The security guards turned to stare at the sound, which was like a metallic clank; Jedi Malakon seized the opportunity, and quietly walked past the security room. The security guards, finally concluding that the sound they heard was nothing, returned to talking with each other, and monitoring the viewscreens.

Jedi Malakon quietly made his way down the length of the corridor, trying to be as silent as possible. The durasteel grated floor made it difficult because every time he made a step, there was inevitably a small clanking noise. Jedi Malakon used the Force to minimize as much of the noise as possible. Jedi Malakon walked past the offices. He quickly took a peek around the corner, and found the offices were completely empty. Trying to move as quickly as possible, Jedi Malakon sped down the corridor. He finally came to a junction, and slowed down; once again he peeked around the corner. Surprisingly, there was a BX-series droid commando walking up the corridor, walking towards him.

*Damn it,* Jedi Malakon thought.

Jedi Malakon looked back towards the direction he came, and saw that one of the security guards had just started walking down the corridor towards him as well.

*You got to be kidding me,* Jedi Malakon thought.

He turned around, and started walking back towards where he came. He thought maybe he could reach the offices, and hide there, but it turned out that the offices would be too far for him to reach.

*Think!* Jedi Malakon thought.

Suddenly, he looked over to his left, and saw there was a storage room. He quickly jumped inside the storage room, and shut the door. He stood as still as possible, minimizing his movements so that he wouldn't make a sound. He closed himself off from the Force, concealing himself even further. He could sense how far away the security guard was, however, and he was approaching fast; the droid commando was out of his perception, but he assumed it was approaching fast as well. Jedi Malakon held his breath; his heart was pounding out of his chest. Fear crept into Jedi Malakon's mind. Sweat started to bead on his forehead, mostly from fear and anxiety. The security guard passed him by without detecting him at all; soon after, he heard the clanking of

mechanical footfalls walk passed him. Jedi Malakon sighed in relief, and quickly calmed his body from the fear that had percolated within him. Jedi Malakon remained in the storage room for a moment longer; he extended his awareness in the Force, trying to sense other beings within the facility. There were barely any; he did, however, sense an unusual presence in the Force nearby. He thought nothing of it, and exited the storage room.

He peeked around the corner, and saw the droid commando walking down the corridor in the opposite direction, with its back towards Jedi Malakon; the other security guard was nowhere to be seen.

*Coast is clear,* Jedi Malakon thought.

Jedi Malakon re-entered the corridor, and started walking down the narrow pathway, towards the main laboratories. He walked past the primary laboratory, and sensed no beings inside. He quickly made his way down the corridor until he past the secondary laboratory. Once again he found no beings inside.

*This is where they make the spice,* Jedi Malakon thought.

Directly ahead was Thrak Zann's personal laboratory. Jedi Malakon immediately headed towards it, and walked through the door. The laboratory was big, but mostly filled with huge piles of paper, scattered books, and pieces of scrap metal. There were several computers in the laboratory; they seemed to be on, and running some kind of software program that he had never seen before. He slowly made his way around the laboratory, trying to be as quiet as possible. Finally, he found Thrak Zann; he was asleep in front of one of the many computers in the laboratory. Thrak Zann's face was rested on the keyboard, in what looked like an uncomfortable position; there were some vials of powdery green ryll, a type of spice that could potentially be used for recreational use, next to Thrak Zann.

Jedi Malakon approached very carefully, then whispered, "Zann!"

Thrak Zann, a tall man with long, silky-white hair and a white grizzled beard, suddenly awoke from his slumber. His eyes were red, and he appeared to be still under the influence of the ryll. His pupils were dilated, and his iris' were silver-blue in colour. Thrak Zann immediately sat back up, and started reaching for a blaster pistol at was next to him.

"Wait!" Jedi Malakon pleaded, "I'm not here to kill you!"



Thrak Zann ignored him, and reached for the blaster pistol. He stumbled out of his chair, and the blaster pistol fell onto the floor. Thrak Zann then fell out of his seat, and hit the durasteel grated floor hard, knocking the wind out of him. Jedi Malakon approached him, but before he could reach him, Thrak Zann kicked a red button underneath the computer desk. Suddenly, sirens started to blare, and red-and-yellow flashing lights started to go on-and-off.

"You son of a bitch." Jedi Malakon replied.

Thrak Zann started to pick himself up, and grabbed onto the blaster pistol. Jedi Malakon quickly activated his blue-bladed lightsaber; the *snap-hiss* echoed within the giant laboratory. Thrak Zann aimed, and fired at Jedi Malakon; he shot two blaster bolts. Jedi Malakon intentionally batted away the blaster bolts specifically so that they wouldn't hit Thrak Zann.

"I've dealt with my fair share of assassins!" Thrak Zann screamed.

Thrak Zann fired another blaster bolt; Jedi Malakon let the blaster bolt pass harmless by him. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon unleashed a powerful Force Wave attack. The incredible pressure wave slammed Thrak Zann's chest like a sledgehammer; Thrak Zann slammed into the durasteel desk he was perched on, knocking him unconscious. Paper disturbed by the Force attack started to rain down all around Jedi Malakon. Suddenly, a whole horde of BX-series droid commandoes ran down the corridor towards him; he heard the clanking footfalls getting louder and louder.

*Just what I need,* Jedi Malakon thought.

Suddenly, one of the BX-series droid commandoes stormed into the laboratory, and fired its assault blaster rifle. The energy bolts were fired at a rapid speed, potentially too fast for Jedi Malakon to safely deflect them all. Instead, Jedi Malakon rolled on the ground, then came back onto his feet. The blaster bolts flew by him, narrowly missing him every time. Jedi Malakon immediately threw his lightsaber at the droid commando. The lightsaber spun in the air, hurdling towards the droid commando. Finally, the spinning blue energy blade cut the BX-series droid commando in half, just above the waist, and returned to Jedi Malakon. The two halves of the droid commando collapsed onto the durasteel grate; its circuitry sparked and sizzled.

Three more BX-series droid commandoes stormed into the laboratory. All three fired their assault blaster rifles at him. Jedi Malakon leapt into the air, avoiding most of

the blaster bolts fired his way. Any that made it dangerously close to him, he managed to deflect while in mid-air. Jedi Malakon landed right in front of the BX-series droid commandoes, and with a single long swipe, cut them all in half. Their legs separated from their torsos, and they all came crumbling down onto the durasteel grate. Surprisingly, one of the droid commandoes was still functional enough to fire its assault blaster rifle. Jedi Malakon immediately plunged his blue-bladed lightsaber into the head of the droid commando, disabling it instantly.

Jedi Malakon looked back up, looking down the long, narrow corridor, and saw even more BX-series droid commandoes heading his way. There were simply too many for him to simply hack and slash through. Desperately, Jedi Malakon harnessed all the Force energy he could, and unleashed a powerful Destroy Droid; this Force power was first developed by Jedi Masters during The Great Droid Revolution over four thousand years ago. Several Jedi Masters figured out a way to use the Force to short-circuit and completely destroy droids without calling upon the dark-side of the Force; the technique called for using powerful lightning bolts that surge the circuit boards, overloading and frying them until they were completely destroyed. Master Lii, during the early parts of Jedi Malakon's training, made him learn a past Force technique that didn't have any real practical use at the time in order to learn broadness. The technique was useful now.

The glowing purplish-blue lightning bolts shot out of Jedi Malakon's fingertips, and surged into the incoming BX-series droid commandoes. The lightning bolts were not harmful to organics, but destructive to droids. Jedi Malakon felt their circuits burning and exploding, and parts of their metallic structure melted; their bodies glowed eerily orange from the intense heat. The droids started to sizzle, causing their photoreceptors to explode with a burst of orange flame. Some held down the trigger to their assault blaster rifles, sending energy bolts into the durasteel walls and floor. Jedi Malakon held the Force power for as long as he could, but he was getting extremely tired. Soon, he had to stop the attack, and recover. His breathing was laboured, and his heart was racing; a sharp tightness in his chest overwhelmed him. Sweat poured down his forehead, and his fingers were tingling. He looked up and saw over a dozen droids laying on the durasteel grated floor, smoking. Surprisingly, some of the BX-series droids were still functional after the onslaught of lightning bolts.

*You're kidding,* Jedi Malakon thought.

Three of the BX-series droid commandoes started to get up, and fire at Jedi Malakon. Jedi Malakon deflected one of the energy bolts back at the BX-series droid

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commando who fired it. The energy bolt struck the droid square in the chest, causing it to take a step backward. The energy bolt left a glowing orange spot on the droid's chest, but no obvious damage to the droid's internal circuitry. Surprisingly, the droid didn't fall, and continued to fire at Jedi Malakon.

*Tough droids*, Jedi Malakon thought.

The three BX-series droid commandoes continued their relentless onslaught, firing blaster bolts non-stop at Jedi Malakon. Jedi Malakon quickly used the Force to augment his movements, and ran deeper into the laboratory. Jedi Malakon was able to move fast enough to avoid most of the blaster bolts fired his way; any that came too close, he simply deflected with his lightsaber. Jedi Malakon, with incredible speed, ran towards the three droid commandoes; they fired relentlessly at him with their assault blaster rifles. Jedi Malakon ducked and dodged most of the blaster bolts, deflecting any that he couldn't. Suddenly, harnessing the vast power of the Force, he unleashed a Force Wave attack that sent the three droids careening into the durasteel wall behind them. The droids basically shattered once they hit the durasteel wall, leaving a huge dent in it.

Jedi Malakon, utterly exhausted, stopped for a moment to catch his breath; he deactivated his lightsaber, kneeled over, and breathed in long, deep breaths. His vision was slightly foggy, and sweat profusely poured down his forehead. His body hasn't been one-hundred-percent since the starfighter crash on Empress Teta. The bacta and the healing trace did wonders, but not miracles. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon heard another mechanical footfall coming down the corridor. He slowly looked back up, and saw a single BX-series droid commando approaching him. This one seemed different; there was a gigantic electro-staff in his hands, instead of the typical assault blaster rifle. The droid activated the electro-staff, and the two bulbs on either end lit up in bluish-purple electrical arcs. The shaft itself was made of phrik, a material resistant to lightsabers.

*Really?* Jedi Malakon thought.

The BX-series elite droid commando stood at the doorway, and said, "*Surrender, and you won't be destroyed.*" In a mechanical, deep masculine robotic voice.

Jedi Malakon swallowed, clearing the frog in his throat, "Hate to break it to you, but it's your pals laying disabled on the floor."

"*Subject is resisting arrest.*" The elite droid commando replied, "*Eliminate!*"

Suddenly, the BX-series elite droid commando lunged through the air with its electro-staff above his head. Jedi Malakon jumped out of the way, just in time to see the electric-bulb on the electro-staff pierced the durasteel grate floor that he was just standing on a moment ago. Jedi Malakon rolled on the durasteel grated floor, and reactivated his blue-bladed lightsaber; the *snap-hiss* echoed. The elite droid commando ripped the electro-staff from out between the durasteel grates, twirled the staff, and charged at Jedi Malakon again. The elite droid commando was surprisingly proficient at sword-to-sword combat; the droid was fast, and powerful, and could spin the electro-staff so fast that the bulbs at both ends were a blur. Jedi Malakon had to duck and dodge most of the droid's strikes since he was so exhausted at this point. His lightsaber clashed with the electro-staff, causing the bulb at the ends to sizzle with electrical energy. Jedi Malakon kicked the elite droid commando in the chest, sending him backwards. The droid wasn't fazed, and immediately charged Jedi Malakon again.

"I'm too tired for this crap." Jedi Malakon said to himself.

The elite droid commando spun its electro-staff again, and lunged forward, stabbing Jedi Malakon. The electro-bulb got within range of Jedi Malakon's body, causing a short, and painful, electrocution. Jedi Malakon screamed in pain, and immediately swiped the electro-staff away from his body. Anger and frustration started to creep into Jedi Malakon's body, and he lashed out at the droid. Jedi Malakon utilized Djem So, an aggressive lightsaber form, and attacked the droid. His slashes and strikes were quick, and powerful, but his muscles couldn't sustain him at this level for every long. The droid on the other hand could last pretty much forever; Jedi Malakon knew he would have to end the battle sooner rather than later.

Jedi Malakon leapt into the air, and smashed the droid over the head. Surprisingly, the droid managed to get the phrik electro-staff above its head, and block the vicious attack. The droid countered perfectly, lashing out with a great swipe that nearly decapitated Jedi Malakon. Jedi Malakon ducked under the electro-staff, and lunged forward. He tried to stab the droid with the tip of his lightsaber, but surprisingly, the droid backed away before the energy blade could pierce his metallic body. With immense strength, the elite droid commando smacked the lightsaber out of Jedi Malakon's hands. The Jedi was completely surprised that the droid would be proficient enough to disarm him.

"*Surrender now, intruder, or be destroyed.*" The BX-series elite droid commando ordered.

The elite droid commando pointed the tip of the electro-staff pointed directly at him. Jedi Malakon started to crawl backwards, moving away from the droid. The electro-bulb at the end of the staff sizzled with a menacing sound. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon summoned the lightsaber towards him; the lightsaber activated in mid-air, and before it reached his hands, took a swipe at the droid. The droid surprisingly deflected most of the attack, but the tip of the lightsaber still managed to gouge a linear line across its torso. Jedi Malakon picked himself up, and caught the lightsaber.

"Jedi don't surrender to droids." Jedi Malakon stated.

"*Negative.*" The BX-series elite droid commando countered, "*You will surrender to me.*"

Jedi Malakon immediately charged at the droid; the droid stood his ground, and twirled his electro-staff with great speed. Their blades met, and sparks showered from the lightsaber, and onto the durasteel grated floor. Jedi Malakon then unleashed another Force Wave attack that pushed the droid backwards into some computer desks. The desks crumpled and shattered from the force of the impact, as well as the weight of the droid. The droid picked itself up, just as Jedi Malakon leaped into the air. Jedi Malakon slashed at the droid's forearm with the blade of his lightsaber. Suddenly, the lightsaber surged, and the energy blade shut off.

*Cortosis gauntlet*, Jedi Malakon thought.

Left defenceless, the droid immediately attacked with its electro-staff. Before the droid could reach striking distance of Jedi Malakon, he mustered as much Force energy as he could, and unleashed another powerful Destroy Droid. The electrical arcs of purplish-blue lightning bolts struck the phrik electro-staff, and surged the bulbs at the end. Suddenly, the bulbs burst with a blizzard of sparks from the electric surge, sending electro-staff out of the elite droid commando's grip. The electric bolts suddenly surged into the droid, frying and burning the delicate circuitry inside the metallic body. The droid's metallic body glowed orange from the intense heat, and sparks rained out of its joints. Jedi Malakon was too exhausted to sustain the Force attack, so after a moments, he had to stop. The Force attack was insufficient to completely destroy the droid, or even disable it. Greyish-white smoke billowed from the droid, and its joints started to spark an twitch violently.

"*Surrend- Surrender now, Je- Jedi.*" The BX-series elite droid commando attempted to order, "*Or- Or else.*"

Jedi Malakon immediately ran over to the crippled droid, and got behind it. He grabbed the droid by the head, and started to pull as hard as he could.

"I told you! Jedi don't surrender to droids!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

Suddenly, Jedi Malakon ripped the head off the droid's torso. The neck of the droid basically shattered from the force Jedi Malakon exerted on it. A shower of sparks poured out of the neck of the droid. The headless body of the droid tumbled towards the durasteel grating, clanking as it collapsed. Jedi Malakon held the black head of the elite droid commando in his hands for a moment, and watched as the white photoreceptors faded to blackness.

Jedi Malakon shook his head, "Good try, clanker."

Suddenly, Jedi Malakon collapsed onto his knees; a surge of pain shot through his body. He wheezed for air, coughing as soon as his lungs filled with air. He clutched his chest; the coughing made his chest hurt. There was a sharp, stinging sensation every time he took a breath. He winced in pain, and clutched his chest tighter. He closed his eyes, and tried to calm his body down. His heart was racing, pounding out of his chest.

*A Jedi shouldn't be in this much pain,* Jedi Malakon thought.

Slowly, his heart started to slow down, and the pain in his chest started to dissipate. Jedi Malakon was feeling better; the tightness in his chest was lifting, and he could breathe easier. Slowly, he opened his eyes; he stared at the durasteel grate, slowly breathing, trying to catch his breath. The grip on his chest was loosening; the pain was starting to disappear. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon heard another set of footfalls coming from the corridor. Jedi Malakon slowly turned to look down the hall; he saw two figures, clad in black heavy cloth robes, walking in single-file towards him. They were carrying yorik-coral lightsabers in their hands.

*You got to be kidding,* Jedi Malakon grudgingly thought.

Jedi Malakon slowly picked himself up from the durasteel grated floor. He held his deactivated lightsaber in his hands. He looked around the laboratory; Thrak Zann was still unconscious on the floor, and the rest was filled with fried and smoking droids. He retreated deeper into the laboratory; he knew he couldn't withstand these two Sith Lords in the current state he was in.

Suddenly, the Sith Lords entered the laboratory. Both Sith Lords were tall, muscular male Khil, a humanoid species with fleshy tendrils hanging from their lower face instead of a jaw. Their skin was tattooed red, with black geometric patterns; interestingly, the black geometric tattoos on both Sith Lords were identical, although mirror images of each other. The iris' of their eyes were sulphur-yellow and lined with red. They both activated their crimson-bladed yorik-coral lightsabers at the same time; the *snap-hiss* from both lightsabers echoed within the laboratory.

"Good show, for a Jedi." One of the Sith Lords shouted in a deep and scratchy voice, "Maybe you'll be a worthy challenge."

Jedi Malakon was hiding behind a desk with a huge pile of paper on top. He concealed himself in the Force, trying to be as small a presence as possible. Jedi Malakon took a peek around the corner of the desk. Both were standing at the doors entrance. Beneath the Sith Lords feet were the shattered bodies of the BX-series droid commandoes.

One of the Sith Lords kicked the head of one of the decapitated droid commandoes; he looked down at the seared circuits, "Those Force powers won't help you here, Jedi."

Jedi Malakon's heart was pounding again; the pain in his chest was starting to return. He clutched his chest in pain; he tried to calm his body, but it wasn't responding the way he wanted it to. His breathing became laboured, and every time he took a breath, a sharp pain would persist.

*Not a good time*, Jedi Malakon thought.

Jedi Malakon quickly looked around, seeing if there was something he could use as a distraction. He saw nothing but computer equipment, piles of papers and books stacked almost to the ceiling, scraps of metal and other mechanical devices, and vials of ryll.

Suddenly, Jedi Malakon had a thought, *ryll*.

Jedi Malakon crawled over to the desk, and grabbed as many vials of ryll as he could; he was clutching his chest the entire time. He fell back down onto the durasteel grated floor, quietly, and looked at how many vials there were. He had four vials of ryll in his hand. He strained to make another move. Jedi Malakon took some deep breaths, despite the pain, and lowered his heart rate. Forcing himself to crawl back behind the

desk, he finally returned back behind cover. He took some more deep breaths, and calmed himself. He looked around the corner of the desk again, and saw that the two Sith Lords weren't standing at the doorway anymore. He could only see one of the Sith Lord's; he was walking towards him, slowly searching the entire laboratory. The two Sith Lords were astonishingly silent.

Quickly, Jedi Malakon grabbed the first hard metal object he could find, and threw it against the durasteel grated floor. The metal object, whatever it was, clanked against the floor. He sensed the closer Sith Lord become very aware, then heard his footfalls coming towards him. Hiding within the desk, he was out of the line of sight of the incoming Sith Lord. Surprisingly, the Sith Lord walked right past Jedi Malakon. Jedi Malakon slowly crawled out of his hiding space, and crept up behind the Sith Lord. The Sith Lord knelt down, and picked up the metal object and examined it.

"Hey." Jedi Malakon said.

The Khil Sith Lord quickly turned around, and saw Jedi Malakon. His red and sulphur-yellow eyes widened in surprise. Before the Sith Lord could even activate his yorik coral lightsaber, Jedi Malakon cracked open the vials of ryll, and threw the fine dust into the face of the Khil Sith Lord. The ryll powder stuck onto the Khil's face, causing massive irritation. The Sith Lord screamed in pain; his eyes started to water, and he clutched his face in agony. Jedi Malakon quickly lunged forward, and plunged his blue-bladed lightsaber into the chest of the Khil. The Khil slowly died in his arms, and Jedi Malakon allowed the dead Sith Lord to collapse onto the durasteel grate. Jedi Malakon immediately deactivated his lightsaber, and picked up the Sith Lord's lightsaber. He knew the other Sith Lord would have heard the noise of the lightsaber, as well as the fallen body.

*One down,* Jedi Malakon thought.

Jedi Malakon started to walk around the laboratory, searching for the other Sith Lord. The laboratory was relatively dark, and poorly lit from above. It made it incredibly hard to find a black clad Sith Lord with dark red skin. Nevertheless, Jedi Malakon searched the laboratory with his lightsaber in his right hand, and the fallen Sith Lord's in his left. He walked slowly, trying to minimize his presence. Reluctantly, he stretched out with the Force, trying to find the Sith Lord. Suddenly, he came across a startling discovery.

*He's close,* Jedi Malakon thought.

Suddenly, the huge pile of paper and books next to Jedi Malakon started to topple over. Jedi Malakon looked up at the collapsing pile of paper as it fell on top of him. The paper was surprisingly heavy, and knocked him off his feet instantly. Jedi Malakon had what felt like a tonne of paper and books on top of him. Standing behind where the pile of paper once stood was the other Khil Sith Lord; he had rage in his heart, and poured it into the Force.

*Oh great,* Jedi Malakon thought.

"Jedi, now you've gone and done it." The Khil Sith Lord growled, "I'll make sure that your death will be slow, and agonizing."

Jedi Malakon tried to push the pieces of paper and book from off his chest. The incredible weight on his chest was crushing him, making it harder and harder to breath. His chest surged with pain, crippling his ability to concentrate and think properly. His breathing got shallower; not enough air was getting into his lungs. Jedi Malakon feared that he would pass out. Jedi Malakon tried again; slowly, but surely, the pieces of paper and books started to come off his chest. The pressure on his chest decreased, and he could breath slightly easier.

The Sith Lord in the meantime, climbed over the desk where the pile of paper and book had been sitting, and jumped down. The Sith Lord wore an expression of anger on his face; his black robe, opened at the chest, showed off his muscular body. His pectoral muscles were bulbous, while his abs were ripped and aggressive; his excellent physical appearance was accentuated by the red and black geometric tattoos covering his body. Jedi Malakon frantically tried to get the paper off of him. Surprisingly, the Sith Lord used the Force, and blew the pieces of paper away. The Sith Lord activated his crimson-bladed yorik coral lightsaber, and walked towards Jedi Malakon. The Sith Lord reared up, and was about to stab Jedi Malakon. At the last possible moment, Jedi Malakon rolled out of the way; the crimson blade plunged through the durasteel grated floor that Jedi Malakon had been laying on just a moment earlier. Instinctually, Jedi Malakon kicked the Sith Lord in the ribs, then rolled over onto his feet.

"I'll make sure every single Sith in the galaxy pays for the atrocities they've committed." Jedi Malakon threatened.

"Unwise, Jedi." The Khil Sith Lord replied.

Jedi Malakon activated both lightsabers in his hands, *Jar' Kai*, and dropped into a defensive stance, Soresu. With a burst of speed, the Sith Lord charged at Jedi Malakon. Expertly, and despite his pain, Jedi Malakon blocked and parried the rapid lightsaber strikes. Sparks rained down from the lightsabers, as well as explosions of light. The Sith Lord, utilized a very aggressive and bold lightsaber form known as Vaapad. This lightsaber form was incredibly ferocious, utilizing very direct strikes that were much more kinetic and powerful relative to other lightsaber forms, but much less elegant and acrobatic. One of the greatest advantages with this lightsaber form was unpredictability; the Sith Lord would attack at odd angles, making it awkward to defend.

Jedi Malakon fought relentlessly against the powerful and ferocious lightsaber attacks from his opponent. The Sith Lord seemed to be harnessing and manipulating the Force to enhance his lightsaber combat skills, a common trait amongst Sith Marauders. Jedi Malakon, although in a great deal of pain and always short on breath, continued to fight hard against the Sith Lord. He utilized both lightsabers in both hands to the best of his abilities, using both to block the onslaught of attacks.

Suddenly, the Sith Lord unleashed a powerful Force Wave attack that sent Jedi Malakon flying across the laboratory. Jedi Malakon slammed into the durasteel grating hard, knocking the wind out of him. Jedi Malakon tried to pick himself up, but failed at doing so. He reeled and gasped in pain. The sudden impact from the Force attack intensified the pain in his chest. Jedi Malakon clutched his chest again; he groaned in pain. The tightness in his chest was growing; his breathing became shorter and shorter. Every breath he took caused him a great amount of pain. Jedi Malakon closed his eyes, trying to fight off the pain.

"I sense your hurting, Jedi." The Khil Sith Lord taunted, "The dark-side of the Force would allow you to control and manipulate that pain. Allow you to use it for your benefit. Make you stronger!"

"The Sith are nothing but rabid animals!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

Suddenly, Jedi Malakon rose onto his feet, and threw the crimson-bladed yorik coral lightsaber at the Sith Lord like a spear. The lightsaber streaked through the air with incredible speed, almost too fast to be seen with the naked eye. Surprised, the Sith Lord smacked the incoming lightsaber away, barely. That moment of confusion was enough for Jedi Malakon. Using the distraction, Jedi Malakon charged at the Sith Lord. Although his chest ached and pained him, he charged anyways. Jedi Malakon went wild, smashing and striking the Sith Lord with everything he had. He knew he couldn't

sustain his fight any longer, so he had to kill him now. Jedi Malakon screamed in rage, smashing his blue-bladed lightsaber against the Sith Lord's crimson blade.

The Sith Lord took several steps backwards, trying to hold off the Jedi. Jedi Malakon was relentless; every strike and smash that he would perform would knock the Sith Lord partially off-balance. Jedi Malakon felt his muscles tire, and the pain in his chest growing. He knew it was now or never. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon leapt into the air, and came down on the Sith Lord, hard. Their lightsabers made contact, and Jedi Malakon tried to force their lightsabers into the Sith Lord's body. Jedi Malakon strained against the crimson energy blade, trying to force it downward. Sweat poured down Jedi Malakon's face; fear filled the Sith Lord's eyes. Suddenly, there was a loud bang from behind the Sith Lord. The sudden loud noise was startling, and confused Jedi Malakon for a moment. Suddenly, the Sith Lord's eyes went wide, and he slowly collapsed onto the durasteel grated floor. Jedi Malakon was petrified in place. He slowly looked up, and saw Thrak Zann standing with a shotgun, barrel smoking, in his hands. Thrak Zann stared at the Jedi.

"I'm not here to kill you." Jedi Malakon replied.

Thrak Zann stared at the Jedi a little longer. He looked behind him, and saw the dead body of the other Sith Lord, "Yeah, I figured as much."

Jedi Malakon was relieved, "I'm just here to talk."

"About what?" Thrak Zann asked.

"You." Jedi Malakon answered.

Thrak Zann narrowed his eyes in suspicion. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon clutched his chest again, and collapsed onto the durasteel grated floor. The pain surged through his body. Thrak Zann immediately ran over to Jedi Malakon. He stood over him, then quickly looked around the desks. Thrak Zann finally grabbed a vial of liquefied ryll, and a syringe. Thrak Zann filled the syringe with the ryll, and grabbed Jedi Malakon's arm. Jedi Malakon resisted.

"This will dull the pain." Thrak Zann replied.

Reluctantly, Jedi Malakon stopped fighting, and Thrak Zann injected the ryll into his body. The ryll acted fast, and almost immediately, the pain started to dissipate and disappear. Jedi Malakon could feel the tightness in his chest start to loosen, and his

breathing started to return to normal. The sudden rush of air into his lungs caused him to cough.

"Thanks." Jedi Malakon replied.

Thrak Zann nodded, "I'll take it off what you owe me."

Thrak Zann then picked Jedi Malakon up, and propped him on top of the desk. Jedi Malakon coughed again, but finally stopped. Jedi Malakon couldn't take his eyes off the dead Sith Lord in front of him. There were shards of purplish-pink metal in his back that seemed to be burning and sizzling; the purplish-pink metal seemed to be melting or bubbling, releasing a billow of bluish-white smoke.

Thrak Zann noticed that Jedi Malakon was looking at the Sith Lord, "That one was named Darth Devar." Thrak Zann informed; he then turned over the other one, "And that one was Darth Angra. They were brothers."

"Yeah, I figured." Jedi Malakon replied.

Thrak Zann swept some hair out of his eyes, "So, why are you really here, Jedi."

"Name's Mathias Malakon." Jedi Malakon managed to say before coughing again.

"Okay, Jedi." Thrak Zann answered, "Why are you here?"

Jedi Malakon swallowed, removing the frog in his throat, "I was wondering if you would like to join our resistance against the Sith."

Thrak Zann broke out laughing, "You're kidding, right?"

"No, actually, I'm dead serious." Jedi Malakon answered.

Thrak Zann finished laughing, "Now why would I want to do that?" Thrak Zann asked, "They paid for this facility, and they leave me alone... for the most part."

"Oh yeah?" Jedi Malakon replied, "And these two Sith Lords were what? Your bodyguards?" He looked into Thrak Zann's eyes, "They were keeping you prisoner here, weren't they?"

Thrak Zann's expression narrowed, "So what if they were?"



"You don't want to be a prisoner in your own facility, do you?" Jedi Malakon asked.

Thrak Zann thought about it, "The Sith aren't so bad. At least they're on my side."

Jedi Malakon shook his head, "For as long as they need you. Or as long as they can trust you."

Thrak Zann suddenly slammed his fist into a durasteel desk, "Why do you think she had me imprisoned here?" Thrak Zann rhetorically asked, "She became so damned paranoid once she took power!"

"Empress Amelia?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"Yeah, that bitch!" Thrak Zann screamed, "She took everything! Then left me here to rot!"

"What do you mean?" Jedi Malakon asked.

Thrak Zann looked back at Jedi Malakon, "Why should I tell you?"

"Because, if we work together, we have a pretty good chance at taking her down." Jedi Malakon answered.

"A pretty good chance?" Thrak Zann replied, "You don't have jack all!"

"There is amounting resistance against the Sith, and Empress Amelia." Jedi Malakon informed, "We just need more firepower, and we can take her down!"

"Why should I risk my life for you?" Thrak Zann asked.

"Because if you don't, and the Resistance fails, you'll be imprisoned here forever, and no one in the galaxy will ever be able to stop her." Jedi Malakon answered.

Thrak Zann thought about it for a while; he pondered his choices, then finally replied, "What would you need?"

Jedi Malakon smiled, "I hear you have the largest collection of antique warships in the entire galaxy." Jedi Malakon started, "They still work?"

"You saw the droid commandoes, didn't you?" Thrak Zann answered.

Jedi Malakon smiled again, and nodded, "Alright. How many do you have? Please say a lot."

"A lot" Thrak Zann answered, "I can have fifty Star Destroyers, full equipped with starfighters ready in no time."

"Those would be the *Venator*-class Star Destroyers?" Jedi Malakon asked.

Thrak Zann smiled, "They may be an old design, but they are just as deadly as they were back in The Clone Wars."

"And the starfighters?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"*StarViper*-class attack platforms mostly, with some other stuff." Thrak Zann answered, "They're full armed, and deadly."

"Do you even have enough pilots to fly them all?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"Not organic pilots." Thrak Zann answered, "But I think I should have enough droid brains to do the job."

"Still, droid verses beings, I'll take beings any day." Jedi Malakon replied, "I'll send whatever extra pilots we have over here, and they'll fly some of the StarVipers." Jedi Malakon looked at Thrak Zann, "With your permission, of course."

"Of course." Thrak Zann coldly replied.

Jedi Malakon nodded, "Good. Now all we need is a plan."

Thrak Zann laughed, "You're kidding, right?"

Jedi Malakon shook his head, "We have no idea where she is."

Thrak Zann's expression turned back to a growl, "Well, damn it, Jedi!"

"Sorry!" Jedi Malakon replied, "We think somewhere in the Core. No one has seen her in a while."

"The Core! That narrows things down!" Thrak Zann turned around, and started to walk away, but suddenly stopped. He turned and faced Jedi Malakon again, "Hey, do you know why the Empire is stretched so thin?"

Jedi Malakon shrugged, "They're fighting on too many fronts, why?"

Thrak Zann shook his head, "No, no, no. That's not the real reason."

"Of course it's the reason! The Empire isn't some unstoppable—"

"Yes, it is!" Thrak Zann cut in, "The Empire has issued large general conscriptions into its army in the last three years, yet it's strained for manpower. The Empire controls all the major shipyards in the galaxy: Kuat, Fondor, Corellia. They could outsource to any number of other shipyards if those become overloaded: Bothawui, Duro, Mon Calamari." Thrak Zann explained, "You can destroy one of their fleets, and they could rebuild another one tomorrow!"

Jedi Malakon was unsure about where this was heading, "Alright, Zann, I'll bite. Why are they stretched so thin?"

Thrak Zann smiled, "They're strained for resources."

Jedi Malakon shook his head, "You just got through saying—"

No, Jedi!" Thrak Zann cut in again, "I'm saying that the Empire could produce any number of ships that it wanted, yet it can't. The Empire does have the resources to build them, but they aren't where they're needed. Why?"

Jedi Malakon shrugged.

"I know why." Thrak Zann answered.

Thrak Zann ran over to one of his giant computers, and started typing. The huge computer, a supercomputer, was unlike anything Jedi Malakon had ever seen. Suddenly, a holographic display appeared in the center of the laboratory. The holographic projector was covered in paper, so Thrak Zann pushed them all off. Suddenly, a starship that Jedi Malakon had never seen before appeared. The starship, more of a star dreadnought, and was gigantic.

"This is why." Thrak Zann answered.

"What is this?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"This is the *Dread Lord*." Thrak Zann answered.

"The *Dread Lord*?" Jedi Malakon asked in a hesitant voice, fighting back a shudder.



Jedi Malakon was terrified by the connotations of the name; the *Dread Lord*. Over a hundred years ago, the Yuuzhan Vong invaded the galaxy. They ravaged over half the galaxy, destroyed entire worlds, killed trillions of beings and brought down the New Republic in an invasion that lasted almost four standard years until finally, the newly born Galactic Federation of Free Alliances, the Galactic Alliance, defeated them over Coruscant. During that time, the absolute ruler of the Yuuzhan Vong clans was called the Supreme Overlord, or alternatively, Dread Lord.

Thrak Zann nodded, "Yes. It was the flagship I designed for Empress Amelia, before she was Empress, almost five years ago." Thrak Zann explained, "I gave it to her minions, and they must have brought it to her. Since then, though, I never heard anything about it. I figured it was forgotten, or lost, or something. But now, I think this is the reason why the Empire isn't spitting out Star Destroyers left and right."

"You think she's building this, and that's why the Empire is strained of warships and resources?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"She's a huge vessel, over nine kilometres long, and she packs a powerful punch." Thrak Zann explained; he punched a few buttons, and the holographic projection rotated to show the ventral underside, "The *Dread Lord* is equipped with ten planetary turbolasers, each capable to taking down a Star Destroyer with a single shot."

"Holy frack." Jedi Malakon whispered.

"Holy frack indeed." Thrak Zann replied, "This vessel could destroy entire fleets single-handedly."

"I've seen what planetary turbolasers can do first hand." Jedi Malakon stated, "On the *Overlord*."

Thrak Zann shook his head, "The *Overlord* would be a baby nerf next to this thing." Thrak Zann replied, "The planetary turbolasers on the *Overlord* are actually a cheat. It utilizes three large turbolaser bolts to achieve the same destructive power." Thrak Zann pointed to the *Dread Lord*, "She can do it with just one bolt."

Jedi Malakon cringed, "And you gave this to her!"

Thrak Zann stared at Jedi Malakon, "She paid well." There was a few moments of silence between the two, "Don't feel too bad though, there is one design flaw."

"What? You mean something like a two metre thermal exhaust port?" Jedi Malakon jokingly asked, referring to the first Death Star where Luke Skywalker, a mere nineteen year old bright-eyed teenager at the time, single-handedly destroyed the gigantic superweapon.

"No. The *Dread Lord* requires a lot of energy, and I couldn't fit a big enough reactor to fully run her." Thrak Zann explained, "So the *Dread Lord* needs external power."

"What power? From where?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"I don't know." Thrak Zann answered, "I only designed the *Dread Lord*."

"Do the Empire know this flaw?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"Yes. Even Imperial engineers aren't so dumb." Thrak Zann replied.

Jedi Malakon ignored the comment, "Okay, okay." Jedi Malakon replied; he thought for a moment, "The important thing is to find the *Dread Lord*. Where would it be built? It would have to be at one of the larger shipyards... somewhere big."

"The biggest is Kuat." Thrak Zann answered.

"There then." Jedi Malakon replied, "Empress Amelia must be overseeing the construction of her flagship."

"It's been almost five years." Thrak Zann replied, "The *Dread Lord* would probably be nearing completion by now."

Jedi Malakon took a deep breath in to calm himself. He nodded, "Okay. We're going to have to act fast if we're going to catch her off-guard. How fast can you move your ships?"

"Very quickly." Thrak Zann answered.

"Okay. Well then, I'd better get things prepared." Jedi Malakon said.

He picked himself off the top of the desk, and started to walk out of the laboratory. Thrak Zann quickly chased after him.

"Wait a minute! What's the plan?" Thrak Zann asked.

"We've got agents all around these parts, you—" Jedi Malakon started to explain before getting cut off.

"Since when?" Thrak Zann interrupted.

"Since the beginning." Jedi Malakon answered, then continued, "You get all the ships and soldiers you can while I'm away. I'll inform the Resistance nearby to follow your lead and lend you a hand. Meanwhile, I'm going to have to round up the others scattered across the galaxy, and organize this attack."

"How long?" Thrak Zann asked.

"Soon."

# *Revelation*

*Fire. An inferno was raging all around him. Mathias stood in the middle of a burning forest, looking out into the flames with terror and fear. The sky was black with smoke, and filled with embers. The winds were strong, blowing burning hot embers onto Mathias. The trees crackled as it slowly burned; the inferno roared and howled as it consumed the air, and the vegetation around.*

*"This can't be happening!"*

*Mathias looked into the burning forest, and saw a black clad figure standing in the midst of the fire. The black clad figure was wearing a heavy cloth Sith robe that covered most of his body. The black clad figure's face was obscured by the hood he wore. Mathias slowly started walking towards the black clad figure.*

*"You're dead!" He shouted, "I killed you!"*

*The black clad figure remained motionless. Suddenly, in a growly, deep voice, the black clad figure replied, "You cannot kill me."*

*The black clad figure removed the hood from off his head, revealing his face. Suddenly, the brush behind the black clad figure burst into flames, and engulfed the black clad figure. Mathias shielded his eyes from the intense heat and bright light. He looked at the black clad figure, on fire, but remaining motionless. He sensed the dark-side within this individual. He gazed upon his face, and was shocked by what he saw. His eyes widened, and his jaw dropped.*

*The black clad figure replied, "I am you."*

Mathias screamed, immediately waking from his nightmare. He was clutching the bed sheet with a vice-like grip, turning his knuckles white. His breathing was heavy, and laboured; his heart was racing, and felt as if it were pumping out of his chest. His chest felt tight, as if there was a weight on it. He was drenched in sweat, soaking the bed sheets. Suddenly, he felt a chill run down his spine.

*This should have stopped, Mathias thought.*

Mathias rolled out of bed, and put on his Jedi robe. Goosebumps ran up and down his arm, probably more from fear rather than the temperature. He ran his hand through his soaked, blond hair and sagged a little as he sat on the side of his bed. He put his face into the palms of his hands, and closed his eyes. He sat like that for a moment, just thinking to himself.

*I'm going crazy, Mathias thought.*



Suddenly, there was a knock on his door. The room he was assigned was small, with only a bed, and a small dresser. The walls were made from hardened-durasteel, but lined with dark wood, and there was a single dim light source from above. The floor was made from basaltic rock panels, made from the same basalt that made the mesa where the Fountain Palace rests, and was cold on his bare feet. The room, although very small, looked quite nice.

Mathias hesitated for a moment, then answered, "What is it?"

"The Queen Mother requests your presence on the bridge, Jedi Malakon." The Hapan officer informed.

Mathias paused for a moment, "I'll be right there."

He heard footsteps leading away from his room. Jedi Malakon finished putting on the rest of his clothes, and walked out of his small room. He entered the corridor of the Hapan Battle Dragon, which was lined with an elegant red carpet, beautiful architecture, and even climbing vines on the walls. He walked down the corridor, and passed by several beautiful Hapan women, all of whom were officers. They sometimes nodded politely, but some completely ignored him. Males were considered lower-class citizens, and there was still a strong anti-Jedi sentiment within the Hapes Consortium.

It's been five days since he returned from the Ryloth system; since then, he has spent most of his time in-and-out of bacta tanks, recovering from all the injuries he sustained from the starfighter crash, as well as subsequent encounters. Other than that, he has been organizing an offensive against Empress Amelia by coordinating the military might of the Galactic Alliance, the Empire-in-exile, the Hapes Consortium, and the newly joined Thrak Zann. It has been hell trying to get all the different faction to work together for a single major operation, but as far as he was concerned, it has been going better than he thought possible.

Jedi Malakon arrived on the bridge of the *Dragon Queen*, a custom-built Hapan Battle Dragon made specifically for Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo, and named after a similar flagship used by her great-great-ancestor, Tenel Ka Djo, almost a hundred years ago. On the bridge were dozens of Hapan officers, most were female, and standing at the forward viewport was the Queen Mother herself. She stared out onto Hapes, the beautiful green and blue orb in the vast blackness of space. Orbiting around Hapes were the remnants of the Galactic Alliance fleets, some Imperial Star Destroyers aligned with the Empire-in-exile, along with three hundred Hapan Battle Dragons, and another

hundred *Nova*-class battle cruisers. The Hapan Battle Dragons were unusual starships; they were essentially a dual saucer-shaped vessel that housed a powerful array of turbolasers and laser cannons. The *Nova*-class battle cruisers were elongate vessels, with two wings protruding downward from the stern. Among the Hapan Battle Dragons were the Honorific Fleet, consisting of sixty-three Hapan Battle Dragons, one for each Hapan world within the Hapes Consortium.

The Queen Mother was wearing a very elegant, and beautiful green robe that shimmered in the light. Her curly light reddish blonde hair flowed down past her shoulders, and she held herself with perfect posture. Jedi Malakon could sense that she was in inner turmoil, preparing for a battle she was trying to avoid throughout the Insurgency.

"Jedi Malakon, welcome." The Queen Mother replied without turning to face him.

Jedi Malakon bowed his head in respect, "Your Majesty, you requested me?"

She turned to face him; although she was in great doubt, and internally conflicted, her face never revealed such emotions, "Yes. I just wanted to double-check the battle plans."

Jedi Malakon slowly nodded. Such impulses to over-analyse were common at the dawn of battle; it was only natural, "Of course, your Majesty."

Jedi Malakon walked over to the holographic projector, where a blue cone of light emanated from its base. Above the blue cone of light was a holographic representation of Kuat, including the drive yards, and projected Imperial presence using day old surveillance; the holographic display slowly rotated in the air above the dim cone of blue light.

Jedi Malakon pointed at the drive yards, "Here is where we think the *Dread Lord* is being currently build. Current estimates puts the construction of the *Dread Lord* at over eighty-percent. The yard is protected by Empress Amelia's current flagship, the *Imperatrix*, who is commanded by Admiral Narklin Danakar, along with eight other *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers—"

The Queen Mother was taken aback and cut in, "The same Admiral Narklin Danakar whose notoriety is second only to..."

Jedi Malakon nodded his head in confirmation, "Yes. The Executioner." The Executioner was a Galactic Alliance nickname given to Admiral Narklin Danakar whose infamous acts are speculated to include the murder of the remaining members of the Triumvirate; since the rumours, his brutality had made him infamous throughout the galaxy.

Although the Queen Mother was still shocked, she replied in a soft voice, "I'm sorry, Mathias. Continue."

Jedi Malakon looked back at the holographic display and continued, "Yes, your Majesty." Jedi Malakon took a deep breath in, and spoke, "Orbiting Kuat is also another fleet consisting of five Star Destroyers, and five *Ardent*-class fast frigates." Jedi Malakon explained, "In approximately three standard hours, we jump in from behind, and target the rear Star Destroyers to gain a clear shot at the *Dread Lord*. Resistance will be high. Hopefully, we can load up some assault transports, and board the *Dread Lord*, and gain control of her bridge. If unsuccessful, we destroy it."

Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo shook her head, "It just seems too simple."

"Yes. We anticipate that with Kuat under attack, the Empire will request assistance from nearby fleets." Jedi Malakon explained, "Intelligence points to the Imperial First Fleet as the most likely candidate to provide aid to the Imperials."

"What is the composition of the First Fleet?" The Queen Mother asked.

"Pretty heavy. Thirty Star Destroyers, plus another twenty fast frigates." Jedi Malakon explained.

The Queen Mother shook her head again, "How fast a response time?"

"It is estimated that they could jump to Kuat in less than two parsecs from their current position." Jedi Malakon informed.

The Queen Mother leaned against the holographic projector, "What is the likelihood of our success?"

Jedi Malakon shook his head, "I don't like to give percentages, your Majesty." The Queen Mother stared towards the floor; Jedi Malakon could her the doubt flood her emotions, "I know how this must feel for you, Alys. With the Galactic Alliance Remnant and Fel's Empire on the brink of destruction, the Hapans are the only ones with a fully

operational, and intact navy. Your people are going to be on the frontlines, taking the brunt of the attack." The Queen Mother looked up and stared into Jedi Malakon's eyes, "But we cannot back down from this fight. It's too important. This may be our last chance to bring Empress Amelia down before her hold on the galaxy becomes too tight for us to release."

"I know, Jedi Malakon. Hard decisions have to be made." The Queen Mother replied, "But I still fear for my people."

"As any good leader would, your Majesty." Jedi Malakon replied.

"Thank you, Jedi Malakon." Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo answered.

Jedi Malakon nodded his head, and said, "If you would excuse me, your Majesty, but I should go below and prepare the troops."

"Of course." The Queen Mother answered.

Jedi Malakon bowed his head, and turned to walk out of the bridge. He marched down the corridor, and entered a turbolift that brought him down to the lower levels where the *Dragon Queen's* hangar was located. As he walked through the corridors, several Hapan officers passed him by, busy running errands or performing their respective tasks. He stepped off the turbolift, and headed for the hangar bay. The hangar was buzzing with activity; the unusual, but deadly Hapan *Miy'til* starfighters were being prepped, and armed for the coming battle. The *Miy'til* starfighters filled the hangar bay; there were thirty-six of the deadly starfighter in the hangar. Jedi Malakon walked by and inspected each of the starfighters for damage. They were all like new, without a scratch on them.

*That's soon going to change,* Jedi Malakon thought.

The *Miy'til* starfighters was an impressive machine; an upgrade from the hundred year old design, it was more elegant and smoother, relative to the older design. Its wings were swept forward, and curved inward, coming to a point in front of the cockpit. The cockpit was located in the rear of the starfighter, which was unusual for most starfighter designs. The *Miy'til* starfighters was also heavily armed, with four medium blaster cannons, two on both wings, an ion cannon, and an interchangeable tube that could hold a number of different munitions, including proton torpedoes, concussion missiles, proton bombs and thermal detonators. The engine system was also radically different to previous designs; it had one large and powerful ion engine in the

center, with two auxiliary engines on either side. This allowed for greater agility and manoeuvrability, with greater thrust power from the single giant engine.

Jedi Malakon walked down the rows of starfighters, occasionally stopping to chat with the Hapan pilots whom would be flying them. In most cases, the Hapan pilots, mostly female and very attractive, were eager for the coming battle. Most felt the Sith and the Empire needed to be stopped, but the Hapan neutrality prevented them from acting against them. This comforted Jedi Malakon quite a great deal. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon came across a vessel he did not expect to see. It was a Corellian-made YT-2400 light freighter, with a giant red diamond painted on its hull.

Jedi Malakon quickly turned around, and shouted, "Where is the pilot for this spacecraft?" No one knew, or bothered to answer, "Where is the pilot for this spacecraft?" He repeated.

After a few moments, someone approached him from behind, "Right here."

Jedi Malakon quickly turned around, and saw a very familiar face, "Renz? Is that you?"

Renz, the gemstone smuggler, turned resistance fighter, who began smuggling medical supplies and other gear for the anti-Sith coalition once the Insurgency broke out all over the galaxy. He became famous throughout the galaxy amongst the Resistance, delivering much needed supplies to strained troops on far-off worlds, rescuing and evacuating citizens under threat of Imperial persecution. He was herald, by some, to be the modern-day equivalent of Han Solo.

Renz stared at him for a moment; he finally recognized who was standing right in front of him, "Malakon?"

Jedi Malakon smiled and nodded, "You haven't changed a bit." Jedi Malakon said with awe, "How long has it been?"

"Too long." Renz replied.

"Agreed. What are you doing here?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"I was transporting some supplies into Hapes, but once I got here, the system turned into a rally point." Renz explained, "I was forbidden to leave. I guess they don't want anyone knowing where they are, or something."

"What are the odds?" Jedi Malakon replied.

"Long-shot." Renz replied; he paused, and looked at the *Miy'til* starfighters, "Looks like quite an operation you've got going here, huh? You have something to do with it?"

Jedi Malakon laughed, "Of course." Jedi Malakon shook his head, "We're going after her."

"Empress Amelia?" Renz asked.

"Yeah." Jedi Malakon answered.

Renz shook his head, and let out a long breath, "You're either very brave, or very dumb to go after her."

"I'd like to think brave." Jedi Malakon replied with a smile.

"It's probably a little of both." Renz answered, then chuckled.

Jedi Malakon smiled at the response, "You mind lending a hand?"

"How so?" Renz asked.

"When we jump, I need you to fly us onto the *Dread Lord*." Jedi Malakon informed.

Renz laughed, "The *Dread Lord*? That's very Palpatine-like, isn't it?"

Jedi Malakon took a step forward, "This is going to be the defining battle of the Insurgency. We need a victory here, or it's all over." Jedi Malakon stared into Renz's eyes, "When the times comes, I'm going to be onboard that freighter, and you're going to fly us into the *Dread Lord*."

Jedi Malakon turned to walk away. Renz shook his head in disbelief, "I'm a damned freighter pilot!"

Jedi Malakon quickly turned around, and with a stern voice and a strong expression, he shouted, "And now you're an assault pilot!"

"Oh c'mon!" Renz shouted.

"When we jump, you're getting me on that ship!" Jedi Malakon ordered, "So you better fly you're damned best, because if you don't, we both will be dead!"

Jedi Malakon stormed away before Renz could protest further. Renz was taken completely by surprise, "Unbelievable."

Jedi Malakon made his way back onto the bridge of the *Dragon Queen*. The bridge was teeming with activity; all the Hapan officers were busy preparing the last stages before the jump to Kuat. Jedi Malakon looked around the bridge, finally laying eyes on the Queen Mother. The Queen Mother was busy checking the jump coordinates, and the vectors that will be required to make the complex jump to Kuat. The Queen Mother poured anxiety, turmoil and worry in the Force; it was completely understandable, considering she was a politician, not a warrior. Jedi Malakon immediately hurried over to her side.

"What's the story?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"Everything looks good so far." The Queen Mother answered, "Jump coordinates look sound, the vectors look like they'll be safe, and the timing should give us the surprise advantage."

"Good." Jedi Malakon replied.

Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo narrowed her brows, and looked over at Jedi Malakon, "You alright?"

Jedi Malakon nodded, "Yeah."

"You don't seem alright." The Queen Mother stated.

Jedi Malakon looked directly into her bright green eyes, "I'm fine."

Suddenly, a Hapan officer, another beautiful brunette, stood up and declared, "Your Majesty, the window to jump is approaching quickly!"

"Thank you." The Queen Mother replied; she turned back to Jedi Malakon, and said, "Last chance."

Jedi Malakon shook his head, then said, "Jump."

Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo nodded in agreement, then stood up and ordered, "Make the jump into hyperspace! Make sure the hypercomm is open!"

Immediately, the Hapan officers began working. They quickly relayed all the jump coordinates and vectors to all the fleet ships orbiting Hapes. Jedi Malakon took the opportunity to walk towards the forward viewport, and peer through the transparisteel window. Outside was an awe inspiring sight; over three hundred Hapan Battle Dragons, along with another hundred *Nova*-class battle cruisers hovering in low-altitude orbit, coupled with another fifty Galactic Alliance warships, consisting of a variety of vessels, stitched together from a variety of fleets, plus another thirty *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers from the Empire-in-exile. He couldn't see the Tetan *Valkyrie*-class Battlestars, but he knew they were out there somewhere. Suddenly, the Queen Mother stood by his side, and they both gazed out the viewport.

"Jump commencing!" One of the Hapan officers shouted.

The Queen Mother closed her eyes in anticipation, and let out a deep breath, "May the Force be with us."

Jedi Malakon placed his hand on her shoulder, and she opened her eyes and looked at him. She smiled, and they turned to see the starships move into position, all directed towards the same point in space. Jedi Malakon and Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo looked at each other one last time, then stared back out the viewport.

Suddenly, a mechanical female voice rang out over the communication system, "*Commencing jump in five, four, three, two, one... jump.*"

Suddenly, the stars started to stretch outwards into long white lines, then they merged together and turned into a bright bluish-white sheet of light. The sudden jolt of going into hyperspace almost knocked Jedi Malakon off his feet, but he was used the feeling, and managed not to fall. Likewise with the Queen Mother, who was now walking back towards the Hapan officers.

"How long will it take to get there?" The Queen Mother asked.

"Approximately fifty hours, your Majesty." A Hapan officer answered.

Jedi Malakon looked back at the Queen Mother, "Might as well get comfortable."

"Coming out of hyperspace, your Majesty!" One of the Hapan officers reported.

"About time." Jedi Malakon sighed.

As the *Dragon Queen* reverted back to realspace, the bluish-white sheet of light that filled the viewport started to coalesce into long streaks of white light, finally returning to points. The entire composite fleet arrived above Kuat. There was a line of Hapan Battle Dragons in front of them, some above, some below, protecting the Queen Mother from danger. The Hapan Battle Dragons were orientated in three-dimensional space such that each Battle Dragon had a clear line-of-fire. In the distance, the deep blue oceans and lush green vegetation of Kuat could be seen. Hovering over the equator of the world were the orbital yards, where the vessels for the Empire were being created. Orbiting Kuat, near the orbital rings, was one of the massive detached construction yards, supposedly holding the *Dread Lord*. Surrounding the detached construction yard were Imperial Star Destroyers, and other vessels; also, coming around the horizon were more Imperial ships.

"Status?" The Queen Mother asked.

"All ships accounted for!" A Hapan officer reported.

*Good*, Jedi Malakon thought.

"Contact!" Another Hapan officer shouted.

"What is it?" The Queen Mother asked.

"Imperial Star Destroyers, *Pellaeon*-class... estimated thirteen in number." The Hapan officer reported, "The *Imperatrix* is present, along with five more *Ardent*-class fast frigates."

Jedi Malakon leaned towards the Queen Mother, and whispered, "Just as we expected."

"No *Dread Lord*!" The Hapan officer reported.

Both Jedi Malakon and Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo looked at the Hapan officer with astonished expressions on their faces; finally Jedi Malakon asked, "What?"

"Negative contact on the *Dread Lord*." The Hapan officer repeated, "It's not here."

"It has to be!" Jedi Malakon shouted.

The Queen Mother quickly grabbed Jedi Malakon by the arm, and pulled him towards her, "It's not here!" She whispered forcefully.

Jedi Malakon pulled his arm away from her grasp, and ran over to the forward viewport. All the vessels in the fleet were prepped, and ready for war. Coming over the horizon were five *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers, escorted by five *Ardent*-class fast frigates. The *Imperatrix*, and the eight other *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer were heading away from them; their massive ion engines blazed towards them. He stared at the construction yard, trying to find the *Dread Lord* by eye.

"Jedi! Do we stay or go?" The Queen Mother asked in a stern and forceful voice.

Jedi Malakon didn't reply; he simply stared out the window, *this can't be happening*.

The Queen Mother stormed towards him, and forced him to look at her, "The *Dread Lord* isn't out there! There is no point to staying! We should leave!" Jedi Malakon was completely speechless, "The Imperial fleet is getting closer! Stay, or go?"

Jedi Malakon snapped back to reality; after a moment, he finally said, "Stay."

Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo shook her head, "This is a mistake. There are plenty of Star Destroyers out there that can do a lot of damage to us."

"We have to stay and fight!" Jedi Malakon screamed, "If the *Dread Lord* isn't here, it will be here!"

The Queen Mother stood silent for a moment, then erupted, "Lock targeting solutions on the nearest Star Destroyer, and engage!"

The Hapan officers repeated and relayed the order; the bridge erupted into activity. From the bridge, they could all hear the gears rotating the heavy turbolaser batteries into firing solutions. Jedi Malakon peered out the window, and saw the other Hapan Battle Dragons train their heavy turbolaser batteries on the same *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer.

"All batteries fire at will!" The Queen Mother ordered.

"Fire everything!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

Suddenly, a torrent of heavy turbolaser fire erupted from the gun emplacements. The Hapan Battle Dragon was a unique warship; in order to increase the rate of fire from the heavy turbolaser batteries, the dorsal and ventral saucer-disk rotated, bring fresh heavy turbolaser batteries to bare, while spent ones recharged. Not only were the Battle Dragons armed with heavy turbolasers, but also ion cannons, and proton torpedo

tubes. All were fired at the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers. A salvo of green energy bolts, blue plasma, and glowing red proton torpedoes streaked across the blackness of space until they struck the hull of the Star Destroyer. Over a hundred Battle Dragons were firing salvo after salvo of heavy turbolaser fire on a single *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer. Explosions of fire tore across the armoured hull of the Star Destroyer, rocking it and tearing it to pieces. The Star Destroyer futilely attempted to evade the torrent of energy bolts, but found itself completely crippled. Within minutes, the Star Destroyer exploded once the heavy turbolaser bolts struck the hyperdrive motivator, causing a cascading failure, leading to an uncontrolled release of energy.

The Hapan officers cheered on the bridge; Jedi Malakon looked back at Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo, and smiled, "One down."

Suddenly, flashes of light started exploding outside the forward viewport. The four other *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer, plus five more *Ardent*-class fast frigates were heading towards them at full speed; they finally got into firing range, and were now attacking. The Hapan Battle Dragons, miniscule when compared to the Star Destroyers, couldn't take as much damage. Nevertheless, the Hapan Battle Dragons were designed for warfare, so they could take a punch. The Hapan Battle Dragons once again focused their salvos on a single Star Destroyer. Another barrage of green heavy turbolaser bolts streaked across space, and struck the Star Destroyer on the dorsal bow. Explosions of flame, sending out twisted debris, erupted all across the Star Destroyer. Only the closest Star Destroyers were firing back. The first few Battle Dragons were taking damage, but survived the first salvo. Explosions filled the viewport, blinding Jedi Malakon momentarily.

"We have to hurry!" Jedi Malakon shouted, "Those Star Destroyers are coming in quick!"

The Hapan Battle Dragons were able to fire salvo after salvo of heavy turbolaser fire much faster than the Star Destroyers because they rotated on the saucer-disk; as a consequence, they were a formidable fighting vessel. The *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer had gigantic pits and craters covering the entire dorsal section of the hull; they were still glowing orange from the intense heat of the direct-energy weapon, with scorch marks surrounding the craters. The pitted hull released plumes of black smoke in the vacuum of space. Another salvo, from over fifty Battle Dragons, struck the damaged Star Destroyer. Another explosion of heat and fire rocked the Star Destroyer. The entire dorsal section of the Star Destroyer seemed to be engulfed by the explosion; surprisingly, the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer survived the second salvo, and continued

firing back. More and more Imperial Star Destroyers were getting into range of the Hapan Battle Dragons; the counter-attack was getting stronger. Suddenly, a combined salvo from three of the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers struck a Hapan Battle Dragon; the energy struck the vessel, causing the dorsal saucer-disk to explode into pieces.

"Keep up the pressure!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

The stricken Battle Dragon was critically damaged, and was out of the fight. Another Battle Dragon from behind moved forward and took its place on the frontline. The Hapans continued the pressure, and fired another combined salvo at the critically damaged *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer. The salvo tore the Star Destroyer in half, literally. Two huge chunks, the bow and stern, of the Star Destroyer broke off from each other, and started careening into the upper atmosphere of Kuat.

"Incoming fast frigates!" A Hapan officer reported.

The *Ardent*-class fast frigates, five of them, tore off from the Imperial Star Destroyers, and sped towards the Hapans. The *Ardent*-class fast frigates were incredibly fast, and because they were only one-fourth the size of a Star Destroyer, they were incredibly hard to hit. The Hapan Battle Dragons fired at the incoming fast frigates, with mixed success. Although fast, the *Ardent*-class fast frigates were less armoured than their larger cousins.

"Take them down!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

Proton torpedoes were fired in response to the fast frigates incoming. The glowing red proton torpedoes streaked through space, finally striking the fast moving frigates. The proton torpedoes packed a powerful punch, and rocked the *Ardent*-class fast frigates. Another salvo from the rapid-fire heavy turbolasers, and another barrage of proton torpedoes, finally took out one of the *Ardent*-class fast frigates. The explosion tore the fast frigate in half; a fireball exploded from within its hull, and twisted debris scattered everywhere. One of the halves struck another fast frigate from behind, ripping the hull apart so severely, it took that fast frigate out of commission.

"Three still inbound!" A Hapan officer reported.

Jedi Malakon looked past the three incoming *Ardent*-class fast frigates, and saw the other *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers started to coalesce into a single unified front. The *Imperatrix*, a custom-built *Imperious*-class Advanced Star Destroyer, was heading the charge. The eleven remaining *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers, led by the *Imperatrix*, sped directly for them. The *Ardent*-class fast frigates started to slow down, about mid-

way between the Hapans and the Imperials. The Hapan Battle Dragons, over fifty on the frontline, continued hammering the smaller warships with salvo after salvo of heavy turbolaser fire. The *Ardent*-class fast frigates, although smaller, could pack a big punch, and take some damage.

"You better take down those fast frigates soon, because we've got the big boys coming in!" Jedi Malakon shouted.

Suddenly, the entire Hapan frontline erupted in a shower of red energy bolts from the unified Imperial front. The red heavy turbolaser fire was devastating, taking out five Battle Dragons simultaneously. Jedi Malakon felt the deaths of every one of the Hapans onboard those Battle Dragon like a vibrosword through his heart; Jedi Malakon knew that the Queen Mother must have also felt it too, through the Force. He looked back at the Queen Mother, who was filled with turmoil and anger.

"Take down those Star Destroyers! Now!" The Queen Mother screamed.

The Hapans, temporarily fazed by the sudden demise of so many Battle Dragons at once, trained their gun emplacements on the Star Destroyers, and continued to fire salvos of heavy turbolasers. The green energy bolts struck the *Imperatrix*, causing explosions all over the hull. The rapid fire technique the Hapan Battle Dragons were being put to the test; although more numerous, the Battle Dragons were weaker relative to the much larger Imperial Star Destroyer. The Hapan Battle Dragons started to spread out, leaving more space in between each ship so they would present less of a target for the Star Destroyers to hit; it also allowed for more Battle Dragons to have a clear line-of-fire. Before the Hapan Battle Dragons could full space out, however, the Imperials fired another devastating salvo of heavy turbolaser fire. Massive explosions rocked the Hapan frontlines. Two more Battle Dragons were caught in the massive barrage of heavy turbolaser fire, destroying them outright.

"Where is the cover?" Jedi Malakon shouted.

"Inbound!" The Hapan officer reported.

"Get our Star Destroyers out in front to protect those Battle Dragons!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

Before the Hapan officer could even relay the message fully, the Empire-in-exile *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers were already moving forward, in front of the Hapan Battle Dragons.

*They must be itching for a fight*, Jedi Malakon thought.

"All guns fire upon the *Imperatrix*!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

The Queen Mother rushed to Jedi Malakon's side, "Do you think she's on that ship?"

"No." Jedi Malakon answered.

She nodded, and returned to her previous spot. The Hapan Battle Dragons, along with the Empire-in-exile Star Destroyers, simultaneously fired their heavy turbolaser batteries. A massive salvo streaked across the vast distance of space in between the two fleets, finally striking the *Imperatrix*. Its hull exploded in a massive fireball that engulfed much of the ship. Twisted durasteel, and other debris flew off the ship, and into space. The *Imperatrix*, along with the other eleven *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers, fired another salvo into their frontlines. Fortunately, the salvo was blocked by the Empire-in-exile Star Destroyers, taking the brunt of the attack. Huge pits and craters covered some of the exiled-Imperial Star Destroyers; the *Imperatrix* hull was almost completely scorched and burned, glowing orange from the residual heat, and covered in craters and pits, but was still holding strong.

"Keep firing!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

The *Imperatrix* started to fall back, and the eleven *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers started moving forward, protecting the flagship. The Hapan Battle Dragons fired another salvo of heavy turbolaser fire, along with the exiled-Imperial Star Destroyers. The gigantic salvo struck a *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer dead-on, striking most of the dorsal bow, and destroying the bridge. The lucky strike critically crippled the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer. The *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer started plummeting towards the upper atmosphere of Kuat. The Hapans cheered in celebration.

Jedi Malakon thought, *we could use a little luck here*.

The two fleets exchanged salvo after salvo again; the entire space between the two fleets was filled with energy bolts from heavy turbolaser batteries, and plasma bolts from ion cannons. The exiled-Imperial Star Destroyers were vicious; their salvos were targeted perfectly, launching huge amounts of heavy turbolaser bolts into the Sith-Imperial fleet. The Hapans gave them support, adding their rapid-fire heavy turbolaser bolts and plasma bolts to the salvo. Two more Sith-Imperial *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers were destroyed, along with one more *Ardent*-class fast frigate.

The Sith-Imperial fleet launched their own retaliation. Their salvos were extraordinarily powerful. A shower of heavy turbolaser fire rained down upon the Resistance, creating a blanket of explosions that engulfed the frontline. The Resistance took many casualties; the Hapans lost seven more Battle Dragons, and the exiled-Imperials lost one of their *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers instantly. One of the Hapan Battle Dragons exploded extremely close to the *Dragon Queen*. The flash from the explosion was blinding, and completely filled the viewports; twisted debris rained down on the *Dragon Queen*, ricocheting off the deflector shield. The explosion rocked the bridge of the *Dragon Queen*, causing electronic equipment to rain out sparks. Several Hapan officers were knocked off their feet; Jedi Malakon was almost knocked off his feet, as was the Queen Mother, but they both used the Force to stick themselves onto the floor.

"That was too close!" The Queen Mother screamed.

"We need to hit them back hard!" Jedi Malakon shouted.

Suddenly, one of the Hapan officers stood up and shouted, "Something is coming out of hyperspace!"

"What is it?" Jedi Malakon shouted.

After a moment, the Hapan officer answered, "It's the First Fleet!"

Jedi Malakon ran over to the forward viewport, and saw the gigantic fleet arriving out of hyperspace, *damn, they're early!*

"Composition?" Jedi Malakon requested.

"Thirty Star Destroyers, twenty fast frigates!" The Hapan officer reported.

"Damn." Jedi Malakon whispered.

Jedi Malakon continued to stare out the viewport. The Queen Mother ran over the Jedi Malakon, and grabbed him, "What do we do?"

"We stay and fight." Jedi Malakon replied.

"If we stay, we could lose the entire fleet!" Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo forcefully whispered.

"If we leave, we won't get another chance to hurt the Empire." Jedi Malakon stated.

The Queen Mother shook her head, "The *Dread Lord* isn't even here! There is no point in staying!"

"If we cut-tail and run now, we'll always be on the run!" Jedi Malakon replied, "We have to stay and fight!"

"Even if we win this battle, the losses on our side will be too great to take on the *Dread Lord*!" The Queen Mother screamed, "We're leaving!"

"What?" Jedi Malakon shouted.

She turned to face the Hapan officers, "Order all ships to retreat!" The Queen Mother ordered.

Jedi Malakon ran over to her, and grabbed her by the arm, forcefully, "You can't do that! I have tactical command!"

"And those are my people dying out there!" Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo shouted.

After a few moments, a Hapan officer informed, "Your Majesty, the exiled-Imperials refuse to retreat!"

Another Hapan officer added, "Your Majesty, half the commanders on our Battle Dragons also want to stay and fight!"

Tears filled the Queen Mother's eyes. She looked over at Jedi Malakon, who stared right back at her. He didn't say a word, but she knew what he wanted, "Cancel that order." She said.

"Pardon?" One of the Tetan officers asked.

"Cancel the order to retreat!" Jedi Malakon shouted, "Move all ships to face the First Fleet! Train all batteries to fire at the nearest Star Destroyer!"

Immediately the order was relayed throughout the fleet. The saucer-disks started rotating, and firing salvo after salvo of heavy turbolaser fire. The exiled-Imperials did the same, along with the remnants of the Galactic Alliance fleet. Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo stood still, unsure of herself now.

Jedi Malakon placed his hand on her shoulder; she looked up at him, and Jedi Malakon said, "This must be done." She nodded in agreement, and whipped a tear from her eye, "We go all the way."

"Their launching fighters!" A Hapan officer reported.

Jedi Malakon immediately turned to look at the Hapan officers, "Launch ours!" Jedi Malakon ordered, "Have them play defence for our frontline!"

Almost immediately, the Hapan launched their *Miy'til* starfighters into the void of space. They circled the Hapan Battle Dragons, meeting heavy resistance from the Sith-Imperial *Predator*-class starfighters. The dogfights immediately ensued; smaller laser cannon bolts filled the void in between Battle Dragons. Several small explosions erupted from these dogfights, shredding the wings and cockpits of the starfighters, lighting up the blackness of space.

"Move the Alliance fleet up, and tell them to launch their fighters!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

The GA fleet, mostly consisting of *Scythe*-class battle cruisers, *ShaShore*-class and *Tri-Scythe*-class frigates, and *Sabertooth*-class Rescue & Assault Vessels, stormed forward. They banked in unison, and met the newly arrived Sith-Imperial First Fleet face-to-face. Immediately, the remnant GA fleet launched their fighters, most of them were CF9 Crossfire starfighters, with a few X-83 TwinTail starfighters. Jedi Malakon was surprised to see X-83 TwinTail starfighters, and stretched out with the Force. He sensed the pilots, and indeed, they were Jedi pilots.

The remnant GA fleet fired a salvo of heavy turbolaser fire, coupled with ion cannon fire and proton torpedo launches. The salvo struck the First Fleet dead-on, causing explosions to rock the hulls of several *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers. Meanwhile, the exiled-Imperial fleet charged towards the *Imperatrix*, and her eight remaining *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers, and two remaining *Ardent*-class fast frigates. The exiled-Imperials launched another salvo; the salvo of energy bolts struck several hulls of Sith-Imperial Star Destroyers, causing explosions to tear through the hull. The Hapans were fighting on both fronts, firing salvo after salvo of heavy turbolaser and ion cannon fire.

The Sith-Imperial fleets retaliated as well; their powerful salvos of heavy turbolaser fire struck hard against the Resistance. One more Hapan Battle Dragon was crippled and destroyed in the ensuing onslaught, while a *Sabertooth*-class Rescue & Assault Vessel, and a *ShaShore*-class frigate were destroyed as well. The salvo rocked the bridge of the *Dragon Queen*, causing a shower of sparks to rain down from exposed wires and various electronic equipment.

"What's our status?" Jedi Malakon screamed.

"*Dragon Queen* stable!" A Hapan officer reported.

"What about the fleet?" Jedi Malakon shouted.

"We're getting pounded!" Another Hapan officer answered, "We're just not doing enough damage to the Imperial fleet!"

Jedi Malakon peered through the transparisteel viewport, and gazed out into the battle. Bright flashes of light, followed by explosions, erupted all over, mostly from the dogfights ensuing all around the Hapan Battle Dragons. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon saw one *Predator*-class starfighter headed straight for the *Dragon Queen*. The *Predator*-class starfighter fired a short burst of laser cannon fire, which flashed and ricocheted off the *Dragon Queen*'s deflector shield. Out of nowhere, a Hapan *Miy'til* starfighter swooped in, and shot down the incoming Imperial fighter. The laser cannon fire shredded the cockpit, and took off one of the hinged-wings, sending the starfighter careening towards the bridge.

"Get down!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

He fell towards the polished basalt floor, and covered his head. The *Predator*-class starfighter smashed directly into the forward viewport on the *Dragon Queen*'s bridge with a loud smack. Surprisingly, the starfighter failed to break through; instead, the shredded cockpit smashed into the transparisteel window, cracking it, then ricocheted off into the darkness of space. Jedi Malakon looked up at the forward viewport, partially cracked because of the impact, and laughed. He looked over at the Queen Mother, who looked up at him.

"Deflector shields did their job." Jedi Malakon said to her.

She nodded, "Guess so."

Suddenly, another salvo from the Sith-Imperial fleets rocked the Hapans. A huge explosion of light and fire engulfed the frontlines. The huge explosion lit up the viewports, completely blinding Jedi Malakon. Jedi Malakon immediately ran towards the cracked forward viewport, and looked out into the battle. Two more Hapan Battle Dragons were destroyed, along with another *ShaShore*-class frigate. The massive vessels were torn in half, careening in different directions because of the explosion that ripped in two. One half of the Hapan Battle Dragon smacked into the side of another, causing that Hapan Battle Dragon to become critically damaged. Debris littered the battlespace.

Jedi Malakon turned to look at the Hapan officers on the bridge, and shouted, "We need to concentrate our fire!" He ordered, "We need to take down those Star Destroyers!"

Jedi Malakon looked up through the cracked forward viewport, and saw a squadron of twelve *Neutralizer*-class bombers coming in at incredible speed. Jedi Malakon's eyes widened, then he quickly turned to face the Hapan officers.

"Bombers coming in, bearing three-five-zero, zenith forty degrees!" Jedi Malakon informed, "Get our fighters to take them down, now!"

The Hapan officers scrambled to redirect the Hapan *Miy'til* starfighters to intercept the Sith-Imperial bombers, but they were coming in too fast. Suddenly, the *Neutralizer*-class bombers swooped down, and started dropping its payload onto the dorsal saucer-disk on the Hapan Battle Dragons. The bombers streaked by the *Dragon Queen*, each dropping a proton cluster bomb on top of her. The proton bomb exploded on top of the saucer-disk, ripping the hull to shreds, then sent out smaller bomblets that also exploded, further damaging the hull. The entire bridge jarred and shook violently; more sparks rained down from exposed wires and electronic equipment. Several Hapan officers were knocked off their seats, while others clutched onto their monitors for dear life.

"What got hit?" Jedi Malakon screamed.

"Upper levels!" A Hapan officer reported, "Sealing off breached compartments now!"

*We can't take another hit like that,* Jedi Malakon thought.

"Get those fighters up there now!" Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo ordered.

Jedi Malakon looked through the cracked viewport, and saw the total destruction the *Neutralizer*-class bombers delivered; as the bombers made their pass, they dropped their proton bombs. Three more Hapan Battle Dragons were destroyed, and several more were heavily damaged in the resulting explosions. Suddenly, three *Miy'til* starfighters streaked by the *Dragon Queen*'s viewport, chasing the bombers. They flew passed his field of vision, and he hoped that they would take out the bombers.

Suddenly one of the Hapan officers screamed, "Incoming contact! Behind us!"

"What is it?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"Is it your friend?" The Queen Mother asked Jedi Malakon. He shrugged, and shook his head.

After a few moments, the Hapan officer answered, "Negative. It's the *Dread Lord*! She's accompanied by another vessel, identified as the *Praetorian*."

"This is our chance!" Jedi Malakon shouted, "Turn all vessels around! Let's meet the *Dread Lord* head-on!"

Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo went to Jedi Malakon's side, "We've already lost much today. Do you think we can pull this off?"

Jedi Malakon looked into her eyes, "We better."

The *Dragon Queen* along with two hundred other Hapan Battle Dragons, the hundred *Nova*-class battle cruisers, and fifteen Tetan Battlestars, including the *Empress Gem*, started to turn about. It was slow going because they were such large vessels. Meanwhile, the remnant GA fleet continued to pound the Sith-Imperial First Fleet, while the exiled-Imperials were determined to bring down the *Imperatrix*. They launched salvo after salvo, filled the void between them with heavy turbolaser fire.

Suddenly, one of the Hapan officers screamed, "Massive energy flux! It's firing!"

Suddenly, the *Dread Lord* fired its ten planetary turbolasers, located on its ventral hull, simultaneously. The massive energy beams struck several Hapan Battle Dragons or *Nova*-class battle cruisers, causing them to explode instantly. Much of the vessels struck were actually vaporized, but the subsequent discharge of energy caused surrounding vessels to be engulfed in the explosion as well. In total, thirty more Hapan Battle Dragons were completely destroyed, and twenty *Nova*-class battle cruisers along with them. The massive loss of life caused the Queen Mother to reel in agony; Jedi Malakon ran over to her, and held her in his arms, preventing her from collapsing.

Jedi Malakon stared at the Hapan officers, "Turn these ships around, and attack that dreadnought!"

"Sir, with that firepower—" A Hapan officer protested.

"Stay above the ventral hull!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

He was still holding the Queen Mother in his arms, who was now blabbering on about something he couldn't understand. He continued to hold her in his arms, trying to comfort her as best he could. Jedi Malakon watched through the forward viewport as

the *Dragon Queen* started to turn around. He looked back down at the Queen Mother, who was on the verge of tears.

He grabbed her by the shoulders, "Your Majesty!" She looked into his eyes, "Alys! Now is the time! Now is the time you have to be strong! For your people, and for the galaxy!" She reluctantly shook her head, and tears ran down her cheek, "Damn it. Alys! I know it's difficult! I know it's tough! But if you don't take command of your fleet, we are dead! We are all dead!"

Jedi Malakon could feel her reluctance in the Force; she was trying to hide deep within herself, but failed. Hesitantly, she nodded, and whispered, "Okay."

Jedi Malakon helped her onto her fleet; she composed herself, and whipped the tears from her eyes. The entire Hapan fleet finally managed to turn full about, and simultaneously started firing salvo after salvo of heavy turbolaser fire upon the gigantic dreadnought. The turbolasers struck the *Dread Lord* unimpeded. The energy bolts caused explosions to rock the hull of the gigantic dreadnought, although they looked like freckles from their distance.

*Shields must be out of commission*, Jedi Malakon thought.

"Sir! The *Dread Lord* is not fully functional yet!" A Hapan officer informed.

Jedi Malakon looked out the viewport again, and gazed upon the gigantic *Dread Lord*. She was nine kilometres long, just as Thrak Zann had said, and she was impressively armed. Her entire hull seemed to be littered with a variety of turbolaser and laser cannon emplacements. Then, Jedi Malakon saw the *Praetorian*; it was surprisingly lightly armed, with only about a hundred turbolaser emplacements. The *Praetorian* was a modified *Imperious*-class Advanced Star Destroyer, missing a lot of its weapons systems, but overcompensated by having incredible shielding.

Suddenly, Jedi Malakon came up with a thought, "Scan for power sources!"

The Hapan officers scanned the two vessels; finally one of them shouted, "Sir, the *Praetorian* is off the chart!"

*That's it!* Jedi Malakon thought, "Forget the *Dread Lord*! Concentrate all fire on the *Praetorian*!"

"Sir?" A Hapan officer asked.

"Do it!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

He heard the heavy turbolaser emplacements rotating above, and then another salvo went off. Over two hundred Hapan Battle Dragons, supported by one hundred *Nova*-class battle cruisers and fifteen Tetan *Valkyrie*-class Battlestars, fired their salvos at the *Praetorian*. The gigantic salvo from the many vessels streaked across the void between the two fleets; finally, the salvo struck the *Praetorian*. Surprisingly, most of the heavy turbolaser bolts failed to penetrate the *Praetorian*'s incredibly powerful deflector shields.

"What's going on?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"The *Praetorian* has tripled over-powered shields!" A Hapan officer reported.

"How screwed are we?" The Queen Mother asked Jedi Malakon in a soft voice.

He looked at her, then replied, "We aren't dead yet." He quickly turned back to the Hapan officers, and ordered, "Keep firing until you break through!"

The Hapan fleet continued to fire salvo after salvo of heavy turbolaser bolts upon the *Praetorian*; the Hapan Battle Dragons fired their heavy turbolaser guns at a phenomenal rate, pounding the *Praetorian*. Although it was being bombarded by an immense torrent of energy bolts, the *Praetorian* failed to take any damage, and never once fired a shot in retaliation. Most of the enemy fire was coming from the *Dread Lord*, which was now firing a modest salvo from its numerous heavy turbolaser emplacements.

*It's charging for another attack*, Jedi Malakon thought.

Jedi Malakon looked over at Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo, and replied, "I'm going to have to get on that ship."

"Are you crazy?" The Queen Mother asked.

"It's shields are down. I can get through!" Jedi Malakon answered.

"It's guns aren't!" Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo replied.

"I've got a good pilot. Order all ships to launch their shuttles!" Jedi Malakon answered; he began walking out of the bridge, then turned to look at the Queen Mother, "We stay till the end."

The Queen Mother had tears in her eyes; she nodded, "Till the end."



The Hapan officers gazed followed Jedi Malakon as he walked out of the bridge. He could feel their surprise, and their worry, as he was leaving. Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo stood quietly for a moment until all eyes were on her. There was a moment of silence.

She turned to face them, then forcefully ordered, "Move the fleet closer to the *Praetorian*! Order all guns to fire at will!"

Jedi Malakon ran down the corridors of the *Dragon Queen*; surprisingly, the corridors were empty. He immediately ran towards the turbolift, and pressed the button for the lower level. His heart was racing from anticipation; his entire life had been leading up to this moment. He couldn't fail, not now; not while he was so close. Suddenly, the turbolift shook violently from side-to-side. The jarring was sudden enough to knock Jedi Malakon off his feet, slamming into the side of the turbolift. His shoulders smacked against the durasteel wall, hard. A sudden surge of pain ran through his body. Jedi Malakon groaned in agony.

*The Dread Lord must have fired again, Jedi Malakon thought.*

Jedi Malakon picked himself up, and when the doors to the turbolift opened, quickly ran out. He ran towards the hangar, which was all but empty now. Off to the side was the *Red Diamond*, the Corellian-made customized YT-2400 light freighter owned and operated by Renz. Renz was standing at the bottom of the boarding ramp, along with fifty other Hapan troops. Jedi Malakon stretched out with his feelings, and sensed the emotions flowing out from the Hapan troopers; they were itching for a fight.

"Alright! Let's go!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

He was the first to rush up the ramp, followed by the Hapan troops, lastly by Renz. Renz was exceedingly worried about his upcoming venture; never in his life had he ever flown an assault mission, nor did he ever want to. Jedi Malakon was standing inside the cabin when Renz finally arrived.

"C'mon! Let's get this hunk of junk into the air!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

Renz sat down in the pilot's chair, "Hey! She's the fastest hunk of junk in the galaxy!"

"I've heard that before." Jedi Malakon whispered to himself; Jedi Malakon was about to leave the cabin, and go aft, when he turned around, and said, "You better fly you're damned best, or else—"

"Or else we're dead! Yeah, I got it!" Renz cut in.

Renz skipped the pre-flight checks, and immediately took off. The hangar door was wide open, and Renz quickly flew through the glowing blue atmospheric containment field. As soon as they entered the vacuum of space, they were in the midst of the gigantic naval battle. Turbolaser bolts streaked across the cockpit viewport at an alarming number.

Jedi Malakon leaned forward, "Get us in that hangar as fast as possible."

Renz was wide-eyed from shock, and possibly fear. His knuckles were white, and sweat was already starting to form on his forehead, "Don't worry. The faster I get into that hangar, the faster I'll be out of this crap."

Jedi Malakon nodded, and went aft; he put on a headset, in order to communicate with his troops, and sat down in the cargo hold with the other Hapan troops. He could feel their anxiety, and their lust for blood. The Hapans, having lost so many of their fellow comrades today, were just itching for some payback. Their state of mind pleased Jedi Malakon. He put his face into the palm of his hands, and let out a breath of air.

*This mission isn't for a Jedi,* Jedi Malakon thought.

The realization, or revelation, of that thought brought a certain comfort to him. He couldn't put his personal feeling about this aside; not this time. Suddenly, the light freighter banked sharply, nearly knocking Jedi Malakon out of his seat. The sounds of turbolaser blasts could be heard clear through the hull; it sounded like a torrent of turbolaser and laser cannon fire surrounded them. The light freighter jinked and juked from side-to-side, banking and dodging the incoming energy bolts. He was impressive with the agility of the relatively large, and bulky, light freighter. The turbolaser fire started to dissipate, but the laser cannons kept on roaring.

*We're getting closer,* Jedi Malakon thought.

Jedi Malakon stared out of the side viewports, and noticed several other assault shuttles heading towards the *Dread Lord's* ventral hangar. The laser cannon

emplacements on the ventral side of the *Dread Lord's* hull were blazing constantly. Most of the assault shuttles were *Crix*-class assault shuttles, while others were *Nune*-class Imperial shuttles. Suddenly, one of the *Crix*-class assault shuttles nearby erupted into flames after being struck by two laser cannon bolts consecutively. The flash of light was blinding, causing Jedi Malakon to turn away. Twisted metal and debris rained down onto the *Red Diamond*, vaporizing and ricocheting off the deflector shield. He could feel the fear welling up inside the Hapan troops now.

He turned to look at the Hapan troops, "We're going to make it!" Jedi Malakon told them.

The *Red Diamond* banked and dodged another incoming torrent of laser cannon fire. Jedi Malakon looked out the side viewport, and saw a flurry of red laser cannon bolts streak passed them. Jedi Malakon's heart started to beat faster, and stronger. He was growing nervous with every passing second, but always remained composed and focused on the upcoming task.

Suddenly, over the intercom system, Renz informed, "*One minute!*"

Jedi Malakon filled with anticipation, and excitement, "Alright, one minute! Get ready!"

The Hapan troops all assembled at the back of the light freighter, next to the boarding ramp. They were going more and more anxious with every passing second, as was Jedi Malakon. Although he was nervous from the daunting task ahead, he was more excited than worried.

"When that ramp opens, get out as fast as you can!" Jedi Malakon ordered, "We only have a few seconds to clear the freighter before it has to take off again!"

The minute passed even faster than Jedi Malakon had thought. Almost immediately after he gave the order, the light freighter swung around sharply, and the boarding ramp opened. They were still hovering about a metre off the permacrete pavement; the repulsorlifts on the light freighter kicked up dust and other small particulate material.

"Go! Go! Go!" Jedi Malakon shouted.

The Hapan troops jumped out of the light freighter, and landed on the hard permacrete pavement. Jedi Malakon was the last to exit the light freighter. He landed,

and rolled on the permacrete floor. The repulsorlifts on the light freighter kicked up a plume of dust that covered Jedi Malakon. He coughed, clearing his lungs.

"Alright! We're clear!" Jedi Malakon told Renz over his headset, "Get out of here!"

The *Red Diamond* roared out of the hangar, and proceeded through the vacuum of space, heading towards the remnant Galactic Alliance frontline. Jedi Malakon immediately turned his attention back into the hangar, and started running towards the end of the vast, and empty, hangar. The *Dread Lord* hadn't completed its construction yet, so wasn't fully operational. He could only hope that only a skeleton crew, along with Empress Amelia, would be onboard. Jedi Malakon ran to the blast door at the end of the hangar, followed by the Hapan troops. Behind them, more and more assault shuttles landed in the empty ventral hangar. The first ones to arrive were the *Nune*-class Imperial shuttles, followed by the Galactic Alliance *Crix*-class assault shuttles. So far, ten shuttles made it into the ventral hangar, with little to no damage; outside, there were still shuttles inbound, jinking and juking in order to avoid the torrent of laser cannon fire. Out from those shuttles came a horde of troops; the typical Galactic Alliance Commando, or GAC, and exiled-Imperial stormtroopers. The exiled-Imperial stormtroopers had a red-stripe painted across their white plastoid armour in order to distinguish them from the other stormtroopers. Meanwhile, as the various troops from the Resistance gathered behind the blast door, Jedi Malakon cut through the thick durasteel door with his blue-bladed lightsaber. Sparks rained down from the powerful energy blade, leaving behind a glowing orange line of molten metal. Finally, Jedi Malakon cut through the door, and used a powerful Force Wave to pry it open.

"Go!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

The various Resistance troops moved through the pried open blast door. The edges of the torn blast door still glowed orange from the lightsaber cut. Jedi Malakon ran through the blast door, and into the corridor. The troops secured the corridor, facing both ways making sure the corridor was clear of enemies. Jedi Malakon looked down both lengths of the long, narrow corridor; it was eerily empty, and dimly lit. Jedi Malakon pointed towards the stern of the *Dread Lord*.

"This way!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

Jedi Malakon led the charge; he was followed by over six hundred Resistance fighters, fully armed and eager for war. More and more shuttles were arriving in the ventral hangar, unloading more and more Resistance fighters. Jedi Malakon used the

Force to augment his movements, allowing him to run down the corridor much faster than normal. There was another blast door up ahead. Jedi Malakon ran towards the blast door at top speed, and slammed into it; the blast door shook, but failed to open. Instantly, Jedi Malakon plunged his lightsaber into the door, and started cutting the door in half. Sparks rained down from the energy blade, and a linear groove was carved into the door, glowing orange from the intense heat. Within seconds, Jedi Malakon cut through the blast door, and with another powerful Force Wave, pried the doors open. Suddenly, a torrent of blaster bolts came through the door.

"Down!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

Jedi Malakon swung to the side; several blaster bolts passed by him, nearly hitting him. Three troops were struck by blaster bolts; the bolts hit them in the chest, burning a hole through their bodies. The torrent of blaster bolts was relentless.

"Grenades!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

Jedi Malakon tucked away and shut his ears. Immediately, three troops, in the prone position, took out a variety of fragmentation and plasma grenades, and threw them through the pried open blast door. The grenades exploded with a violent roar. Dust billowed through the door, slowly settling to the ground. The torrent of blaster bolts ceased, and Jedi Malakon immediately stood back up, and ran towards the blast door.

"We're in!" Jedi Malakon shouted.

He ran through the blast door with his lightsaber activated. The corridor on the other side of the blast doors was filled with thick grey smoke; the walls were pitted with shrapnel, and had large black scorch marks resulting from the explosion of the grenades. The stormtroopers on the other side, wearing the new light grey, plastoid-ceramic composite armour, were either dead on the ground, or dazed and confused. Jedi Malakon charged at the ones still standing, and viciously attacked them. He hacked and slashed with his lightsaber wildly, severing limbs from torsos, and decapitating heads. The Resistance fighters piled through the blast door, and entered the smoky corridor. Any stormtrooper that Jedi Malakon hadn't yet killed were disposed of by the Resistance fighters. Suddenly, the stormtroopers that were further away from the explosions started running down the corridor, away from Jedi Malakon. In a rage, Jedi Malakon unleashed a powerful Force Wave attack. The immense energy from the compression wave took the stormtroopers off their feet, and slammed them into the

walls and ceiling. Their armour shattered, despite being stronger and tougher than older generations of stormtrooper armour. Some stormtroopers managed to survive the Force Wave attack, although they were dazed, confused, and had concussions of varying degrees. Others were instantly killed by the forceful impact; broken bones and cracked skulls were the usual reasons. Jedi Malakon immediately stabbed and slashed at the remaining stormtroopers. Within moments they were all dead. He looked back at the Resistance fighters; there were dozens and dozens of dead stormtroopers at their feet. He noticed that the beings inside the stormtrooper armour were unusual; their skin was pale, almost grey, and was flaky. It was a frightening sight.

*Too much exposure to the dark-side of the Force*, Jedi Malakon concluded; suddenly, he ordered, "This way."

The Resistance fighters didn't hesitate for a moment; they immediately ran down the smoky, dim corridor until they reached the turbolifts. Jedi Malakon entered the large turbolift, along with twenty other Resistance fighters, a mix of Hapan troops, GACs, and exiled-Imperial stormtroopers. Jedi Malakon pushed the button for the top floor, and waited as the turbolift quickly ascended. The doors to the turbolift open, and Jedi Malakon immediately ran out with his lightsaber in hand. Suddenly, a blaster bolt streaked through the corridor, fired at Jedi Malakon. Jedi Malakon deflected the blaster bolt, sending it into the durasteel wall. Behind him, the twenty Resistance fighters fired their blaster rifles down the hall. Out of two more turbolifts were forty more Resistance fighters, all firing their blaster rifles wildly. Jedi Malakon peered down the corridor, and saw another group of stormtroopers trying to make their way towards them. The stormtroopers fired their assault blaster rifles. The quick blaster bolts streaked down the corridor at a phenomenal speed; Jedi Malakon deflected and batted away as many blaster bolts as he could, but some managed to pass him. Several Resistance fighters were struck down by the torrent of blaster fire.

"Move forward!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

He ran towards the Imperial stormtroopers, using the Force to enhance and augment his movements. He dodged and deflected a torrent of incoming blaster bolts while charging towards the stormtroopers. They relentlessly firing at him, trying to bring the charging Jedi down. With all the energy he could muster, Jedi Malakon unleashed another Force Wave attack. The pressure wave from the Force attack ripped down the corridor, sweeping stormtroopers off their feet, and slamming them into walls. Their armour shattered and fell off upon impact, while others had their armour cracked. Some were killed immediately after the Force attack, while others remained

dazed and confused. Jedi Malakon charged forward and started lashing out with his lightsaber. The Resistance fighters, more and more pouring into the corridor with every passing minute, were right behind him, firing down the corridor as more stormtroopers charged towards them.

"Push forward!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

Jedi Malakon, seeing that even more stormtroopers were heading down the corridor, headed their way, suddenly stopped. There was a voice rang in his ear; the voice, that of a female's, echoed within his mind. Jedi Malakon looked around the corridor, trying to find its source, finding nothing. Finally, he realized that the voice was inside his head. It was Empress Amelia's voice! The sudden realization made his heart pound of his chest, and his breathing quicken; a shiver ran down his spine, and the hairs on the back of his neck stood on end. He stretched out with the Force, and found an immensely powerful being just one floor down, near the bow.

Jedi Malakon immediately turned to his troops, and ordered, "You guys continue down this corridor until you reach the bridge!"

"Where will you be?" One of the Hapan troops asked.

"I have to go find Empress Amelia." Jedi Malakon answered.

Jedi Malakon started running down the corridor, heading towards the turbolifts, when one of the troops asked, "What do we do when we get to the bridge!"

"Tear it down!" Jedi Malakon answered.

Jedi Malakon ran into the turbolifts, and pushed the button to go one floor down. The turbolift was fast, and almost immediately, the doors opened. Jedi Malakon stepped outside, and looked down one corridor, and then the other. One either side were blast doors. He headed for the bow of the *Dread Lord*, using the Force as his guide. Suddenly, the blast door in front of him opened. Jedi Malakon activated his blue-bladed lightsaber, anticipating an attack or ambush. Surprisingly, there was no being on the other side of the blast door. A hundred metres past the blast door was another; it too opened, revealing empty space. The corridor was lined with blast doors that opened one-by-one.

*Empress Amelia is leading me to her,* Jedi Malakon concluded.

He ran down the dimly lit, empty corridor, harnessing the Force for a boost of power. He ran with all his might, making his way across the vast distance the gigantic *Dread Lord* made for. The corridors were lined with doors, although they were all locked. He stretched out with the Force into each room; they were all empty. Finally, he reached the last blast door; it opened, revealing a chasm. Across the chasm was another blast door, which slid open once he reached the edge. It was quite a distance away, but definitely jumpable for a Jedi. The winds within the chasm were strong, funnelled and turbulent. Jedi Malakon was only worried that the shearing force from the winds would push him off-course. Jedi Malakon ran backwards to get a running head start.

*Here goes nothing*, Jedi Malakon thought.

He ran towards the edge at full speed, then leapt once he reached the ledge. He used the Force to allow him to jump unreal distances. Jedi Malakon soared over the chasm; he could feel the powerful winds trying to push him off-course. Jedi Malakon landed on the other side, hit the ground, and rolled; he rolled onto his feet, and quickly activated his blue-bladed lightsaber. The *snap-hiss* from the energy blade echoed within the chasm. Jedi Malakon immediately took a quick look around; he sensed no one around him. He took his first step hesitantly; he could feel the dark-side permeate the area around him. It penetrated through him, and absorbed into him. He took a few more steps forward; the room was very dark, and the material he was walking on didn't feel or sound like the same durasteel panel floors that made up the rest of the *Dread Lord*. Suddenly, the lights above turned on; Jedi Malakon immediately dropped into an defensive fighting stance, typified by Soresu.

"The Force is with you!" A female voice rang out in the large room. The voice echoed in the large room.

The room was unlike anything he had ever seen in a Star Destroyer before. It was made of tan-brown stone that looked much older than the *Dread Lord* itself. The room was consumed with unusual dark-side energies; the further he walked in, the stronger the intensity got. There were six great pillars, three on either side of him, running down the triangular room. The room got narrower as he walked further in, where it ended at a curved stone wall with three steps leading up to it. Suddenly, he realized that it was the stones that were the source of much of the dark-side energies; each brick in the wall, and every tile on the floor, had etchings and Sith-like patterns on them. Jedi Malakon knelt down, and touched one of the floor-tiles; he moment he touched the tile, he felt a surge of dark-side energy enter his body. He resisted as much as he could, finally standing up to distance himself from the energy.



*These stones... these patterns, they seem so familiar,* Jedi Malakon thought; suddenly he screamed, "Amelia! Show yourself!"

Suddenly, at the end of the room, the unusual curved wall started to rotate. Jedi Malakon walked towards it, unsure what would be at the other end. When the curved wall finally moved aside, it revealed a dimly lit spherical room, made from similar stones found in the triangular room. Jedi Malakon knew exactly what the spherical room was; it was a Sith meditation chamber. A Sith meditation chamber was a special Force-embodied room that was used to amplify ones Force abilities; the chamber itself seemed to be constructed out of the same stone material as the triangular room. Inside the large meditation chamber stood a cloaked figure with a lightsaber in hand. The cloaked figure walked forward, slowly, until finally coming into the light. Jedi Malakon held his breath, anticipating the coming moments. The figure removed her hood, and revealed her face to him.

"Amelia." Jedi Malakon growled.

Amelia, Dark Lady of the Sith Order and Empress of the Galactic Empire, was a powerful presence. She had a very youthful look about her. Her deep red hair, streaked with black, was long, lush, and flowed off her head down passed her shoulders. She stared at him with her piercing bright blue and green iris'; the rim of her eyes were made even more sinister with black eyeliner. Her lips were full, and deep red, outlined with black. She wore a black heavy cloth Sith robe, with a tight black crop-top, and a pair of short trousers underneath. Her athletic body was accentuated by black Sith-patterned tattoos; an unusual black geometric tattoo ran down her left arm. Her skin had lost almost all pigmentation, as if she hadn't been exposed to light for an extended period of time; her skin was still tight, smooth, and youthful however.

She took a step forward, and smiled, "A Jedi?" She said, "I never thought one would ever be so bold."

Jedi Malakon stood his ground, "We're just full of surprises."

"Indeed." Empress Amelia replied, "Tell me, Jedi, were you the one to kill my Fist?"

"He answered for his atrocities against the beings of this galaxy." Jedi Malakon answered, "As will you."

Empress Amelia smiled once more, "And you're going to make me?"



"I will kill you." Jedi Malakon said plainly.

Empress Amelia laughed, "Such a fool, Jedi. I sense your inner feelings! You are here purely for revenge. Not a Jedi trait, I think."

"Today, I am not a Jedi, but the hand of justice." Jedi Malakon countered.

"That's a good start." Empress Amelia answered, "Now, let's have some fun."

Empress Amelia waved her hand, and suddenly, five chambers hidden behind the stone walls slowly opened. Jedi Malakon immediately became defensive, but soon realized that the hidden chambers did not contain any threat, but rather something much more devious, and disturbing. As the walls slowly slid aside, dust and other small particles of rock fell, filling the room. Finally, after a few moments, the stone walls slid open, revealing its contents. A thick, black and purple smog descended out of the hidden chambers; Jedi Malakon sensed the smog was concentrated dark-side energy. As the black and purple smog laid on the stone rock, small purple static discharges emanated from within its cracks. Suddenly, the fog cleared, revealing five bodies, one in each chamber, chained to the stone wall behind them. Jedi Malakon sensed them; they were Jedi.

"What is this?" Jedi Malakon questioningly asked.

"Your companions, I believe?" Empress Amelia taunted.

Jedi Malakon immediately ran over to one of them in order to cut him down, but Empress Amelia immediately stopped him, "I wouldn't do that, if I were you."

"You monster! What have you done?" Jedi Malakon demanded.

"I did you a favour." Empress Amelia answered; she smiled, then explained, "These were Jedi, like you, who thought they could kill me. As you can see, they clearly failed."

"You murdered them!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

"Murdered? Can't you sense the life within them?" Empress Amelia replied.

Jedi Malakon reached out to the bodies. They were alive, but their minds were dead, "What...?" Jedi Malakon said in a confused voice.

"Their life-force still resides within them, but they are brain-dead." Empress Amelia explained, "You cannot help them... not anymore."

"Why?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"You will see." Empress Amelia replied.

Empress Amelia activated her crimson-bladed lightsaber; the energy blade made a *snap-hiss* that echoed within the large, triangular room. Jedi Malakon twirled his lightsaber, and charged at her. He used the Force to augment his movements, and charged up the stairs to meet her. He leapt into the air to take a swing at her, but before he could lash out, Empress Amelia pushed him away with a powerful Wave Front. The incredibly powerful pressure wave swept Jedi Malakon off his feet, and sent him flying backwards. He smashed into one of the pillars; a surge of pain rushed throughout his body. He collapsed onto the stone tile floor, and moaned in agony. After a moment, he quickly picked himself up, and charged at her again. Empress Amelia walked towards him, calmly, and overconfidently.

Jedi Malakon leapt into the air again, and smashed his lightsaber against hers. A shower of sparks rained down from the impact, along with an explosion of light. Jedi Malakon went wild, slashing and striking Empress Amelia with everything he had. He used Djem So, an aggressive lightsaber form, and furiously attacked her. Empress Amelia easily defended herself from the onslaught of attacks. Despite Jedi Malakon's impressively fast and powerful attacks, Empress Amelia didn't seem fazed or strained at all. Jedi Malakon allowed himself to go wild, losing himself into the Force in order for it to guide his movements. Jedi Malakon smashed his lightsaber against her again, engaging in a sabre-lock. Jedi Malakon strained against her crimson blade with all his might. Sparks showered and explosions of light emanated from the contact.

"You have great potential, Jedi." Empress Amelia taunted, "Yet you do not use it."

Empress Amelia immediately broke the sabre-lock by kicking Jedi Malakon in the gut. Jedi Malakon stumbled backwards, taking a few steps in order to regain his balance. Instantly, Empress Amelia sped forward, using the Force to augment her movements, and attacked Jedi Malakon with a single swipe of her lightsaber. Her swing was augmented with the Force, making the attack much stronger. Jedi Malakon blocked the attack, but the impact from the strike sent him flying into air, careening into a wall. Jedi Malakon slammed into the wall, nearly knocking him out cold. A small cloud of

dust surrounded Jedi Malakon, no doubt from the impact with the stone wall. A sharp pain raced up his spine as Jedi Malakon tried to pick himself up.

*Damn*, Jedi Malakon thought.

He looked up at Empress Amelia, who was smiling and laughing. He watched as she played with her lightsaber as if it were a toy. She made the lightsaber hover in front of her; suddenly, with the twitch of her finger, she sent the lightsaber spinning towards him. The crimson-bladed lightsaber spun towards him with impressive speed; the energy blade was barely visible to him as it sliced through the air, effortlessly. Jedi Malakon's eyes went wide, and just in time, Jedi Malakon managed to duck before the crimson blade decapitated him. The lightsaber streaked just centimetres above his head, scarring the stone wall behind him. Jedi Malakon immediately picked himself up, and dodged another swipe from the hovering crimson-bladed lightsaber. Jedi Malakon tracked the energy blade as best he could, but it moved too fast for him to see it. Suddenly, like a spear, the crimson-bladed lightsaber shot towards him. Jedi Malakon blocked the energy blade with his own; as he strained against the hovering lightsaber, Empress Amelia slowly walked towards him. The hovering lightsaber exerted an impressive amount of strength, but nevertheless, he fought against the energy blade. More sparks and explosions of light emanated from the contact from these two energy blades.

Desperately, Jedi Malakon unleashed a Force Wave attack that disengaged the crimson-bladed lightsaber from his own, while momentarily stopping Empress Amelia's approach. With lightning fast reflexes, Jedi Malakon charged at the defenceless Empress; he reared his lightsaber up for a strike, and came down on her forearm. Surprisingly, the lightsaber struck her arm, but ceased to slice through; Jedi Malakon was wide-eyed from shock. She wore no gauntlet, and what he struck was flesh. The Force surged out from Empress Amelia, and protected her body from the energy blade; Corrupted Protection. After the first moment of shock, she gave him a great big smile.

"Pity the fool." Empress Amelia replied.

Suddenly, Empress Amelia smacked the lightsaber out of his hands, and lifted him into the air with the Force. With the deliberate and agonizing pressure, Empress Amelia slowly exerted her will onto his body. She started bending his bones, and squeezing his organs; Force Crush. His bones creaked and resisted the strain exerted onto them, while his organs seemed to fail instantly. Jedi Malakon screamed in defiance, and in pain, but he was helpless to do anything. The joints in his shoulder and

pelvis suddenly popped out of place, causing a great deal of pain to shoot up his body. Tears filled his eyes, and he growled and roared in anger. With whatever strength he had left, he stretched out with the Force, reached out to his lightsaber, and sent it flying towards Empress Amelia. The blue energy blade activated in mid-air; Empress Amelia ceased her attack, dropping Jedi Malakon onto the stone tile floor, but not before blocking the flying blue-bladed lightsaber with her own.

"Impressive, Jedi." Empress Amelia replied, "You're already doing better than anyone before you. Take some consolation in that."

Jedi Malakon reeled in pain while on the stone tile floor. His muscles were utterly spent, and his shoulders were dislocated. In his agony, he popped them back in, causing another surge of pain to flood his body. He screamed, which then turned to a cry. Empress Amelia watched as the Jedi struggled; unexpectedly, she grabbed his lightsaber, and tossed it to him.

"We're not finished yet." Empress Amelia replied.

Jedi Malakon thought he was hallucinating, but he reached out and grabbed his lightsaber; he didn't activate it however. Jedi Malakon's vision was blurry, and unfocused; he was seeing double, or triple, everything. The room was spinning, causing him to get dizzy. His muscles felt like lead-weights, unable to move or function properly; they twitched and spasm uncontrollably, unwilling to perform the tasks he wanted them to do. His heart felt like it was going to explode, and his breathing felt laboured; the tightness in his chest returned, and Jedi Malakon thought he was going to stroke out and die.

*It's over*, Jedi Malakon sadly thought to himself.

Empress Amelia took a step forward, and said in a soft, suggestive voice, "It's not over, Jedi." Jedi Malakon was surprised, "This is how it'll go." She pointed to one of the suspended Jedi hanging on the wall, "These husks of former Jedi... you can harness their vitality, if you so choose..." Jedi Malakon looked up at Empress Amelia in confusion and wonder, "Just reach out with the Force, grab the life-force from inside their bodies... and *tear* it out of them!"

Jedi Malakon tried to crawl away from Empress Amelia, but stumbled several times. Finally, he stopped, nearly collapsed, and said in a shaky voice, "That is the dark-side of the Force."

"Indeed, Jedi." Empress Amelia answered, "You're methods have utterly failed. Only the dark-side will give you any hope of defeating me... and exacting your revenge."

Jedi Malakon crawled towards the closest husk-Jedi hanging on the wall. He looked up at the husk of the Jedi; the Jedi, a former human male, had cracked and scarred pale skin, and his face was contorted into a horrible expression of fright and terror. He closed his eyes, unwilling to look at the husk of the Jedi any longer. Jedi Malakon contemplated the choice given to him by Empress Amelia. It pained him to even contemplate using the dark-side of the Force.

Empress Amelia felt the turmoil inside Jedi Malakon, "Do it, Jedi!" Empress Amelia tempted, "It is the only way!"

Jedi Malakon screamed, and reared up. He stretched out with the Force, and reached into the husk of the Jedi. He could feel the life-force inside the husk's body, and started to pry it out. Jedi Malakon growled and roared, trying to rip the vitality and Force energy from the husk of the Jedi. Suddenly, he tore the life-force out of the body, and his body consumed the newly found energy. His muscles felt rejuvenated and refreshed, while the pain in his chest and body started to disappear. His body started to stabilize; he felt like a new man. The husk of the Jedi, on the other hand, had turned black, and corroded; the body instantly decayed right in front of him, until it turned into dust and ash. The sight was shocking and disturbing at the same time. He quickly turned to face Amelia, and activated his lightsaber. Without thinking, he charged at Empress Amelia at full speed.

Empress Amelia laughed, "Excellent. You are powerful."

Suddenly, Empress Amelia unleashed an epic Power Surge that filled the room with a vast amount of electrical energy. The torrent of lightning bolts shot out of her fingers, and flew towards Jedi Malakon. Instinctually, Jedi Malakon rose his blue-bladed lightsaber in front of him, and blocked most of the lightning bolts from shocking his body. Never in his life had he ever experienced such a powerful surge of electrical energy; it was unheard of.

The immense electrical discharge lit up the dark room with a flurry of blue flashing lights. Some of the lightning bolts got through his defence, and struck Jedi Malakon on the side; the sudden shock caused a sharp jolt of pain to surge through his body. Jedi Malakon roared once more, fighting against the torrent of electrical energy

striking his lightsaber. The lightning bolts sizzled and sparked once they made contact with the blue energy blade. The intense heat from the lightning bolts scorched his skin; the lightning was incredibly bright, nearly blinding Jedi Malakon. Jedi Malakon fought against the torrent of lightning bolts; the lightsaber seemed to seize every time an electric bolt stuck it. Jedi Malakon roared again, using the anger and aggression within him, and started to move forward, towards Empress Amelia.

Empress Amelia laughed, "Good, Jedi. Use your aggressive feelings!"

The bridge of the *Dragon Queen* rocked violent back and forth; sparks rained down all around the Queen Mother, and the Hapan officers were tossed out of their seats like rag dolls. Over two hundred Hapan Battle Dragons, supported by a hundred *Nova*-class battle cruisers and fifteen Tetan Battlestars, are pounding the *Praetorian*, the support starship of the *Dread Lord*. Thousands of energy bolts streaked across the void of space, finally striking the *Praetorian*. Although the torrent of heavy turbolaser fire was unlike anything the Queen Mother had ever seen, the *Praetorian* stood firm. Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo rushed over to the forward viewport, and stared out onto the onslaught.

She quickly turned to look at the Hapan officers behind her, "Why aren't we destroying it!"

Another salvo of heavy turbolaser fire smashed into the Hapan frontline from the *Dread Lord* hovering above; the heavy turbolaser salvo exploded on the Hapan Battle Dragons, engulfing several ships. The bridge of the *Dragon Queen* shook and rolled violently, nearly knocking the Queen Mother over. Miraculously, only a few Battle Dragons were crippled from the attack.

Finally, a Hapan officer shouted, "We can't break down the *Praetorian*'s shields, your Majesty!"

"What the hell does that mean?" The Queen Mother screamed.

"We barely penetrate her shields!" The Hapan officer explained; another salvo from the *Dread Lord* struck the Hapans, causing more sparks to rain down all around them, "The *Praetorian* recharges its shields faster than we can bring them down!"

"Frack!" The Queen Mother whispered to herself.

The Hapans launched another salvo at the *Praetorian*; the salvo struck the hull of the massive Star Destroyer almost simultaneously. Although the heavy turbolaser bolts were concentrated within a small area, the incredibly powerful triple-layered energy shield protected the *Praetorian* from major hull damage. As a result, only a few energy bolts made it through the deflector shield.

Suddenly, one of the Hapan officers stood up, and screamed, "Sensors are picking up a massive energy flux!"

The Queen Mother quickly turned back to the battle, and looked up at the *Dread Lord*, "It's going to fire! Take evasive—"

The Queen Mother was cut off by the sudden discharge of ten planetary turbolasers firing into the Hapan lines. The massive energy beams struck the Hapan Battle Dragons, causing them to instantly explode, even vaporize. The resulting explosion and fireball engulfed nearby starships, causing their hulls to boil, and the starship itself to explode. The gigantic explosion engulfed nearly fifty more Hapan ships; forty Battle Dragons, and ten *Nova*-class battle cruisers. The *Dragon Queen*, just beginning to bank away from the energy beam, managed to escape most of the damage resulting from the nearby explosion. Flaming debris and twisted metal rained down on the *Dragon Queen*, overwhelming the deflector shield, and finally piercing the hull. Huge blobs of molten durasteel floated within the vacuum of space.

The bridge was rocked violently; the Queen Mother was knocked off her feet by the sudden jarring. She slammed into the polished basalt floor, hard, nearly knocking her out cold. The bridge filled with sparks showering down from exposed wire and electronic equipment. Small fires erupted, but were quickly put out by nearby Hapan officers. One of the Hapan officers, a young male, rushed over to the Queen Mother.

"Your Majesty, are you alright?" The Hapan officer asked.

The Queen Mother clutched her head, and nodded, "Yes."

Her head was bleeding, although not profusely, and it probably looked worse than it actually was. She whipped the blood off her forehead, and began to rise off the floor. The Hapan officer helped her onto her feet, but she immediately pushed him away, and walked back towards the forward viewport. Tonnes of twisted metal, molten durasteel, and chunks of debris that used to be Hapan Battle Dragons floated amongst the fleet; sometimes, she could even see the dead, frozen bodies of former Hapan

officers and troopers floating in the cold vacuum of space. A sudden rage swelled up inside her.

"I want that ship destroyed! Now!" The Queen Mother screamed in anger.

The Hapan officers were frightened by the sudden release of emotion; although relatively untrained in the ways of the Force, the Queen Mother could feel their unease. Although they were surprised by her, the Hapan officers continued their work, relaying orders and coordinates for the gunners to use.

Suddenly, another Hapan officer shouted, "Incoming contact!"

The Queen Mother looked back at the Hapan officers, "What is it?"

"Fighters incoming!" The Hapan officer reported.

She quickly turned back to the forward viewport, and saw a horde of *Predator*-class starfighters inbound. Her worries and uncertainties started to rise inside of her again.

*Damn it*, She thought, "Scramble our fighters out there!"

The Hapan relayed the orders, and quickly began scrambling to recharge the energy shields, and get targeting solution of each fighter. The bridge turned into a frenzy of activity; the gears on the laser cannons started to rotate after acquiring targeting solutions on the Imperial starfighters. She simply stared out into the void, watching the *Predator*-class starfighters approaching her.

*Damn it, Mathias, you better get it done soon*, The Queen Mother thought, *or else we are all dead!*

"Great! Just what I need! More difficulties!" Renz shouted at himself.

Two Imperial *Predator*-class starfighters were on his tail, firing their laser cannons at the *Red Diamond*. Renz was flying assault transport missions for the Resistance now, and this was his third trip into the hangar of the *Dread Lord*. His nerves were shot, his clothing was soaked in sweat, and his neck and back were killing him. Although he was an exceptionally skilled pilot, the sluggish and relatively slow and sluggish light freighter made weaving a safe path to the *Dread Lord* especially difficult.

The *Dread Lord's* laser cannon emplacements were pounding hard, firing a flurry of red energy bolts towards him.

"Give me a break!" Renz shouted.

Renz instinctually slammed the yoke hard left, narrowly evading the torrent of energy bolts. The two *Predator*-class starfighters behind him, however, anticipated his manoeuvre perfectly, and fired their blaster cannons. The energy bolts struck his hull, causing the cockpit to jar and shake violently.

"Damn it!" Renz screamed, "You've got to be fracking kidding me!"

Luckily, the energy bolts failed to fully penetrate the powerful deflector shield equipped on the *Red Diamond*. The two *Predator*-class starfighter, an incredibly manoeuvrable and agile fighter, easily tailed the bulky light freighter. Although more manoeuvrable than the light freighter, Renz had never experienced Imperial pilots that could fly so well. He has outrun and out-manoeuvred Imperial fighters before, with ease, but nothing like this.

*Better training at the academy?* Renz thought to himself.

That seemed unlikely. Renz slammed the yoke from side-to-side again and again, trying to dodge both the laser cannon emplacements on the *Dread Lord*, as well as lose the two *Predator*-class starfighters behind him. He furiously evaded the incoming energy bolts. His knuckles were white from the incredible strain he was under, and sweat poured down his forehead. Although Renz was incredibly skilled, he couldn't lose to two Imperial starfighters behind him.

*This sucks,* Renz thought.

Suddenly, a CF9 Crossfire starfighter swooped in from below, and fired its laser cannons at the Imperial starfighters. The green energy bolts perforated one *Predator*-class starfighter's cockpit, causing it to explode, while the other had a hinged-wing torn off. Renz quickly looked behind him to see what was going on. He saw the two starfighters explode; relief descended upon Renz, and he started to breathe easier.

Over the communication system, Renz heard laughing, followed by, "*You're all clear!*" Cosh Sonter replied, "*I'll bring you in.*"

"Thanks." Renz replied.

A new found confidence welled up inside Renz. Immediately, he let loose of all the uncertainty and doubt that had previously clouded his mind, and focused on the ventral hangar of the *Dread Lord* ahead. He jinked and juked wildly, expertly dodged and weaving in between the torrent of laser cannon bolts fired at him. He quickly looked behind him, and saw that the CF9 Crossfire starfighter that had saved his life was indeed running escort for him off his right-hand wing.

*Thank the maker*, Renz thought to himself.

The ventral hangar was getting closer, and the laser cannon fire intensified. Although the flurry of laser cannon bolts fired at him increased, he was sure of himself, and his skills. He knew he could make it. He slammed hard left, then immediately, hard right. His banks and breaks were perfect, making him an incredibly hard target to hit. Renz finally got near enough to the hangar that his CF9 Crossfire starfighter escort had to bug out. Renz slammed on the thrusters, and made for the ventral hangar. The sudden jolt from the thrusters pushed Renz into the back of his seat. Within a second, he was inside the gigantic ventral hangar. He never touched down, but instead hovered about a metre above the surface of the permacrete pavement. He swooped the *Red Diamond* around until he was facing the atmospheric containment field. He quickly pushed the button for the boarding ramp to descend, then hovered there for a moment.

Suddenly, he heard, "*We're clear! Go!*" Over the communication system.

Renz immediately retracted the boarding ramp, and sped out of the ventral hangar. Immediately, he came under fire again from the hundreds of laser cannon emplacements all around him. He shot out from under the *Dread Lord*, and sped for the remnant Galactic Alliance fleet.

*This is where the fun begins*, Renz thought to himself.

Jedi Malakon slammed down on top of Empress Amelia's crimson-bladed lightsaber. He had his shaft fully extended, and used the incredibly long staff to his full benefit. He expertly twirled and spun his lightsaber lance, using its speed and momentum to lash out and strike Empress Amelia. His strikes were incredible powerful, and with the extended shaft on his lightsaber lance, it added an extra torque and reach to his attacks. Jedi Malakon expertly used both the energy blade, as well as the phrik staff as a weapon, increasing his attack speed two-fold. Jedi Malakon let

himself go wild, striking and smashing against Empress Amelia. Her blocks and parries were perfect, and she counter-attacked every chance she got.

Suddenly, Empress Amelia kicked Jedi Malakon in the gut, sending him backwards, and taunted, "You've got spirit, Jedi. I'll give you that."

"I've got more than spirit!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

Empress Amelia took a step forward, "Yes. You have focus, determination. Don't you?" Empress Amelia replied, "That is the dark-side calling to you, Jedi."

"Shut up!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

With incredible speed, Jedi Malakon lunged towards her, jabbing his lightsaber lance out in front of him. Empress Amelia side-stepped and dodged the attack. With perfect grace and fluidity, Jedi Malakon spun around, and smashed Empress Amelia with the blue energy blade as fast as he could. Empress Amelia blocked the attack, but the force from the impact of the two lightsabers caused her to take a step backwards. Jedi Malakon pushed the momentum, and continued with a flurry of quick slashes, followed by powerful smashes. He was feeding off his rage and anger, while Empress Amelia relished in it. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon leapt into the air, and came down on Empress Amelia. She blocked the attack with a overhead horizontal parry; they were engaged in a sabre-lock. Sparks rained down, and blinding explosions of light filled the dimly lit room.

"You learn fast, Jedi." Empress Amelia replied, "You would make a great Sith!"

"I would die before joining the Sith!" Jedi Malakon strained to counter.

Empress Amelia chuckled, "Ignorant Jedi, you are closer than you think."

"Liar!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

Jedi Malakon kicked Empress Amelia in the knee, causing her to take a step backwards to regain her balance. Jedi Malakon twirled his lightsaber lance again, and started a series of powerful overhead smashes and horizontal strikes. The fury inside Jedi Malakon was growing; his attacks were vicious, and wild. Jedi Malakon's attacks were lightning fast; the blue energy blade was a mere blur as it sliced through the air. Although the attacks were coming in at an incredible frequency, Empress Amelia easily defended herself, never breaking a sweat.

*This is impossible,* Jedi Malakon thought.

Jedi Malakon on the other hand was straining with every blow. His muscles were beginning to tire, and his lungs and heart were working overtime to fuel his body. His breathing was being laboured, and his heart was pounding out his chest. Sweat was pouring down his face, occasionally getting into his eyes. Although his body was giving up on him, his mind and will were stronger than ever.

*It's now or never,* Jedi Malakon thought.

With an incredible surge of power, Jedi Malakon unleashed another Force Wave attack. The compression wave shattered some of the stone tiles, and caused Empress Amelia to take a step back. Jedi Malakon followed up the epic Force attack by leaping into the air; he reared up to strike down upon Empress Amelia. Suddenly, Empress Amelia let loose a sonic attack, Sonic Scream, that flung Jedi Malakon across the room. Jedi Malakon slammed into a pillar with a grunt, causing the stone pillar to shatter and break. Jedi Malakon hit the floor face-first, and a billow of dust got kicked up in the air. Chunks of debris fell onto Jedi Malakon from the cracked and shattered pillar he smacked into; although he hit the stone pillar with incredible force, the pillar remained standing. Jedi Malakon remained laying on the stone floor for just a moment in order to recover; blood ran down and out his ears, and all he could hear was a high-pitch ringing sound.

Jedi Malakon composed himself, and looked up. Already, Empress Amelia was in the air, flying towards him with her crimson-bladed lightsaber reared up to stab him. Jedi Malakon rolled out of the way, just in the nick of time, and watched as the crimson energy blade pierced the stone tile that he laid on a moment earlier. Empress Amelia slammed into the floor with such force that she cracked the stone tile she landed on. Jedi Malakon immediately seized the opportunity, and lashed out at Empress Amelia; she countered perfectly, and kicked Jedi Malakon in the kneecap, causing him to stumble backwards. Jedi Malakon took several steps backwards, trying to regain his balance. Surprisingly, Empress Amelia was already walking towards him. He tripped over a small stone, sending him onto one knee. Jedi Malakon raised the phrik shaft of his lightsaber lance to block the overhead strike. With surprising power, Empress Amelia came down on his shaft with her crimson energy blade. The crimson energy blade shattered the phrik shaft, going straight through the supposed lightsaber resistant material. The crimson blade continued through the shaft, slicing his left shoulder, and nicking his left thigh.

Jedi Malakon screamed in pain as the energy blade sliced through his flesh. Although the lightsaber made merely a superficial injury, the pain magnified and intensified over time. Jedi Malakon was in blinding pain; he clutched his shoulder, and screamed in pain again. He fell onto the ground; he tried to will himself not to feel the pain, but that was foolish. Jedi Malakon was completely shocked that Empress Amelia could shatter his lightsaber lance.

*Shatterpoint*, Jedi Malakon thought.

"You know what must be done, Jedi." Empress Amelia taunted.

The pain Jedi Malakon was feeling was overwhelming, blinding even. The pain spread throughout his body, crippling his ability to move properly. Jedi Malakon quickly looked up to the wall, and saw the husks of the Jedi; two were already blackened dust and ash, while three more remained. He crawled over to the closest one, and reached out with the Force. The husk was a human female; her face was contorted into a horrible expression, and the once youthful skin was now grey, and covered in scars, scabs, cracks and wrinkles. Jedi Malakon searched inside for her life-force, and started to tear it out of her. The life-force ripped out of the chest of the husk, and entered Jedi Malakon through a bright orange lightning bolt. The husk of the Jedi turned to black dust and ash, while Jedi Malakon felt himself become rejuvenated. The lightsaber wounds on his shoulder and thigh healed almost immediately, and his muscles were completely refreshed. He reached out with the Force again, and retrieved his shattered lightsaber lance. He retracted the shaft, and activated the blue blade. He looked up at Empress Amelia, who had been watching the entire time. Anger filled his heart, and he charged at her once more. Their lightsabers came together, causing a shower of sparks to rain down from the energy blades. Jedi Malakon strained against hers.

"You are closer to us than you think." Empress Amelia taunted.

Suddenly, an Imperial *Predator*-class starfighter made a strafing run at the *Dragon Queen*, and fired a torrent of laser cannon bolts into the forward viewport. Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo flinched, and screamed in terror. The deflector shield, luckily, prevented any of the energy bolts from penetrating, and shattering, the transparisteel viewport. Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo was getting anxious with every passing moment.

*Those starfighter pilots are much more daring than I would expect,* The Queen Mother thought; then, she immediately turned to face the Hapan officers, "Get those fighters off us!"

Suddenly, another *Predator*-class starfighter streaked downward, and fired a torrent of laser cannon bolts onto the hull of the *Dragon Queen*. The shields prevented most of the energy bolts from getting through, but some pierced through the hull, causing decompressions and various other hull damage. The Queen Mother stared out the forward viewport again, and watched as the Hapan Battle Dragons and *Nova*-class battle cruisers fired salvo after salvo of heavy turbolaser fire upon the *Praetorian* with little to no luck.

"We can't endure much more!" A Hapan officer screamed.

"I know." The Queen Mother said to herself.

Suddenly, the bridge on the *Dragon Queen* shook violently, and more sparks rained down from the exposed wire. There was a loud clanking and thumping sound that resonated within the bridge. The Queen Mother looked around the bridge, not finding the source of the sound; she was confused.

"What the hell was that?" Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo asked.

It took a moment for a Hapan officer to answer, "We've been boarded!"

"What?" The Queen Mother screamed.

"The hangar has been breached, and thirty Imperial stormtroopers are on their way up!" The Hapan officer reported.

*Damn it,* The Queen Mother thought, "Seal the blast doors! Get our troops—"

"There are none left!" The Hapan officer shouted, "They're all on the *Dread Lord*!"

"Son of a bitch." The Queen Mother whispered.

She thought about a solution as she watched the blast doors on the bridge seal. She reached into her robe, and took out her rancor-tooth lightsaber; she held it in her hands, and finally activated it. The teal coloured energy blade snapped to life, and the hum resonated within the bridge. The Hapans were surprised, shocked and confused

by the sight. She felt their confusion through the Force, but instead, radiated calm. Within moments, the stormtroopers were at the blast door, and were cutting through.

She grew nervous, "Only stormtroopers?"

"Affirmative, your Majesty." A Hapan officer answered.

*I hope that's right,* The Queen Mother thought.

Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo twirled her teal-bladed lightsaber, and fell into a defensive stance, Soresu. The officers on the bridge immediately unholstered their blaster pistols, and aimed them at the sealed blast door. The Queen Mother stared at the blast door, and watched as sparks and glowing orange molten metal poured onto the polished basalt floor. Within moments, the Imperials successfully cut through the blast door, and pried it open.

"Fire!" The Queen Mother ordered.

The Hapans at the monitor stations immediately ducked in cover, covering their heads from any blaster bolts that might streak by. The Hapan officers fired their blaster pistols at the stormtroopers. The white plastoid armoured stormtroopers were immediately struck down by the blaster bolts. They immediately retaliated by firing their blaster rifles at the Hapan officers, as well as the Queen Mother herself. She deflected the incoming blaster bolts, batting them away. She tried to deflect the bolts directly back at the charging stormtroopers, but the blaster bolts were coming at too fast a speed for her to accurately deflect the bolts. She was also relatively inexperienced at actual lightsaber combat, making her uneasy, and unconfident.

She held her own, though, and batted away most of the blaster bolts sent her way. The others she allowed to pass her harmlessly. More and more white armoured stormtroopers poured onto the bridge. The Hapan officers fired their blaster pistols relentlessly, but the slow rate of fire, and relatively weak weapon, did little to hinder the advance of the stormtroopers. The Queen Mother charged at the stormtroopers with a fury. The stormtroopers fired their blaster rifles at her, but she deflected and batted away the incoming energy bolts. Suddenly, she was in their midst, slashing and stabbing wildly. She let herself completely go into the Force, allowing it to guide her actions.

The Hapan officers ceased their firing, not wanting to fire at their Queen Mother. Meanwhile, the Queen Mother was hacking and slashing at the white armoured

stormtroopers. They desperately tried to shoot her with their blaster rifles, but she ducked or dodged out of the way, usually resulting in another stormtrooper being shot instead. She screamed and growled, working herself into a rage. Suddenly, she harnessed the Force into a powerful attack, sending the stormtroopers backwards, Force Push. The weak plastoid armour on some of the stormtroopers cracked and shattered from the Force attack, while others simply fell off.

"C'mon!" The Queen Mother screamed.

Only a dozen or so stormtroopers remained, and they were dazed and confused by the sudden Force attack; the rest were left laying dead on the polished floor. Once again, she charged at them, using the Force to augment her movements, enhancing her speed. She slammed into the first one, cracking the armour with the simple force of her body-check. She quickly turned around and slashed another stormtrooper across the chest. The teal-bladed lightsaber slashed through the plastoid armour, partially melting it, and cutting the being inside nearly in half.

The Hapan officers behind her started firing their blaster pistols again. The blaster bolts streaked passed her, and struck several more stormtroopers in the chest, shattering the cheap plastoid armour, killing the beings inside. The Queen Mother's heart rate was elevated, and pumping hard; her breathing was laboured from the over-exertion. Sweat started to accumulate on her forehead, but her focus was direct and linear. The stormtroopers that remained were just beginning to recover. Instantly, the Queen Mother charged at them, screaming in rage as she ran.

One of the stormtroopers fired his blaster rifle at her, sending several energy bolts at her. She instantly batted away the first two bolts, sending them into the walls; the third, however, she deflected perfectly, sending the energy bolt back at the stormtrooper who shot it. The blaster bolt struck the stormtrooper in the chest, shattering the plastoid armour, killing the being inside. Two more stormtroopers charged at the Queen Mother. Once again, she mustered all the strength she could, and unleashed another Force Push. The Force attack sent the two stormtroopers flying through the air, finally slamming into the wall. One of the stormtrooper's plastoid armour cracked and shattered once he hit the wall, breaking bones in the process; the other was merely knocked out.

Lastly, one more stormtrooper remained. With all her speed, Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo charged at the stormtrooper. He fired his blaster rifle at her while she charged at him. She batted the blaster bolts away, sending the energy bolts into the

floor or walls around her. She used the Force to augment her movements, making her run faster than normal, and quicken her reflexes. Within moments, she was right in front of the stormtrooper; with a quick slash, she decapitated the stormtrooper. The white helmet fell off the neck, and bounced, then rolled on the carpeted floor. She stood over the headless body for a moment to catch her breath. Adrenaline surged through her body like nothing before; her heart was pounding from excitement, and her breath was quick and shallow.

Suddenly, one of the Hapan officers yelled, "Majesty!"

Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo quickly turned around, and saw that the knocked out stormtrooper had regained consciousness. She leapt towards the stormtrooper, using the Force to quicken her movements. Within less than a second, she was within striking range; she plunged her teal-bladed lightsaber into the chest of the stormtrooper, piercing through the white plastoid armour, the being inside, and exited behind with ease. The armour had cracked around where the energy blade pierced through. She heard the death gurgle from the being inside the helmet, then felt him die in the Force. Immediately, she ripped the teal-bladed lightsaber out of the stormtroopers body; she looked around her, and saw the thirty dead stormtroopers around her. A wave of emotions flooded her mind, and tears started to fill her eyes. She thought through the entire battle, reliving every moment; she was completely surprised she could do or act in such a way. It was a completely new experience for her, one that she thought she would never have to experience in her life. She was divided, unsure how to feel now. She deactivated her teal-bladed lightsaber, and stood in the corridor quietly. Immediately, five Hapan officers rushed to her side with their blaster pistols in their hands. They surrounded and protected her.

"Back!" One of the Hapan officers ordered.

They trained their blaster pistols at the dead stormtroopers, and slowly moved backwards, almost pushing the Queen Mother onto the bridge. They rushed into the bridge, which was filled with scorch marks and pits from the various blaster bolt strikes. Some of the Hapan officers were laying on the polished basalt floor; some were alive and being treated, while others were dead. Other Hapan officers were still at their monitoring stations, relaying orders and information; most of them had tears in their eyes, and were shaky from the previous battle. Suddenly, the bridge was rocked once again by a heavy turbolaser strike. The Queen Mother was knocked off her feet, and sparks rained down all around her.

The Queen Mother picked herself up, and screamed, "Where the frack is Zann?" The Hapans shook their head unknowingly, "Damn that bastard!"

Another salvo from the *Dread Lord* struck the Hapan Battle Dragons. The heavy turbolaser bolts exploded on contact with the hulls of the Battle Dragons. The flash of light from the explosion lit up the bridge of the *Dragon Queen*.

"We can't take any more damage like that!" A Hapan officer screamed.

"I know!" Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo replied.

Suddenly, one of the Hapan officers stood in surprise, and shouted, "Incoming contacts!"

The Queen Mother whipped her head back to look at the Hapan officer, "What is it?"

"Star Destroyers! Fifty of them!" The Hapan officer reported.

"Imperial?" The Queen Mother asked.

The Hapan took a moment to answer, "Negative! They're *Venator*-class!" The Hapan officer looked up to look at the Queen Mother, "It's Zann!"

*Finally!* The Queen Mother thought; tears filled her eyes, then she replied in a low voice, "That magnificent bastard!"

Renz jinked and juked wildly through the black void of space. The heavy turbolaser and laser cannon fire increased in frequency. Suddenly, one of the heavy turbolaser bolts struck the hull of the *Red Diamond*, perforating the armoured hull. Immediately, the hull started decompressing, and venting atmosphere.

"Damn it!" Renz screamed.

He immediately sealed off the compartment where the rupture had taken place. He quickly looked up through the cockpit viewport, and saw a flurry of laser cannon bolts streak passed him. He immediately banked right.

"Oh—" Renz screamed.

The *Red Diamond* managed to evade the laser cannon bolts by mere metres. Renz had a death-grip on the yoke, clutching it until his knuckles turned white. He jinked and juked wildly, evading as many energy bolts as he could. Suddenly, he noticed that the energy bolts were being redirected. He quickly glanced though the transparisteel cockpit viewport, and saw a gigantic fleet of Clone Wars-era *Venator*-class Star Destroyers. He saw at least twenty-five to his left, all painted black and dark grey, with the double-*del* symbol on the hull. The great dorsal hangar doors on all the *Venator*-class Star Destroyers started to slide open, and a horde of starfighters poured out of them. He couldn't make out what model the starfighters were, but at that point, he really didn't care. The starfighters seemed to be flying towards him, or at least, towards the *Dread Lord*.

"Great... now I'm hallucinating." Renz said to himself.

Suddenly, the *Predator*-class starfighters that were circling him erupted into flashes of light. Suddenly, two *StarViper*-class attack platforms, baring the double-*del* insignia of Zann, streaked by his cockpit viewport, firing at the remaining *Predator*-class starfighters. The *StarViper*-class attack platform, although not as fast or manoeuvrable as the *Predator*-class starfighter, was much better armoured, and far better armed. Equipped with twin double heavy laser cannons, and proton torpedo tubes, they could pummel almost anything put in front of them. Their S-foils were also interesting, giving them impressive agility, while looking menacing all at the same time.

"If this is a hallucination... it's a good one." Renz said to himself again.

Suddenly, over the communication system, "Red Diamond, *we'll run cover for you.* " One of the *StarViper* pilots hailed.

Renz clicked the microphone, "Thanks for the help, guys."

The two *StarViper*-class attack platforms fell behind the *Red Diamond*, one on either side of his wings, running escort for him. He jinked and juked as usual, but not nearly as much as before. The *Dread Lord* was focused on the incoming *Venator*-class Star Destroyers now, and the *Predator*-class starfighters were being occupied by the *StarViper*-class attack platforms.

*This might end up being a good day after all,* Renz thought.

\* \* \*

Jedi Malakon stumbled onto the last husk of a Jedi. His body had been beaten, and bruised. The tightness in his chest was growing, causing him difficulty in breathing. His breathing was struggled, and laboured, while his heart felt like it was going to explode. His muscles were utterly exhausted, and twitched and spasm uncontrollably. Jedi Malakon had double-vision, and the room was spinning. He looked up at the face of the last remaining husk of a Jedi; the husk was a human male. Like all the others, the pale grey skin was rotten, scarred and cracked, while his face was contorted into a painful expression.

Jedi Malakon stretched out with the Force, and reached for the life-force still within the husk of a Jedi. Jedi Malakon tugged upon the life-force within the husk's undead body; he roared and strained to rip the life-force from within its black body. Finally, the life-force tore out from its chest, entering Jedi Malakon through a single orange electrical bolt. His body was rejuvenated, and his muscles refreshed. The husk of the Jedi disintegrated into black dust and ash, finally blowing away, only to be scattered around the stone room. Jedi Malakon felt himself become stronger, both physically, and through the Force. He looked towards the end of the room, where the triangular room got narrower; Empress Amelia stood at the top of the stairs, in front of the entrance to the meditation sphere. The dim light silhouetted her figure, and the gentle draft in the room made her robe flutter, and her hair sway. She stood at the top of the stairs, smiling wonderfully.

"Last one, Jedi." Empress Amelia taunted, "Last chance for revenge."

He activated his blue-bladed lightsaber once more; the *snap-hiss* echoed in the large, almost empty room. He pointed the tip of the blue blade at her in a threatening pose.

Empress Amelia laughed, "You really think the Jedi pose is going to be frightening to me?" She laughed again.

"Eventually, you will die. Maybe not by me, and maybe not for a while, but sometime soon, someone will kill you." Jedi Malakon threatened.

"I'd like to see that." Empress Amelia answered.

"Be careful what you ask for." Jedi Malakon replied.

"I am the Force, Jedi!" Empress Amelia screamed in anger, "I am a goddess!"

Empress Amelia ran down the stairs, and charged at Jedi Malakon. She ran with impressive speed, closing the distance between them rapidly. Suddenly, she took a swipe at Jedi Malakon's chest; instinctually, he blocked the attack. Suddenly, she ran up one of the pillars, and leapt off of it. With incredibly agility and acrobatic precision, she spun in the air, and kicked Jedi Malakon in the jaw. The sudden kick in the face sent a flood of pain throughout Jedi Malakon; he was seeing stars, and took several steps backwards in order to regain his balance. Empress Amelia landed on the stone tile floor gracefully, with her robe fluttering elegantly in the light breeze. Suddenly, she picked Jedi Malakon up with the Force, and sent him careening into another pillar. Jedi Malakon slammed into the pillar hard, causing a surge of pain to run up and down his spine. He fell towards the ground, and collapsed.

Jedi Malakon forced himself to stand, although he was still dazed by the impact. Empress Amelia immediately charged at him; she ran towards him, and jumped into the air. With impressive acrobatic prowess, she wrapped her thighs around his neck. Then, with incredible power, she crushed his throat, then spun in the air, sending Jedi Malakon into the wall behind him. Jedi Malakon smashed into the wall with such force, the stone bricks shattered and cracked upon impact. Jedi Malakon once again collapsed onto the stone tile floor; pain was swelling up in his body. Empress Amelia smiled, then charged with the tip of her crimson-bladed lightsaber pointed towards Jedi Malakon. Before she could lunge forward to land a killing blow, Jedi Malakon quickly kicked Empress Amelia in the gut, sending her backwards. Jedi Malakon, fighting through the pain, attacked Empress Amelia with a flurry of lightsaber attacks. His swings were wild and rapid, while his smashes were powerful and direct. He drew on the Force, feeding on it so it would fuel his body through the vicious attacks. Empress Amelia blocked and parried every attack perfectly; sparks flew as the energy blades smashed against each other. Jedi Malakon tried to use his acrobatic skills to his advantage, ducking and dodging Empress Amelia's counter-attacks. Jedi Malakon, growing more tired with every swing of his energy blade, tried to take Empress Amelia down as fast as possible, but she was far too quick for him.

Out of nowhere, Empress Amelia counter-attacked, and kicked Jedi Malakon in the gut; Jedi Malakon stumbled backwards from the sudden, sharp attack. Empress Amelia suddenly threw her crimson-bladed lightsaber at him; it spun in the air, hurdling towards him at an incredible speed. With lightning fast reflexes, Jedi Malakon leaped into the air, and jumped over the rapidly spinning lightsaber. Suddenly, while Jedi Malakon was still airborne, Empress Amelia unleashed an epic Wave Front. The powerful pressure wave blew Jedi Malakon through the air, careening into a wall,

finally landing on the stone tile floor, face first. Jedi Malakon, although in incredible pain, instinctually knew to expect another attack from Empress Amelia. Empress Amelia suddenly leaped into the air, pulled her crimson-bladed lightsaber back into her grasp, and lunged towards Jedi Malakon. Immediately, Jedi Malakon pushed himself off the floor, and jumped out of the way; Empress Amelia came down hard, driving the lightsaber into the floor that Jedi Malakon laid on just moments earlier. Jedi Malakon flew through the air, finally landing on his feet behind Empress Amelia. Jedi Malakon was breathing hard, and his muscles were utterly exhausted.

*Time to end this,* Jedi Malakon thought.

Suddenly, Empress Amelia turned around, and unleashed an impressive discharge of electrical energy directed towards Jedi Malakon; a Power Surge. The immense torrent of lightning bolts struck Jedi Malakon with incredible speed. The first few lightning bolts Jedi Malakon couldn't block because they streaked through the air far too quickly for him to parry with his lightsaber. The shock from the electrical bolts scorched his skin, and caused a sharp pain to shoot up his spine. Jedi Malakon rose his blue-bladed lightsaber just in time to catch any more lightning bolts from striking his body. His body was already battered and bruised beyond its natural limits; his body couldn't take any more punishment, despite him stealing the life-force from those husks of Jedi.

Empress Amelia kept up her pressure on Jedi Malakon by sending wave after wave of lightning bolts towards him. The glowing blue flashes of electricity filled the room. Some of the lightning bolts struck the stone walls and floor, gouging and carving linear grooves into the rock itself. Jedi Malakon blocked as many of the lightning bolts as he could, but he knew he would fail eventually. The lightning bolts flashed and sizzled against his energy blade, but some managed to get through, striking him in the side or legs. The sudden jolt of pain brought Jedi Malakon to his knees. He strained and struggled against the torrent of electrical energy, but she was far too powerful. Jedi Malakon roared in defiance, withstanding as much of the lightning as he could. The pain inside him was growing, but he fought on.

Suddenly, Empress Amelia stopped her relentless onslaught; she watched Jedi Malakon, smoking from the attack, nearly collapse. She then taunted, "Oh, poor Jedi. So weak... so pathetic." She paused, then replied, "So much wasted potential."

"You don't know what you are talking about!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

"You have wasted your life to the pathetic ideals of the Jedi Order." Empress Amelia explained, "And now... your life will have to come to a premature end."

"I will not die here today!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

Jedi Malakon charged at her, but before he could take more than two steps, Empress Amelia once again unleashed a torrent of electrical bolts. The electrical discharge felt even stronger than the one previously. Jedi Malakon rose his lightsaber in time to deflect the initial shock, but the force from the lightning bolts started to push against Jedi Malakon. Slowly, Jedi Malakon started to take steps backwards in order to lower the strain his body felt.

*This is impossible*, Jedi Malakon thought.

The intense heat from the electricity in the room was overwhelming; his skin felt as if it were on fire. The muscles that the lightning bolts managed to strike twitched and spasm uncontrollably. Desperately, Jedi Malakon reached deep within himself, and drew upon the Force for aid; he combined two Force techniques, Master Immunity, giving him resistance to Force attacks, and Master Energy Resistance, giving him extra protection from the electrical discharges. The two Force powers combined gave Jedi Malakon a boost of confidence, allowing him to withstand more of the onslaught Empress Amelia was dishing out.

Empress Amelia laughed the entire time, letting loose lightning bolt after lightning bolt. The room filled with the static electricity generated from extensive use of Power Surge. Her hair stood on end, and the smell of ozone filled the air. Nevertheless, she never relented, and continued her onslaught. Jedi Malakon screamed and roared against the attack, more from the strain rather than the growing pain. His muscles were tiring; they felt heavy, unwilling to fight anymore. He knew he couldn't keep the struggle up much longer.

Suddenly, Jedi Malakon's defences were completely overwhelmed, and the full force from the Power Surge struck him simultaneously. Jedi Malakon's chest surged with pain as the lightning bolts struck it. The sudden electrical jolt caused him to get flung into the air, finally smashing into one of the stone pillars behind him. Jedi Malakon's shoulder smacked into the pillar, causing another jolt of pain to flood his body. He finally collapsed onto the stone tiled floor, where he laid motionless for a few moments. Smoke lingered around his body, no doubt from the electrical burns his body sustained from the massive Force attack; his robes were smoking from the electrical

attack, and billowed outwardly. His muscles, especially his biceps and thigh muscles were twitching uncontrollably. He was still alive, despite what he would have thought; the only indication he was alive was the pain he felt.

*Unbelievable*, Jedi Malakon thought.

He slowly tried to pick himself up, but soon collapsed onto the stone tile, kicking up some dust and ash. He groaned in pain, waiting his final demise.

"Very impressive, Jedi." Empress Amelia replied, "You do indeed have great potential in the Force."

Jedi Malakon simply listened, laying still on the stone tiled floor, waiting for her to finally make her point. Eventually, however, he began to rise again.

"You would make a great Sith." Empress Amelia replied, "You have every quality I need!"

He finally rose until he was on his knees. Sorrow, and pain filled his body. He thought of all the moments in his life that led to his moment. Some were pleasant, others were painful. He was angry, full of rage, but soon he realized that fighting anger with anger wasn't the way he should have tackled the problem. He let his emotions get the better of him, and a Jedi should have known better. He regretted not realizing that sooner, but instead, he was going to die at the hands of a monster. He closed his eyes, and tried to cleanse himself of all the dark-side taint that filled his body; he washed away all the emotions that have clouded his thoughts.

"Since you slayed my last Fist... I think I shall make you my new one." Empress Amelia replied, "You will do... for now."

Jedi Malakon's body quickly cleansed away the corruption and taint of the dark-side. He felt the light-side of the Force quickly taking its hold within his mind once more. Suddenly, he felt a sudden surge in pure light-side energy; the energy overwhelmed his body, turning matter into pure energy, causing it to expand and permeate his living flesh.

"No!" Jedi Malakon screamed in defiance.

Suddenly, before Empress Amelia even knew what was going on, she unleashed her most powerful Force attack yet, Force Dark. This Force power was a unique attack,

where the Force would actually disintegrate the atoms that it makes contact with. The wave of pure dark-side energies radiated outward from her, hurdling towards Jedi Malakon. The room turned dark, and the red energy wave roared through the room. As it scorched across the stone tiles, it would burn and singe the surface of the stone, picking up even more dark-side energies as it passed along its surface.

All of a sudden, Jedi Malakon turned into a beacon of pure light-side energy; the Force and his flesh body were unified at such a high level, they were one. Matter literally transformed into energy; his body became a conduit for which the light-side of the Force could emanate. Jedi Malakon roared as he turned into a being of light, radiating a blinding white light from within, for which even Empress Amelia had to turn away from. As the light-side energies radiated and channelled its way through Jedi Malakon, it met the dark-side energies shot out from Empress Amelia. The light and the darkness met with a clash; electrical shocks erupted as the two energies combine. Meanwhile, the dark-side energies passed harmless by Jedi Malakon, keeping him safe.

Empress Amelia finally realized what was happening, "Impossible!"

Suddenly, Jedi Malakon rose to his feet, and charged at Empress Amelia. His focus was absolutely clear; nothing else mattered at his point. His body was no more, but rather, he was pure light-side energy in transit. He made it across the room within a second, faster than he could ever travel before, even with the aid of the Force; space-time seemed to dilate and expand. Soon, he was standing in front of Empress Amelia; she wore an expression of utter surprise and shock. He sensed her through the Force; her presence was complete and total, unyielding and strong. Instinctually, she lashed out at Jedi Malakon with her crimson-bladed lightsaber. Jedi Malakon reacted on instinct, and rose his arm to block. Surprisingly, his arm, radiating pure light-side energies, completely blocked the crimson-bladed lightsaber from passing through. At such a close proximity, Jedi Malakon could sense the inner turmoil within Empress Amelia; she was in utter shock, and was weak after the sudden discharge of such a powerful attack. Immediately after blocking the lightsaber strike, he plunged his hand into Empress Amelia's chest, like a blade, piercing straight through. His fingers cleaved her heart, and her eyes went wide from surprise, and her jaw dropped.

"I... am... a... goddess..." Empress Amelia slowly replied.

Jedi Malakon retracted his hand, and allowed her body to fall towards the stone tiled floor. He watched her body fall in slow motion; what was only mere seconds, felt like hours to his eyes. Almost immediately, his body started to return to normal, and



the immense surge of pure light-side energy dissipated. His senses started returning to normal, retreating from its hyper-heightened state. The moment that Empress Amelia's body hit the floor, Jedi Malakon had returned to his former fleshy state. He stood by her lifeless body in utter awe and amazement; even he couldn't believe what had transpired here. He was breathing hard, and his heart was racing, most-likely from the over-exertion of being at a higher state-of-being that few beings had ever reached. He kneeled down, and examined her body; there was a great big gaping wound where his hand had pierced through her body. The edges were cauterized, similar to hundreds of wounds he had seen from lightsabers. He quickly looked down at his belt; his lightsaber hung off of it.

Jedi Malakon shook his head in disbelief, "No, Amelia, you're just mortal."

Soon, her body started to disintegrate right before his eyes. The skin started to turn black, and seemed to crack and scar instantly. Jedi Malakon took a step back, and watched. Soon, a cloud of purple and black lightning streaked across the room, originating from her body. The flashes of light were incredibly bright, causing Jedi Malakon to look away. Her body turned into a cloud of crackling purple and black electricity; the air seemed to crack and shatter. Soon, she disappeared with a surge of electricity, leaving only her clothes behind. Within seconds, her body was gone, and her dark-side taint on the galaxy with her.

"Maybe in death, you will find some peace." Jedi Malakon said.

The bridge on the *Dragon Queen* was once again rocked by another torrent of heavy turbolaser fire from the *Dread Lord*. Sparks rained down all around the Queen Mother, and small bursts of flames shot out of damaged electronic equipment. The rocking and shaking of the bridge had become so common that she barely noticed them anymore. She watched as the Hapans were taking heavy damage. Although, recently, the *Dread Lord* has been concentrating on the Resistances newly arrived allies, Thrak Zann, accompanied by over fifty *Venator*-class Star Destroyers fully equipped with *StarViper*-class attack platforms. Over half of the Hapan Battle Dragons had been destroyed, along with the *Nova*-class battle cruisers. Thrak Zann had been hammering both the *Praetorian*, and the *Dread Lord*, but they are still running strong. His *StarViper*-class attack platforms took care of most of the *Predator*-class starfighters, whose pilots seemed overly skilled than usual.

Suddenly, a Hapan officer shouted, "Look!"

The Queen Mother looked back at the Hapan officer, then quickly looked back at the battle in front of her. She watched as the *Predator*-class starfighters seemed to scatter out of perfect formation, and become utterly confused. Their perfect anticipation and unison seemed to break down. She was utterly shocked.

Suddenly, she realized what must of happened; she screamed in utter joy, "He did it! That crazy son of a bitch did it!"

She screamed in joy, jumping up and down and laughing uncontrollably. Jedi Malakon, before the battle had started, hold the Queen Mother that Empress Amelia possessed an ability called Battle Meditation, an ability where anticipation and Force influence could control the warriors on the battlefield, giving them perfect military precision. It seemed that as soon as they entered the battle, Jedi Malakon was completely right about her possessing this Force power. The sudden dissolution of their perfect tactics must mean that Jedi Malakon, against all odds, succeeded in killing Empress Amelia. She smiled with happiness, and couldn't stop smiling.

The Hapans around her couldn't figure it out. Finally, one asked, "Your Majesty, what is it?"

She turned around, smiling, and with tears of joy in her eyes, "The Empress is dead."

At first, the Hapan officers could believe what they were hearing. After a few minutes, they came to except it. Their eyes went eye from shock, then they suddenly erupted in cheers. The Queen Mother joined them in their cheering. Several Hapan hugged each other, while others cried in relief and joy. The Queen Mother was about to break out into tears, but resisted the urge. They still had a battle to win.

Suddenly, once the cheering had dissipated slightly, one of the Hapan officers looked at the monitor, and shouted, "Your Majesty! Look!" He was pointing out the forward viewport.

Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo looked at the Hapan officer, then looked to where he was pointing. She watched as one of Thrak Zann's *Venator*-class Star Destroyers broke away from the fleet, and charged forward towards the *Praetorian*. The large *Venator*-class Star Destroyer slowly crept closer to the *Praetorian*; it took on heavy

damage from the *Dread Lord*, but continued to charge on. The Queen Mother was confused at first, but then realized what he was doing.

"They're scuttling a ship!" The Queen Mother shouted.

Suddenly, the *Venator*-class Star Destroyer smashed into the side of the *Praetorian*, tearing and ripping through the hull of the gigantic three kilometre long Star Destroyer. The crash seemed to happen in slow-motion, ripping massive chunks of armoured hull away from both vessels. Suddenly, the bridge of the *Dragon Queen* was engulfed in a massive flash of light, followed by the roar of the explosion from both vessels. Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo had to turn her head away from the flash, shielding her eyes from the bright and burning light. As soon as it dissipated, she turned back and saw the massive fireball rip the *Praetorian* in half, while the *Venator*-class Star Destroyer was nowhere to be seen.

Suddenly, one of the Hapan officers reported, "Your Majesty! The *Dread Lord* is powerless!" The Queen Mother quickly turned to look at the Hapan officer; he then replied, "It's completely defenceless!"

She turned back around, and gazed upon the gigantic behemoth of a vessel. The heavy turbolaser fire and nearly completely stopped, and its ion engines were barely running. Suddenly, Thrak Zann's fleet started to charge forward, and hammered the *Dread Lord* with massive salvos of heavy turbolaser fire. The highly energetic bolts slammed into the defenceless hull of the *Dread Lord*, rupturing compartments, and tearing apart the armoured hull.

The Queen Mother immediately screamed, "Tell them to stop!" She turned back to the Hapan officers, "Hail Thrak Zann, and tell him to cease fire!"

The Hapan officers immediately relayed the order. They quickly got the message back, "Your Majesty, Thrak Zann refuses to cease-fire."

The Queen Mother's expression turned to pure anger, "Tell that bastard that we've got friendlies inside! Tell him we need that ship in one piece!"

The Hapan officers relayed the order. The Queen Mother watched the battle nervously, waiting for Thrak Zann's reply. After a few tense moments, the *Venator*-class Star Destroyers ceased firing upon the *Dread Lord*, as well as all fighter attacks. Relief descended upon Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo, and she let out a long breath. She

gazed out the battle, and saw that the *Dread Lord* was completely helpless, and trapped between Thrak Zann's fleet, and her own Hapan fleet.

Suddenly, another Hapan officer reported, "Your Majesty! The Galactic Alliance and fleet reports the Sith-Imperial fleet is fleeing Kuat!"

Another Hapan officer added, "I'm getting similar reports from the exiled-Imperials, your Majesty!"

The Queen Mother detested the idea of further warfare for something so trivial and primal as revenge. The Queen Mother walked over to the side viewports and watched the Sith-Imperial fleet, two in fact, fleeing the battle above Kuat; surprisingly, or disappointedly, the *Imperatrix* was still functional and fighting. The remnant Galactic Alliance fleet hammered the fleeing Sith-Imperial *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers, even though they took heavy damage and losses over the course of the battle. The Sith-Imperial fleet seemed to only have a small fraction of its original strength at the start of the battle, but the Queen Mother couldn't see how many exactly.

"Order the fleets to pursue, and capture if possible." The Queen Mother ordered, "Do not engage."

"Yes, your Majesty." The Hapan officer replied, possibly disappointedly.

Jedi Malakon ran through the long, narrow corridors of the gigantic *Dread Lord*. After several minutes of full out running, even after using the Force to augment his movements, he only just reached the turbolifts that will take him up one level. He got on the turbolift, utterly exhausted from the constant running, and pushed the button to go up to the top level. The doors slid open, and Jedi Malakon saw the bodies of the dead stormtroopers he slayed while trying to make his way to the bridge the first time. His heart sank a little, more remorseful for his vicious and wild attacks.

Jedi Malakon stepped out of the turbolift, and ran down the corridor, heading towards the bridge. He used the Force to enhance his movements, allowing him to basically soar down the narrow corridor. After only a few moments, he reached the rest of the Resistance fighters, still unable to penetrate the Imperial stormtroopers, and breach the bridge.

"This is ridiculous!" Jedi Malakon shouted.



He stormed forward, charging towards the blast door. The blast door opened slightly, and a flurry of red energy bolts shot out. Jedi Malakon deflected the blaster bolts, sending them hurdling into the armoured doors. The door sparked as the blaster bolts struck the armoured durasteel. Suddenly, the stormtroopers threw a fragmentation grenade out into the corridor. Before the blast door could seal shut again, Jedi Malakon picked up the fragmentation grenade with the Force, and threw it back into the bridge. The blast door shut behind them, and the fragmentation grenade exploded. The screams and shouting from the Imperials on the bridge were audible even from the other side of the blast door. Suddenly, the explosion rocked the bridge, then, there was silence.

Jedi Malakon plunged his lightsaber into the blast door, and slowly cut his way through the thick, armoured durasteel doors. Sparks rained down from the lightsaber, and molten metal, glowing orange from the intense heat, outlined the gouge. After only a minute of cutting, Jedi Malakon successfully cut through the door, and pried it open using the Force.

"Go!" Jedi Malakon ordered.

The Resistance fighters poured into the bridge, followed shortly after by Jedi Malakon. He stepped onto the gigantic bridge of the *Dread Lord*. About half a dozen bodies laid dead on the durasteel floor, with their light grey plastoid-ceramic composite armour completely shattered and cracked from the explosion of the fragmentation grenade. Smoke billowed from the dead bodies, slowly rising into the air; the floor was perforated with shrapnel and massive scorch marks burnt the durasteel. The Resistance fighters took control of the bridge. Surprisingly, the Imperial officers, and the remaining stormtroopers, were down on their knees with their hands on top of their heads. The Resistance fighters had their blaster rifles trained on them, ready to fire at a moment's notice.

"What do we do?" A resistance fighter asked.

Jedi Malakon thought about it for a moment; before, he would have probably killed them all, but now, he was an enlightened man, "Bind their hands."

The Resistance fighters immediately jumped into the pit at the center of the bridge. They removed the Imperial officers working each station, and bound their hands with lasercuffs. They quickly gained control of the bridge, ceasing all automatic fire from all gun emplacements. Soon, the roar of battle quietened.

"Inform the fleet that we have control of the bridge." Jedi Malakon ordered.

A Resistance fighter relayed the message. Suddenly, a great smile came to his face, "Sir, I think you're going to want to hear this."

He pushed a button, activating the speaker. In all ten big speakers surrounding the bridge, a cheer of happiness and joy rang out from all the surviving ships of the fleet. The cheering was overwhelming, causing Jedi Malakon to tear. As the rest of the fleet cheered, the Resistance fighters on the bridge started to laugh, share hugs, and cheer as well. Jedi Malakon simply stood where he was, taking it all in. Never in his life had he ever experienced such happiness in so many beings before. He closed his eyes, and took it all in; the sounds, the emotions, and the Force. After a few moments, he walked over to the trapezoidal forward viewport of the *Dread Lord*, and gazed upon the fleet. The Hapans had paid a heavy price from the battle, as did the remnant Galactic Alliance and exiled-Imperials. He looked out, and saw all fifteen Tetan *Valkyrie*-class Battlestars intact. He smiled, and for once during the entire war, felt pure and utter joy.

"You rebel scum! You will never get away with this!" The Imperial Admiral shouted in disgust.

Jedi Malakon turned to look at the angry man. He felt pity for the man, "Take them away!"

The Resistance fighters picked all the bound Imperial prisoners up, and led them out of the bridge. He looked back at the quite fleet, and smiled once more.

*It's over.*

# *Atonement*

### One Standard Month Later: Cinnagar, Empress Teta:

Lerona Teta Jade walked through the streets of Cinnagar peacefully, alongside Mathias Malakon. They were holding hands, walking slowly through the ruins of her once great city. They simply enjoyed being in each other's company. Lerona led Mathias towards the outskirts of the city, but not at a hurried pace.

"So peaceful, isn't it, Jed—" Lerona Teta Jade stopped herself, "I'm sorry, Master Malakon."

Mathias smiled, "It is. And please, enough with the Master."

She smiled as well, and placed her head on his shoulders. They continued walking down the empty streets.

"What happens now?" Mathias asked.

"Rebuild. We have to." Lerona answered.

"And how long will that take?" Mathias asked.

Lerona let out a long sigh, "Many, many years." She sighed, "It's going to be tough, but we'll make it." They took a couple more steps, then finally, she asked, "How's the rest of the galaxy?"

They both laughed, then Mathias finally answered, "Well, all things considered, it's doing just fine."

"Really?" She asked.

"Well, the GA and exiled-Imperials getting along, for now, but I don't know how long that will last. Hopefully they can resolve their pre-war grudges and work out a system of government that can last." Mathias explained, "The Empire still controls Coruscant, and much of the Core, so that will be our next top priority."

"That's one battle I'm sure glad I'm going to miss." Lerona replied.

Mathias shook his head and smiled, "The biggest problem is finding anyone with leadership qualities up for the task; the Sith basically killed off anyone who might have been a threat to them." Mathias answered, "So far, the Galactic Alliance and the Empire have managed to assembled a committee of generals, admirals and politicians, but the

work is overwhelming. Luckily the Hapans are willing to do their part in helping stabilize the transition of government when we eventually take over Coruscant."

"The galaxy needs stability now more than ever." Lerona replied.

"Yes. There will definitely be some growing pains when the new government takes over, but nothing that they shouldn't overcome." Mathias continued, "Some smaller local wars have broken out in certain regions of the galaxy. Not completely unexpected, but unfortunate."

"And the Jedi?" Lerona asked.

"After the Empire and the Sith attacked the Hidden Temple on Taivas, the Jedi Order has been completely shattered. For now, they're staying out of politics, but knowing them, they'll be bossing the politicians around in no time." Mathias answered.

Lerona laughed, "The Jedi need to reorganize. They're going to be an important part of the restoration process."

"Yes, I agree." Mathias concurred, "But during the course of the Insurgency, they've become wary of all the Jedi that fought against the Sith."

Lerona shook her head, "And you? What are your plans?"

"My you ask a lot of questions." Mathias replied.

"I just don't want to miss out on all the fun." Lerona answered.

Mathias nodded his head, "I am doing fine. I'm trying to bring the Jedi into the mix, but some are hesitant to listen to me." Lerona looked up at Mathias, "Because I defied their orders to fight in the war."

"But you put an end to it!" Lerona replied, "You killed Amelia!"

"I know." Mathias answered.

She narrowed her eyes, "How did you do that anyways?"

Mathias stopped, and with him, Lerona; he let out a sigh, "I don't know, but it was spectacular." Mathias started, "I was one with the Force. I was connected to it, but in a much greater way. It flowed out of me like a raging river..." He looked down at her, "I really don't know how I did it. I was pure; I was a conduit for the Force, and through

me, the Force made its decision. I doubt I will ever experience such a oneness with the Force ever again."

Lerona placed both her palms on his cheeks, "It sure changed you."

Mathias placed his hands on hers, then ran his hand through his hair. It was greyer than before, and his skin seemed to have aged by ten years. Although still not old, he was physically older. Such a torrent of pure light-side energies within a single being takes a physical toll on the body, causing it to age during the experience. For some reason, Jedi Malakon thought it made him look wiser.

He smiled, then continued walking again, holding Lerona's hand. Finally, she asked, "Anything I should worry about?"

Mathias did think of one thing, "Well, our former ally, Thrak Zann, as refused to take part in negotiations, and has taken the opportunity to consolidate his grip on the criminal underworld."

Lerona shook her head in disbelief, "He did it for the money, not the honour."

"Well, without him, we would have lost a lot more than we did." Mathias replied.

"I suppose." Lerona replied.

They walked further into the outskirts of the city, finally reaching a point where the buildings all around were completely demolished and ruined. The further they walked, the more ruined and destroyed the buildings around them seemed to get, until they were simply gone. The street they were walking on turned jet-black, scorched from intense heat, and was uneven, probably from a shockwave. In front of them was the wrecked hull of the *Enslaver*, Darth Tyranid's flagship. She was leading him to this spot. He felt uneasy, but continued forward.

"What is this?" Mathias asked.

"You know what this is." Lerona answered.

They walked up to the ruined hull of the *Enslaver* until they were right up next to it. The former bridge could still be made out, although it was twisted and contorted into a frightening position. He placed his hand on the hull; it was cold to the touch, and he still sensed the dark-side taint on the ship.

"I was thinking of building a commemorative park around this." Lerona replied, "You know, to remember those who lost their lives in the battles fought over this city."

"I think that's a great—" Mathias started.

Suddenly, Mathias took out his blue-bladed lightsaber, and activated the blade. He stood there, looking deep into the wrecked hull of the *Enslaver*. He stretched out with the Force; he definitely felt a presence still within the ship.

"What is it?" Lerona asked.

Suddenly, a twisted amalgamation appeared out of the wrecked starship. It was Lord Tyranid himself, somehow surviving the immense crash into the city of Cinnagar. One of his arms was completely torn off, although not bleeding, and one of his mechanical cybernetic legs wasn't functioning properly. Lord Tyranid slowly crawled out of the wreckage, finally emerging outside the ship.

"I've been waiting... for you... to show." Lord Tyranid said in a mechanical voice.

"And why is that?" Mathias sharply replied, while pointing the tip of his lightsaber at Lord Tyranid.

"I wanted... to thank... the man... that finally... killed Amelia." Lord Tyranid strained to say; Mathias was confused by the statement, "I wanted to see... the man... who did... what I couldn't."

"Who were you?" Mathias asked.

"My name... was... Tycho Xar." Lord Tyranid answered; he let out a sigh, "The voices have stopped... Amelia's voices... I can finally... remember... my name."

Mathias knew the name; he read about his heroism during his training under Master Lii, but never knew what became of him. I guess now, he knows, and he mourned the knowledge.

Lerona cringed, and whispered, "You poor thing."

"What is it that you want?" Mathias asked.

"Peace... give me... peace." Lord Tyranid requested.

Lord Tyranid stood on his knees, and ripped off the burnt black robes covering his cracked, scarred and rotting body. Mathias could sense that he was in a great amount of pain, but that shouldn't be something new. He stretched out through the Force; he detected no malice, or ill intentions from Lord Tyranid.

Mathias nodded, and peered through the metallic skeleton of Lord Tyranid. He focused on the skeleton through the Force, finally revealing the shatterpoints on each metallic bone. Mathias sensed him through the Force; Lord Tyranid was a splintered being, not only physically, but in the Force as well. They were clear to him, like red lines running all across his body. He focused on the one on his sternum, and aimed the tip of the blue blade there.

Mathias looked up at Lord Tyranid, "I hope you find peace."

Suddenly, he plunged the lightsaber blade through the sternum, shattering it instantly. The energy blade continued through, severing the mechanical heart, causing it to fail immediately. Mathias retracted the energy blade, and Lord Tyranid fell face first into the scorched ground beneath the wrecked hull of the *Enslaver*. Slowly, the fleshy part of Lord Tyranid started to turn to dust, and a sudden gust of wind blew it away, leaving only the metallic skeleton behind. Mathias gazed upon the metallic skeleton with a blank, unyielding stare; he felt utterly terrible for what he did. Tycho Xar, a young prodigy within the Jedi Order, a hero to both the Galactic Alliance and the Jedi Order, and one destined for greatness, laid dead at his feet. A Jedi destined for fame, now will forever remained within history in infamy. Sad.

"You did the right thing." Leronia replied.

"I know." Mathias whispered.

She gave him a hug, and a tear ran down his cheek. Then he replied, "I guess that he wasn't really the enslaver, was he?" Leronia looked up at Mathias, "I guess he was actually the enslaved."

"Ironic." Leronia answered, "And sad."

# *Extras*





### Light-side Users Force Table:

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4	Combo 1	Combo 2
Force Push	Force Whirlwind	Force Repulse	Force Wave		
Force Suppression	Force Breach	Hinder Force	Blind Force		
Throw Lightsaber	Advanced Throw Lightsaber	Master Throw Lightsaber	Lightsaber Shield		
Force Assist	Force Combat	Master Force Combat	Perfect Force Combat		
Burst of Speed	Knight Speed	Master Speed	Teleport	Forcible Transport (Wave, Teleport)	
Force Resistance	Force Protection	Master Immunity	Impervious	<i>Protection</i> (Breach, Immunity, Energy, Armour, Valour, Barrier)	<i>Force Light</i> (Protection, Battle Meditation, Redirect, Heal)
Energy Resistance	Improved Energy Res.	Master Energy Res.	Perfect Energy Res.		
Affect Mind	Improved Affect Mind	Master Affect Mind	Dominate Mind		
Force Body	Improved Force Body	Master Force Body	Body Meditation		
Battle Meditation	Improved Battle Meditation	Master Battle Meditation	Perfect Battle Meditation		
Force Deflection	Improved Deflection	Force Redirection	Perfect Redirection		
Mind Trick	Improved Mind Trick	Master Mind Trick	Perfect Mind Trick		
<i>Heal</i>	<i>Improved Heal</i>	<i>Master Heal</i>	<i>Perfect Heal</i>		
<i>Force Aura</i>	<i>Force Shield</i>	<i>Master Armour</i>	<i>Perfect Armour</i>		



<i>Force Valour</i>	<i>Knight Valour</i>	<i>Master Valour</i>	<i>Perfect Valour</i>	<i>Force Enlightenment</i> (Speed, Armour, Valour)	
<i>Daze</i>	<i>Stun</i>	<i>Stasis</i>	<i>Stasis Field</i>		
<i>Daze Droid</i>	<i>Stun Droid</i>	<i>Disable Droid</i>	<i>Destroy Droid</i>		
<i>Force Barrier</i>	<i>Improved Barrier</i>	<i>Master Barrier</i>	<i>Perfect Barrier</i>		
<i>Revitalize</i>	<i>Improved Revitalize</i>	<i>Force Resuscitation</i>	<i>Perfect Resuscitation</i>		
<u>Drain Life</u>	<u>Improved Drain Life</u>				
<u>Shock</u>	<u>Force Lightning</u>				
<u>Drain Force</u>	<u>Improved Drain Force</u>				
<u>Fear</u>	<u>Horror</u>				
<u>Slow</u>	<u>Affliction</u>				
<u>Wound</u>	<u>Choke</u>				
<u>Force Scream</u>	<u>Improved Scream</u>				
<u>Force Ignite</u>	<u>Force Engulf</u>				
<u>Sith Alchemy</u>	<u>Improved Alchemy</u>				

**Dark-side Users Force Table:**

<b>Tier 1</b>	<b>Tier 2</b>	<b>Tier 3</b>	<b>Tier 4</b>	<b>Combo 1</b>	<b>Combo 2</b>
Force Push	Force Whirlwind	Force Repulse	Force Wave		
Force Suppression	Force Breach	<u>Hinder Force</u>	<u>Blind Force</u>		
Throw Lightsaber	Advanced Throw Lightsaber	Master Throw Lightsaber	Lightsaber Shield		
Force Assist	Force Combat	Master Force Combat	Perfect Force Combat	<u>Rage</u> (Wave, Surge/Burn, Combat, Throw, Teleport)	
Burst of Speed	Knight Speed	Master Speed	Teleport	<u>Forcible Transport</u> (Wave, Teleport)	
Force Resistance	Force Protection	(Master) <u>Corrupted Immunity</u>	<u>Impervious</u>	<u>Corrupted Protection</u> (Breach, Immunity, Energy, Armour, Valour, Barrier)	<u>Legendary</u> (Protection, Battle Meditation, Redirect, Heal)
Energy Resistance	Improved Energy Res.	<u>Corrupted Energy Res.</u>	<u>Perfect Energy Res.</u>		
Affect Mind	Improved Affect Mind	<u>Corrupted Mind</u>	<u>Dominate Mind</u>		
Force Body	Improved Force Body	Master Force Body	Body Meditation		
Battle Meditation	Improved Battle Meditation	<u>Corrupted Battle Meditation</u>	<u>Perfect Battle Meditation</u>		
Force Deflection	Improved Deflection	Force Redirection	Perfect Redirection		
Mind Trick	Improved Mind Trick	<u>Corruption</u>	<u>Perfect Corruption</u>		



<i>Heal</i>	<i>Improved Heal</i>	<u>Corrupted Heal</u>	<u>Perfect Heal</u>		
<i>Force Aura</i>	<i>Force Shield</i>	<u>Corrupted Armour</u>	<u>Perfect Armour</u>		
<i>Force Valour</i>	<i>Knight Valour</i>	<u>Corrupted Valour</u>	<u>Perfect Valour</u>		
<i>Daze</i>	<i>Stun</i>	<u>Stasis</u>	<u>Stasis Field</u>		
<i>Daze Droid</i>	<i>Stun Droid</i>	<u>Disable Droid</u>	<u>Destroy Droid</u>	<u>Power Surge</u> (Destroy Droid, Surge, Wave)	
<i>Force Barrier</i>	<i>Improved Barrier</i>	<u>Corrupted Barrier</u>	<u>Perfect Barrier</u>		
<i>Revitalize</i>	<i>Improved Revitalize</i>	<u>Force Resuscitation</u>	<u>Perfect Resuscitation</u>	<u>Pilfer Health</u> (Heal, Resuscitation, Drain Life)	
<u>Drain Life</u>	<u>Improved Drain Life</u>	<u>Master Drain Life</u>	<u>Perfect Drain Life</u>	<u>Death Field</u> (Life, Force, Surge)	<u>Force Dark</u> (All dark-side powers)
<u>Shock</u>	<u>Force Lightning</u>	<u>Force Storm</u>	<u>Force Surge</u>		
<u>Drain Force</u>	<u>Improved Drain Force</u>	<u>Master Drain Force</u>	<u>Perfect Drain Force</u>	<u>Pilfer Force</u> (Body, Drain Force)	
<u>Fear</u>	<u>Horror</u>	<u>Insanity</u>	<u>Break Mind</u>	<u>Break Body</u> (Mind, Pestilence)	
<u>Slow</u>	<u>Affliction</u>	<u>Plague</u>	<u>Pestilence</u>		
<u>Wound</u>	<u>Choke</u>	<u>Kill</u>	<u>Crush</u>		
<u>Force Scream</u>	<u>Improved Scream</u>	<u>Master Scream</u>	<u>Sonic Scream</u>	<u>Wave Front</u> (Sonic, Wave, Surge/Burn)	
<u>Force Ignite</u>	<u>Force Engulf</u>	<u>Force Blaze</u>	<u>Flash Burn</u>		
<u>Sith Alchemy</u>	<u>Improved Alchemy</u>	<u>Master Alchemy</u>	<u>Abomination</u>	<u>Technobeast</u> (Abomination, Resuscitate)	



### Galactic Federation of Free Alliances Fleet:

	<b>X-83 TwinTail starfighter</b>	<b>CF9 Crossfire starfighter</b>	<b>BB-2 Starfire fighter-bomber</b>
<b>Climbing Rate:</b>	Low	Moderate	Low
<b>Manoeuvrability:</b>	Moderate	Low	Low
<b>Armament:</b>	Moderate (Enhanced heavy laser cannons; proton torpedoes)	Heavy (laser cannons; double light laser cannons; proton torpedoes)	Heavy (laser cannons; light laser cannon; interceptor missiles; proton torpedo salvo; ion bomb)
<b>Speed (in atm):</b>	1200 km/hr	1200 km/hr	1200 km/hr
<b>Shielding/Armour:</b>	170 hp	150 hp	170 hp (+ regenerating shields)
<b>Sensory Package:</b>	Astromech Droid	Navicomputer	Navicomputer
<b>Hyperdrive:</b>	Class 1.0	Class 1.0	Class 1.0
<b>Special Feats:</b>	None	None	None
<b>Make:</b>	Incom Corporation	Incom Corporation	SoroSuub Corporation

	<b>J-1 shuttle</b>	<b>Crix-class Assault Shuttle</b>	<b>MT Dropship</b>
<b>Climbing Rate:</b>	High	Moderate	Low
<b>Manoeuvrability:</b>	Moderate	Moderate	Low
<b>Armament:</b>	Light (Double laser cannons)	Light (twin laser cannons; two blaster cannons)	Light (laser cannon; concussion missiles)
<b>Speed (in atm):</b>	850 km/hr	850 km/hr	850 km/hr
<b>Shielding/Armour:</b>	110 hp	200 hp	300 hp
<b>Sensory Package:</b>	Navicomputer	Navicomputer	None
<b>Hyperdrive:</b>	Class 2.0	Class 1.0 (backup 10.0)	None
<b>Complements:</b>	One X-83 TwinTail starfighter	Two Landspeeders or six speeder bikes	Depends on configuration
<b>Personnel:</b>	Crew: 2 Passengers: 20	Crew: 5 Passengers: 50	Crew: 15 Passengers: 200
<b>Make:</b>	Koensayr Manufacturing	Corellian Engineering Corporation/ Mon Calamari Shipyards	Corellian Engineering Corporation

	<i>Sabertooth-class Rescue &amp; Assault Vessel</i>	<i>ShaShore-class frigate</i>	<i>Scythe-class battle cruiser</i>	<i>Tri-Scythe-class frigate</i>
<b>Armament:</b>	Light (30 turbo; 20 point-defence)	Moderate (60 turbolasers; 20 point-defence; 20 torpedo)	Heavy (30 hvy turbolasers; 60 turbo; 20 ion; 40 torpedo)	Moderate (100 turbolasers; 20 point-defence; 40 torpedo)
<b>Armour:</b>	780 hp	900 hp	1900 hp	920 hp
<b>Hyperdrive</b>	Class 1.0 (backup 10.0)	Class 1.0 (backup 10.0)	Class 0.75 (backup 8.0)	Class 1.0 (backup 10.0)
<b>Complements:</b>	None	CF9 Crossfire starfighter (24); shuttle (2)	CF9 Crossfire starfighter (36); shuttle (4)	CF9 Crossfire starfighter (12); shuttle (2)
<b>Personnel:</b>	Crew: 800; Troops: 300	Crew: 1200; Troops: 250	Crew: 5200; Troops: 1500	Crew: 1400; Troops: 250
<b>Make:</b>	---	Mon Calamari Shipyards	Mon Calamari Shipyards	Mon Calamari Shipyards

### Empress Teta Fleet (Included within GA):

	<i>Viper-class starfighter</i>	<i>Blackbird-class stealth starfighter</i>	<i>Raptor-class bomber</i>
<b>Climbing Rate:</b>	Low	Low	Low
<b>Manoeuvrability:</b>	Low	Low	Moderate
<b>Armament:</b>	Light (Three double-medium laser cannons)	Light (Three double-medium laser cannons)	Heavy (laser cannons; light laser cannon; interceptor missiles; proton torpedo salvo; ion bomb)
<b>Speed (in atm):</b>	1500 km/hr	1500 km/hr	1200 km/hr
<b>Shielding/Armour:</b>	150 hp	140 hp	150 hp
<b>Sensory Package:</b>	Navicomputer	Adv. Navicomputer	Navicomputer
<b>Hyperdrive:</b>	Class 1.0	Class 0.5	Class 1.0
<b>Special Feats:</b>	None	Stealth + Sensors	None
<b>Make:</b>	Tetan Fleet Systems	Tetan Fleet Systems	Tetan Fleet Systems

	<i>Valkyrie-class Battlestar</i>	<i>Ares-class fighter platform</i>	<i>The Empress Gem (Valkyrie-class Battlestar)</i>
<b>Armament:</b>	Heavy (60 long-ranged turbo; 60 hvy turbo; 60 turbo;12 ion; 12 torpedo)	Light (5 hvy turbolaser)	Heavy (60 long-ranged turbo; 60 hvy turbo; 60 turbo;12 ion; 12 torpedo)
<b>Armour:</b>	1900 hp	1000 hp	2500 hp
<b>Hyperdrive</b>	Class 0.75 (backup 8.0)	Class 0.5 (backup 5.0)	Class 0.5 (backup 8.0)
<b>Complements:</b>	shuttle (6)	<i>Viper</i> -class starfighter (100); <i>Raptor</i> -class bomber (100); <i>Blackbird</i> -class stealth fighter (50); shuttle (10)	shuttle (6)
<b>Personnel:</b>	Crew: 5200; Troops: 1200	Crew: 1000 Pilots: 500	Crew: 5200; Troops: 1200
<b>Make:</b>	Tetan Fleet Systems	Tetan Fleet Systems	Tetan Fleet Systems

### Galactic Empire Fleet:

	<i>Predator-class starfighter</i>	<i>TIE/D Mark II Defender</i>	<i>Fury-class starfighter</i>	<i>Neutralizer- class bomber</i>
<b>Climbing Rate:</b>	High	High	High	Moderate
<b>Manoeuvrability:</b>	High	High	Moderate	Low
<b>Armament:</b>	Light (two double medium laser cannons)	Heavy (four cannons; two ion cannons; two proton torpedoes)	Light (Adv. Hvy laser cannons)	Moderate (double medium laser cannon; proton torpedoes)
<b>Speed (in atm):</b>	1500 km/hr	1680 km/hr	1320 km/hr	1500 km/hr
<b>Shielding/Armour:</b>	100 hp	175 hp (+ regenerating shields)	180 hp	120 hp
<b>Sensory Package:</b>	Navicomputer	Navicomputer	Navicomputer	Navicomputer
<b>Hyperdrive:</b>	Class 1.0	Class 1.0	Class 0.75	Class 1.0
<b>Special Feats:</b>	None	None	None	None
<b>Make:</b>	Sienar Fleet Systems	Sienar Fleet Systems	SoroSuub Corporation	Sienar Fleet Systems



	<i>Nune-class shuttle</i>	<i>Sigma-class long-ranged shuttle</i>
<b>Climbing Rate:</b>	Low	Low
<b>Manoeuvrability:</b>	Moderate	Low
<b>Armament:</b>	Moderate (Medium laser cannons; double hvy laser cannons)	Light (Double hvy laser cannons)
<b>Speed (in atm):</b>	900 km/hr	950 km/hr
<b>Shielding/Armour:</b>	150 hp	130 hp
<b>Sensory Package:</b>	Navicomputer	Navicomputer
<b>Hyperdrive:</b>	Class 1.0 (backup 10.0)	Class 1.0 (backup 8.0)
<b>Complements:</b>	None	None
<b>Personnel:</b>	Crew: 8 Passengers: 35	Crew: 1 Passengers: 10
<b>Make:</b>	Sienar Fleet Systems	Sienar Fleet Systems

	<i>Ardent-class fast frigate</i>	<i>Pellaeon-class Star Destroyer</i>	<i>Imperious-class Advanced Star Destroyer</i>
<b>Armament:</b>	Moderate (50 hvy turbolasers; 30 turbolasers; 50 point-defence)	Heavy: (50 hvy turbolasers; 50 turbolasers; 40 ion; 50 torpedo)	Heavy: (50 hvy turbolasers; 50 turbolasers; 40 ion cannons; 50 torpedo)
<b>Armour:</b>	1200 hp	2350 hp	2500 hp
<b>Hyperdrive</b>	Class 1.0 (backup 12.0)	Class 0.75	Class 0.75
<b>Complements:</b>	<i>Predator-class</i> starfighters (12)	<i>Predator-class</i> starfighters (48); <i>Nune-class</i> shuttle (6)	<i>Predator-class</i> starfighters (48); <i>Neutralizer-class</i> bomber (12); <i>Nune-class</i> shuttle (6)
<b>Personnel:</b>	Crew 1400; Troops: 200	Crew: 8450; Troops: 2700	Crew: 6700; Troops: 3000
<b>Make:</b>	Kuat Drive Yards	Kuat Drive Yards	Kuat Drive Yards



	<b>The Enslaver (Imperious-class Advanced Star Destroyer)</b>	<b>The Imperatrix (Imperious-class Advanced Star Destroyer)</b>	<b>The Dread Lord (Dread Lord- class Star Dreadnought)</b>	<b>The Praetorian (Imperious-class Advanced Star Destroyer)</b>
<b>Affiliation:</b>	Galactic Empire (Lord Tyranid)	Galactic Empire (Empress Amelia)	Galactic Empire (Empress Amelia)	Galactic Empire
<b>Armament:</b>	Heavy (50 hvy turbolaser; 50 turbolaser; 40 ion cannons; 50 torpedo)	Heavy (50 hvy turbolaser; 50 turbolaser; 40 ion cannons; 50 torpedo)	Heavy (10 planetary turbo; 550 hvy turbo; 500 turbo;10 long- range turbolaser; 4 planetary ion; 75 ion)	Light (100 turbolaser; 30 ion cannons)
<b>Armour:</b>	3000 hp	3000 hp	5000 hp	2000 hp
<b>Hyperdrive</b>	Class 0.5 (backup 8.0)	Class 0.5 (backup 8.0)	Class 0.5 (backup 5.0)	Class 0.5 (backup 8.0)
<b>Complements:</b>	<i>Predator-class</i> starfighters (48); <i>Neutralizer-class</i> bomber (12); <i>Nune-class</i> shuttle (6)	<i>Predator-class</i> starfighters (48); <i>Neutralizer-class</i> bomber (12); <i>Nune-class</i> shuttle (6)	<i>Predator-class</i> starfighter (600); <i>Neutralizer-class</i> bomber (100); shuttles; walkers (100)	shuttles (10)
<b>Personnel:</b>	Crew: 6700; Troops: 3000	Crew: 6700; Troops: 3000	Crew: 712000; Troops: 150000	Crew: 100000
<b>Make:</b>	Kuat Drive Yards	Kuat Drive Yards	Kuat Drive Yards	Kuat Drive Yards

	<b>AT-AHT</b>	<b>AT-RCT</b>	<b>Century Mark V Tank</b>	<b>Kybucket Speeder Bike</b>
<b>Armament:</b>	Heavy (Hvy laser cannons; hvy blaster cannons)	Light (double medium blaster cannons; suppression cannons or grenade launcher)	Medium (dual hvy blaster cannon; light and medium blaster cannons)	Light (weapon)
<b>Armour:</b>	350 hp	120 hp	200 hp (+ regenerating shields)	50 hp
<b>Speed:</b>	80 km/hr	90 km/hr	60 km/hr	500 km/hr
<b>Complements:</b>	8 speeder bikes or 3 AT-RCTs	None	None	None
<b>Personnel:</b>	Crew: 5 Troops: 60	Crew: 2	Crew: 3	Crew: 1
<b>Make:</b>	Kuat Drive Yards	Kuat Drive Yards	Santhe/Sienar Technologies	Aratech Repulsor Company



	<i>Phoenix-class Aircraft Carrier</i>	<i>Ironclad-class Battleship</i>	<i>Mammoth-class Frigate</i>	<i>Kraken-class Destroyer</i>	<i>Shark Underwater Fighter</i>
<b>Armament:</b>	Light (2 hvy turbolasers; 10 turbo; 4 missile)	Heavy (20 hvy turbo; 50 turbolaser; 80 laser cannon; missile launcher)	Moderate (4 hvy turbo; 10 turbolaser; 10 laser cannons; missile launcher)	Moderate (4 hvy turbo; 8 turbolaser; 8 laser cannon)	Light (laser cannons)
<b>Armour:</b>	500 hp	500 hp	300 hp	250 hp	100 hp
<b>Speed:</b>	40 km/hr	60 km/hr	60 km/hr	60 km/hr	40 km/hr
<b>Complements:</b>	<i>Predator-class starfighter</i> (192); <i>Neutralizer-class bomber</i> (36); shuttles	Shark Underwater Fighter (2)	None	Shark Underwater Fighter (2)	None
<b>Personnel:</b>	Crew: 800; Pilots: 300	Crew: 150 Troops: 40	Crew: 80 Troops: 10	Crew: 50 Troops: 10	Crew: 1
<b>Make:</b>	---	---	---	---	Santhe/Sienar Technologies

	<i>The Overlord</i>	<i>Leviathan-class Attack Submarine</i>
<b>Armament:</b>	Heavy (3 planetary turbo; 100 hvy turbo; 100 turbo; 1 planetary ion; 4 missile guns)	Heavy (1 planetary turbolaser; 1 hvy turbolaser; torpedo)
<b>Armour:</b>	700 hp	500 hp
<b>Speed (underwater):</b>	50 km/hr	30 km/hr
<b>Complements:</b>	<i>Predator-class starfighter</i> (24); <i>Neutralizer-class bomber</i> (6)	<i>Predator-class starfighter</i> (50)
<b>Personnel:</b>	Crew: 3000; Troops: 250	Crew: 200 Pilots: 50

### The Hapes Consortium Fleet:

	<b>Hapan <i>Miy'til</i> starfighter</b>	<b>Hapan <i>Miy'til</i> assault bomber</b>
<b>Climbing Rate:</b>	Moderate	Moderate
<b>Manoeuvrability:</b>	Moderate	Moderate
<b>Armament:</b>	Heavy (4 laser cannons; ion cannon; proton torpedo)	Moderate (laser cannons; concussion missile)
<b>Speed (in atm):</b>	1200 km/hr	1200 km/hr
<b>Shielding/Armour:</b>	130 hp	180 hp
<b>Sensory Package:</b>	Astromech Droid	Navicomputer
<b>Hyperdrive:</b>	Class 1.5 (backup 8.0)	Class 1.2 (backup 2.0)
<b>Special Feats:</b>	None	None
<b>Make:</b>	Olanji/Charubah	Olanji/Charubah

	<b>Hapan Battle Dragon</b>	<b>Hapan <i>Nova</i>-class cruiser</b>	<b>The <i>Dragon Queen</i> (Hapan Battle Dragon)</b>
<b>Affiliation:</b>	The Hapes Consortium	The Hapes Consortium	The Hapes Consortium (Alys Nalah Djo)
<b>Armament:</b>	Moderate (40 turbo; 40 ion; 2 triple-ion; 10 torpedo)	Moderate (25 turbo; 10 point-defence; 10 ion cannons)	Moderate (40 turbo; 40 ion; 2 triple-ion; 10 torpedo)
<b>Armour:</b>	1100 hp	700 hp (+regenerating shields)	2500 hp
<b>Hyperdrive</b>	Class 2.0 (backup 14.0)	Class 1.5 (backup 12.0)	Class 0.5 (backup 8.0)
<b>Complements:</b>	Miy'til starfighters (36)	Miy'til starfighter (24); Miy'til bomber (6)	Miy'til starfighters (36)
<b>Personnel:</b>	Crew: 1400; Troops: 500	Crew: 1800; Troops: 600	Crew: 1400; Troops: 500
<b>Make:</b>	Olanjii/Charubah	Hapes Consortium	Olanjii/Charubah

**Thrak Zann's Crime Syndicate Fleet:**

	<i>StarViper</i> -class attack platform	TIE/sa Interdictor
<b>Climbing Rate:</b>	Moderate	Low
<b>Manoeuvrability:</b>	High	Low
<b>Armament:</b>	Heavy (twin double hvy laser cannons; proton torpedoes)	Heavy (laser cannons; proton torpedoes; conc. missiles; bombs)
<b>Speed (in atm):</b>	1320 km/hr	850 km/hr
<b>Shielding/Armour:</b>	160 hp	200 hp
<b>Sensory Package:</b>	Navicomputer	Navicomputer
<b>Hyperdrive:</b>	Class 1.0	Class 1.5
<b>Special Feats:</b>	None	None
<b>Make:</b>	MandalMotors/ Mandal Hypernavitics	Sienar Fleet Systems

	<i>Venator</i> -class Star Destroyer
<b>Armament:</b>	Moderate (8 hvy turbolasers; 2 medium turbolasers; turbolasers; 52 point- defences; 4 torpedo tubes)
<b>Armour:</b>	2000 hp
<b>Hyperdrive</b>	Class 1.0 (backup 15.0)
<b>Complements:</b>	<i>StarViper</i> -class fighter (240); TIE/sa Interdictor (36); shuttles
<b>Personnel:</b>	Crew: 7400; Troops: 2000
<b>Make:</b>	Kuat Drive Yards (Mod. By Thrak Zann)

	<b>BX-series droid commando</b>	<b>BX-series elite droid commando</b>
<b>Armaments:</b>	Moderate (assault blaster rifle; thermal detonators)	Heavy (electro-staff; assault blaster rifle; thermal detonators)
<b>Armour:</b>	40 hp	55 hp (+ cortosis gauntlets)
<b>Special Feats:</b>	Adv weapons training; Adv rifle training; Adv counter-measure training	All of previous; Adv coordination; Adv melee training
<b>Make:</b>	Baktoid Combat Automata	Baktoid Combat Automata

### The Fringe: Renz:

	<b>Red Diamond (YT-2400)</b>
<b>Climbing Rate:</b>	Low
<b>Manoeuvrability:</b>	Moderate
<b>Armament:</b>	Light (Hvy dual laser cannons; missile tubes)
<b>Speed (in atm):</b>	1000 km/hr
<b>Shielding/Armour:</b>	250 hp
<b>Sensory Package:</b>	Adv. Navicomputer
<b>Hyperdrive:</b>	Class 0.5 (backup 8.0)
<b>Special Feats:</b>	Adv. Sensors + Stealth
<b>Make:</b>	Corellian Engineering Corporation

### Approximate Hyperspace Travel-Time Equations:

<b>Distance (parsecs):</b>	<b>Approximate Time-Travel Equations:</b>
$\leq 10$ pc	$(1 \text{ hr} \cdot (\text{distance in parsecs})) \cdot (\text{hyperdrive class})$
$11 \text{ pc} < \text{distance} \leq 100 \text{ pc}$	$(10 \text{ hrs} + (\frac{1}{2} \text{ hr} \cdot \text{distance in parsecs} / 4)) \cdot (\text{hyperdrive class})$
$101 \text{ pc} < \text{distance} \leq 1000 \text{ pc}$	$(22.5 \text{ hrs} + (\frac{1}{2} \text{ hr} \cdot \text{distance in parsecs} / 50)) \cdot (\text{hyperdrive class})$
$> 1000 \text{ pc}$	$(32.5 \text{ hrs} + (\frac{1}{2} \text{ hr} \cdot \text{distance in parsecs} / 150)) \cdot (\text{hyperdrive class})$

Path Modifiers: Major/commercial lanes: dec. 30%; Secondary lanes: dec. 20%; Hyperspace beacon present: dec. 10%; Standard lane: standard time; Uncharted lane: inc. 25%;

Pilot Skill Modifiers: Extensive knowledge: dec. 30%; Limited knowledge: dec. 20%; Hearsay knowledge: standard time; No knowledge: inc. 25%;

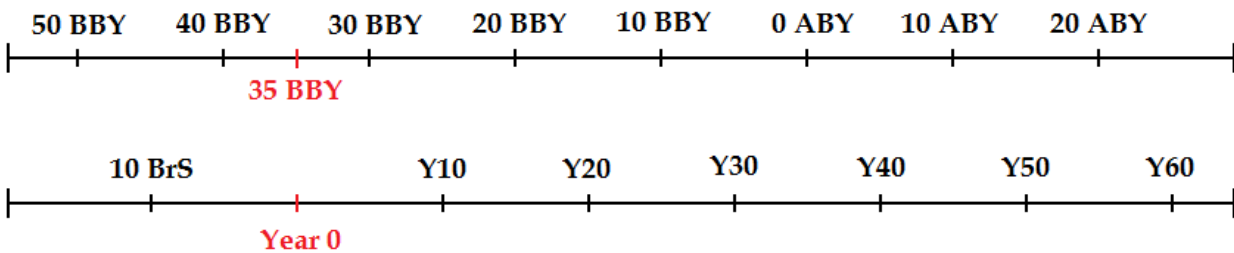
Gravity Modifiers (each): Planets/planetoids: inc. time 0.1%; Stars: inc. time 0.5%; Hypergravity anomalies (black hole, neutron stars, star clusters, interdiction fields, etc): inc. time 1% to 5%;



### Phonetic Alphabet:

A	Atom	N	Nebula
B	Bacta	O	Optic
C	Constellation	P	Prince
D	Delta	Q	Quasar
E	Echo	R	Rho
F	Foxtrot	S	Sabacc
G	Gamma	T	Tango
H	Halo	U	Uniform
I	Icon	V	Vortex
J	Juno	W	Whiskey
K	Kessel	X	X-Ray
L	Lucas	Y	Yavin
M	Meteor	Z	Zeta

### Star Wars Timeline:



1 Year = 368 Days

1 minute = 60 seconds

60 minutes = 1 hour

24 hours = 1 day

5 days = 1 week

35 days = 7 weeks = 1 month

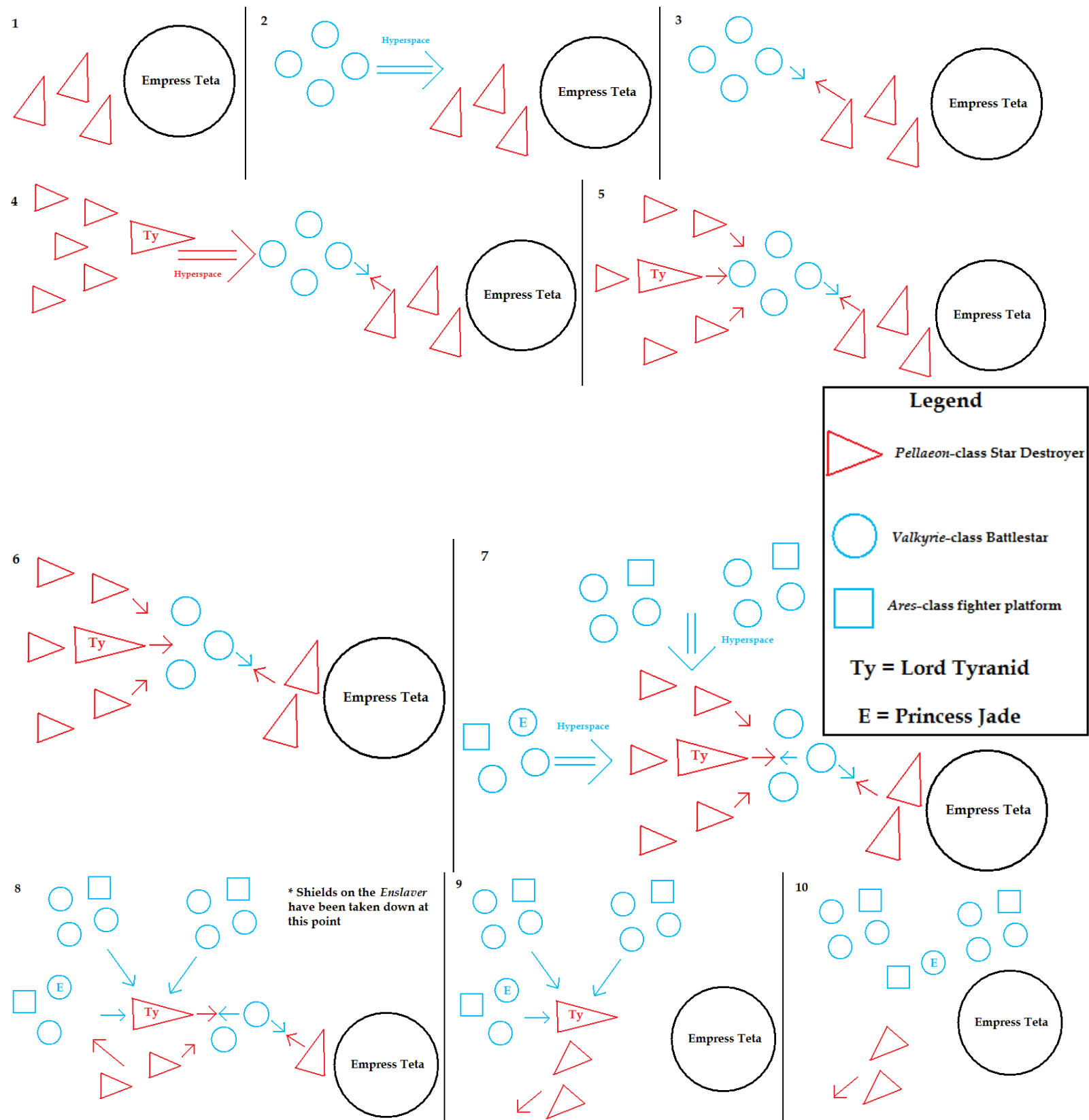
10 Months + 3 weeks + 3 days = 10 Months + 1 Short Month = 1 year

Standard Notation: After ReSynchronization (Year:Month:Day)

Before ReSynchronization (Year BrS)

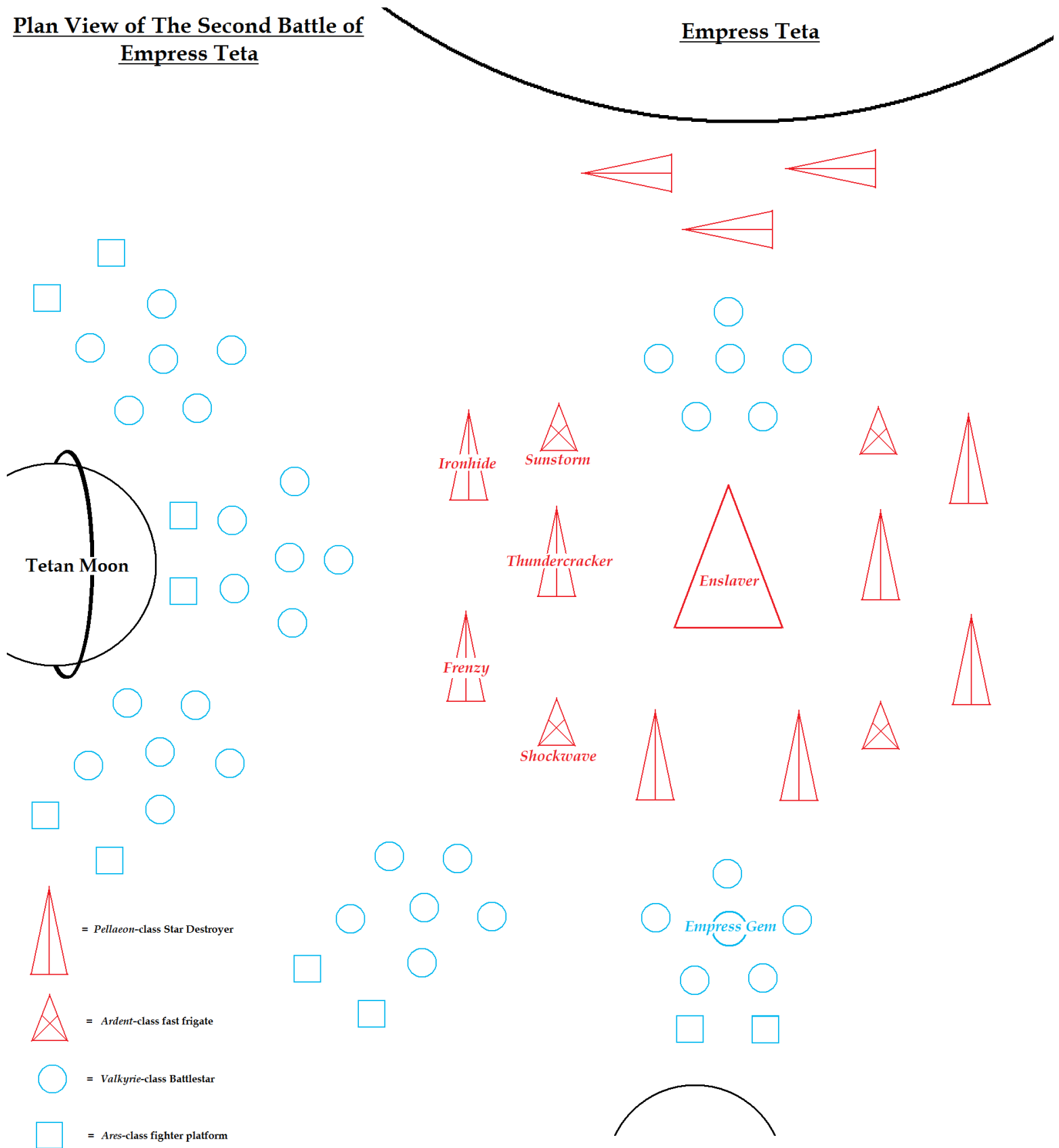


## The Second Battle of Empress Teta:

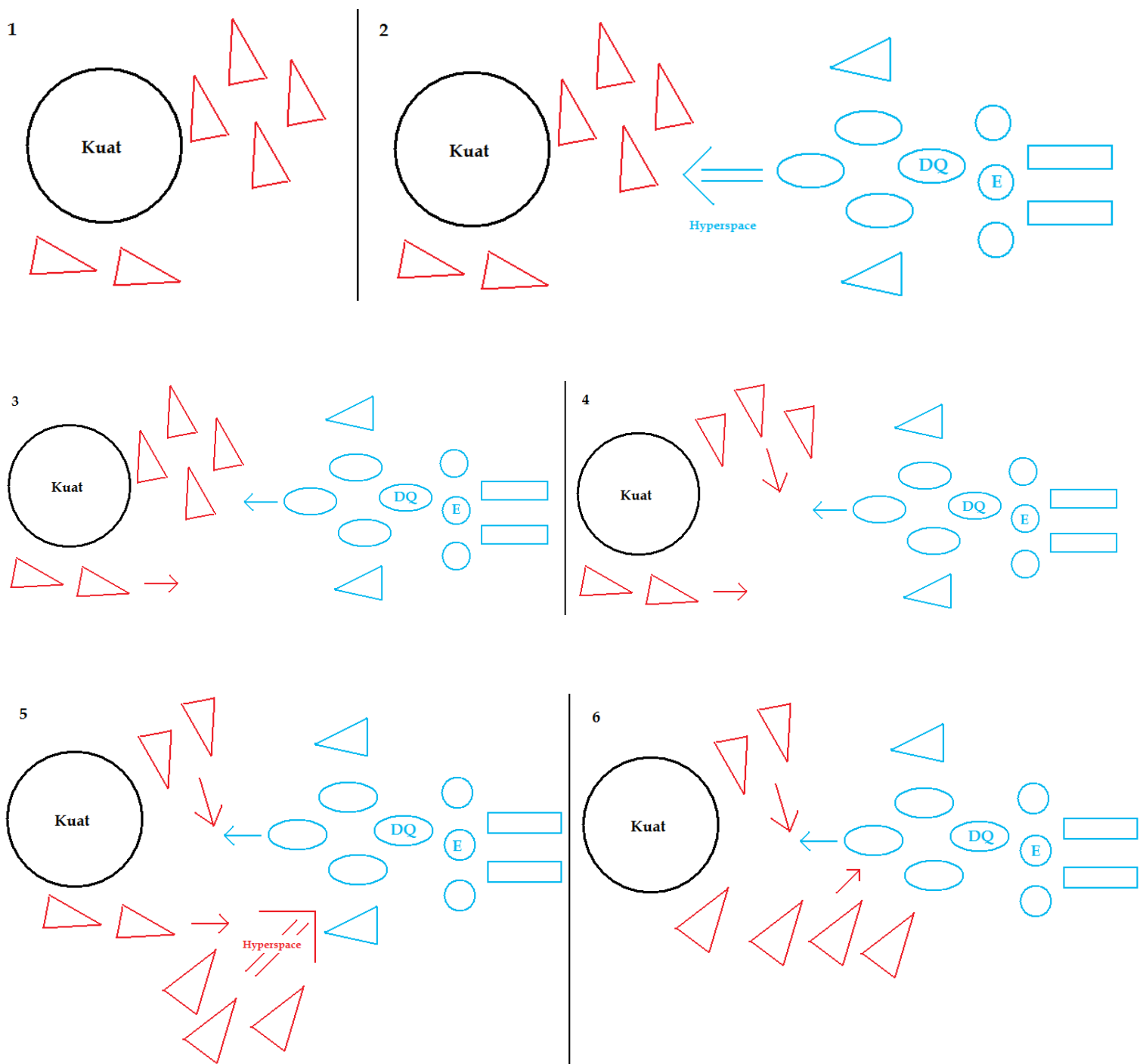


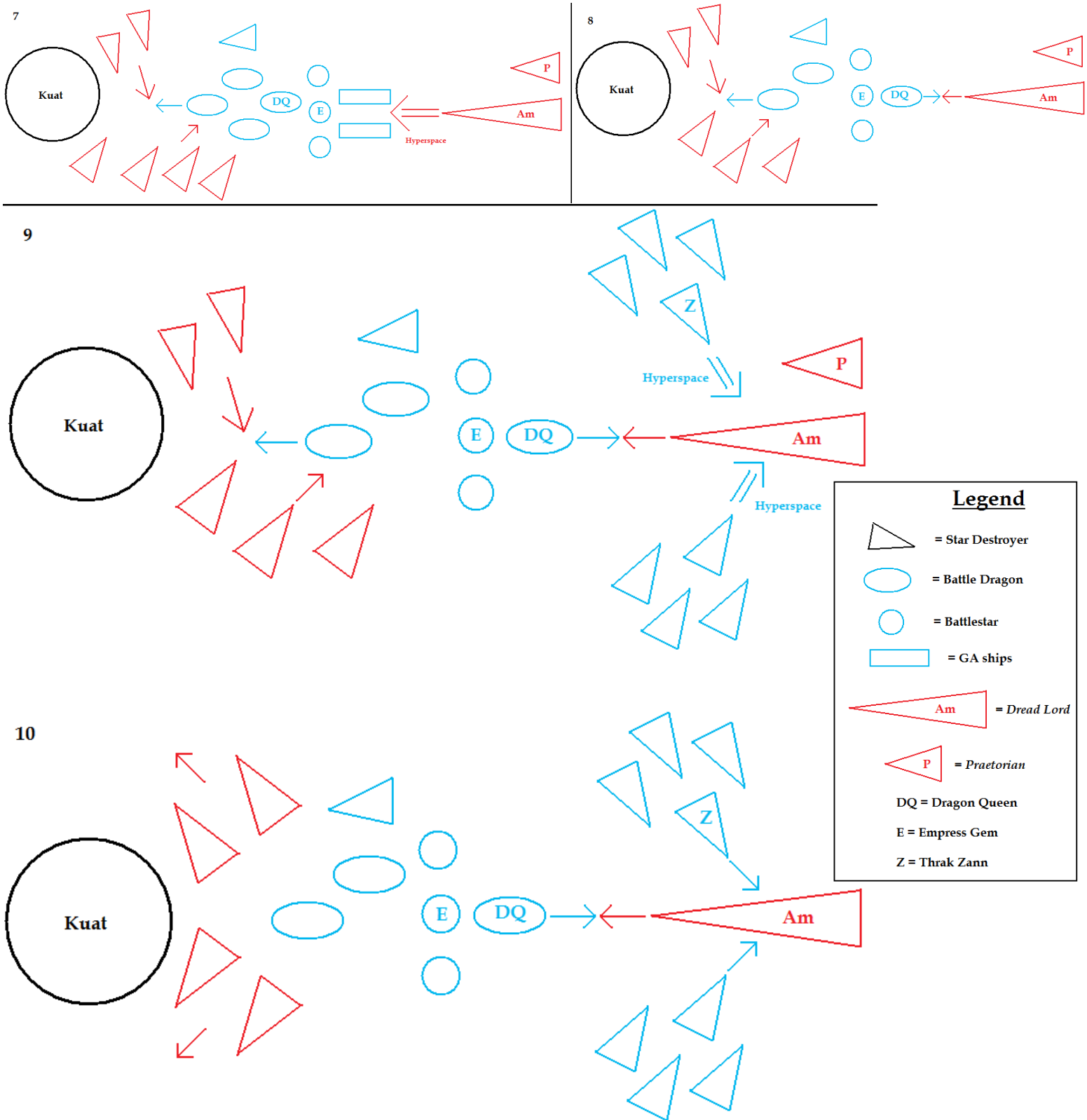
## Plan View of The Second Battle of Empress Teta

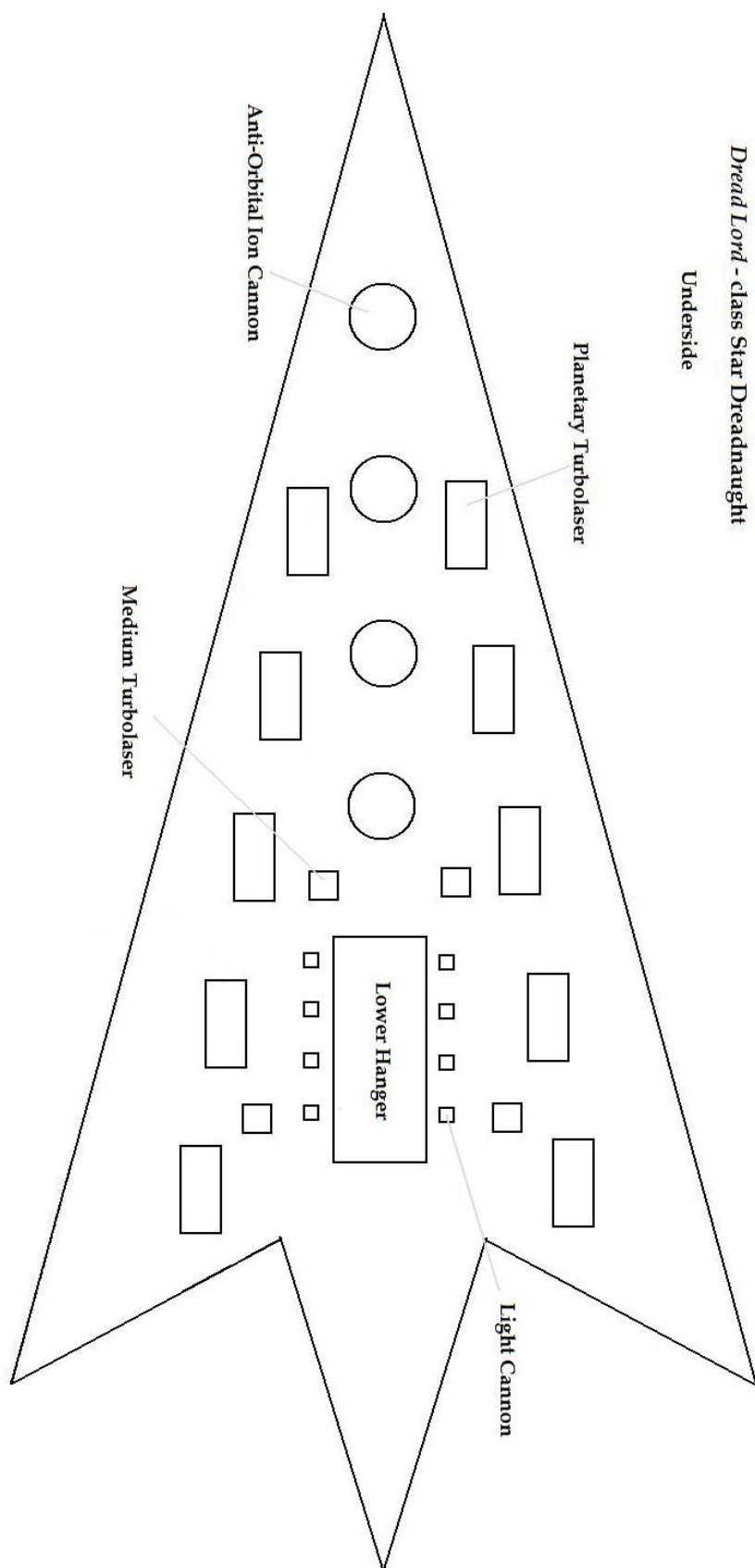
## Empress Teta

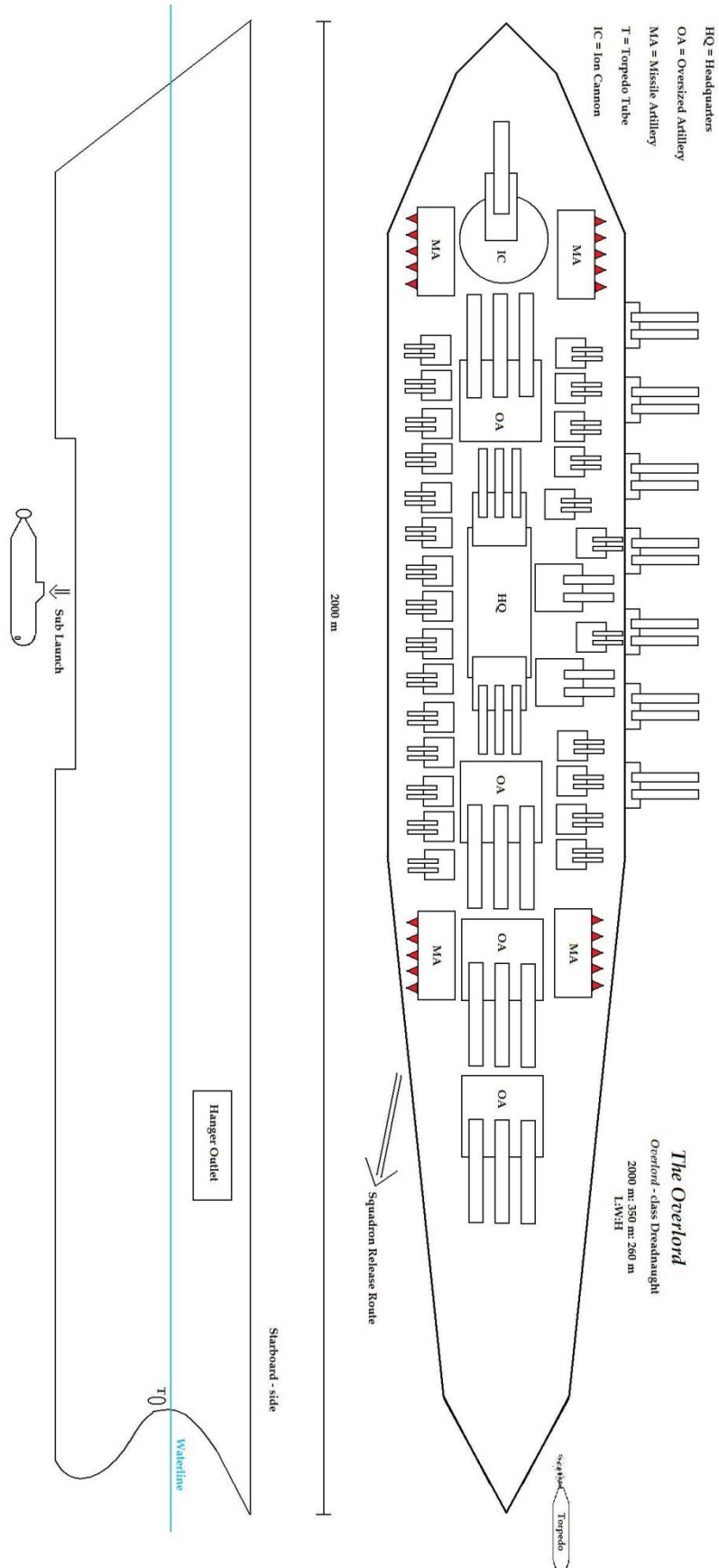


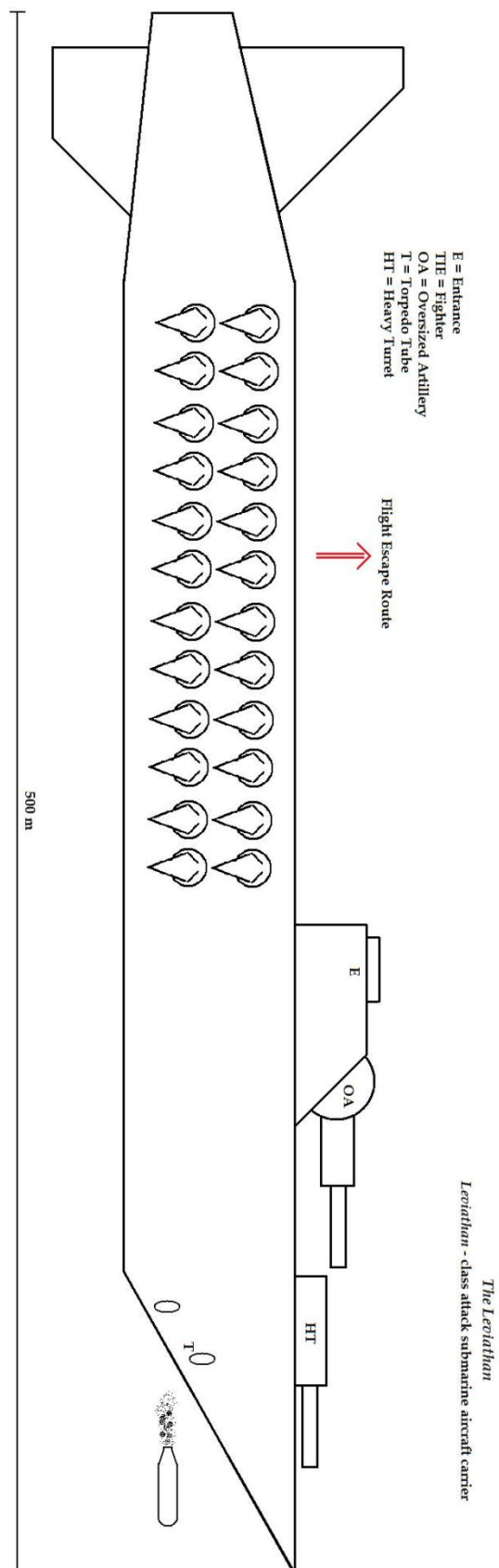
## The Battle of Kuat:



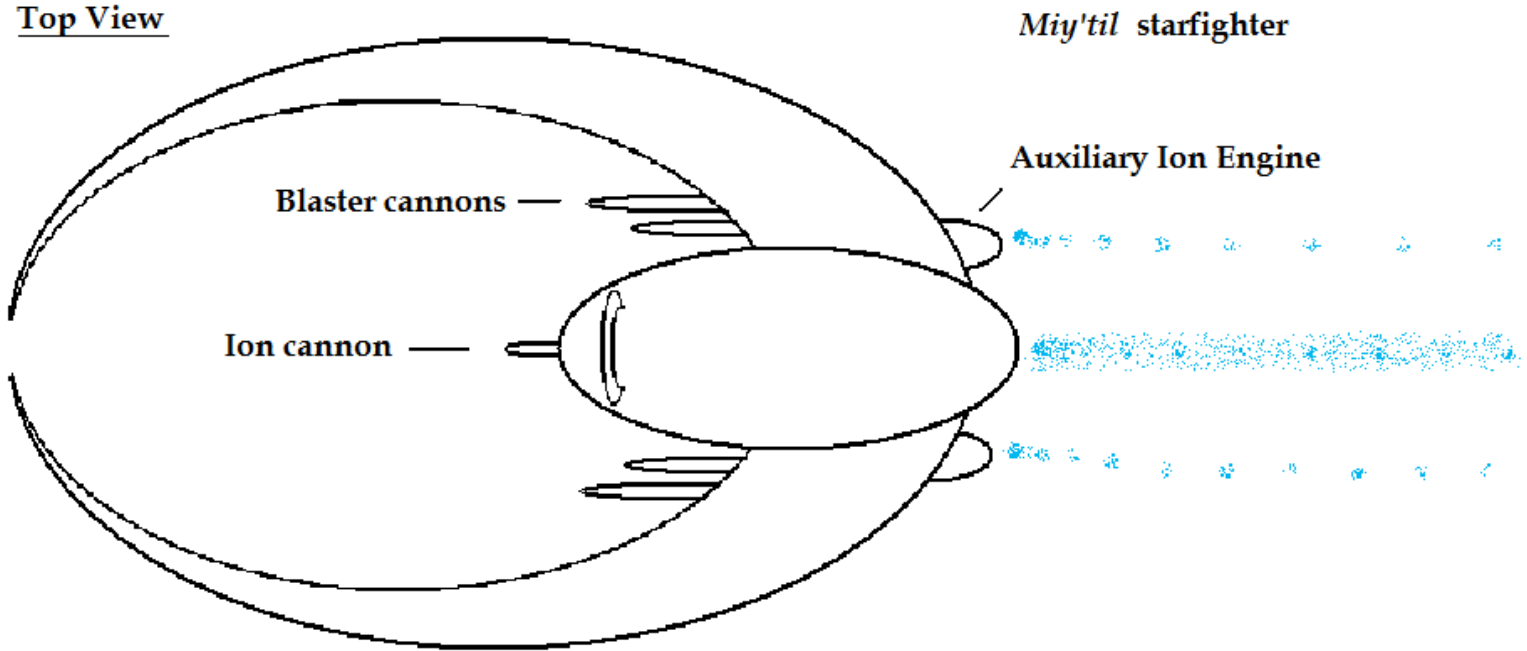




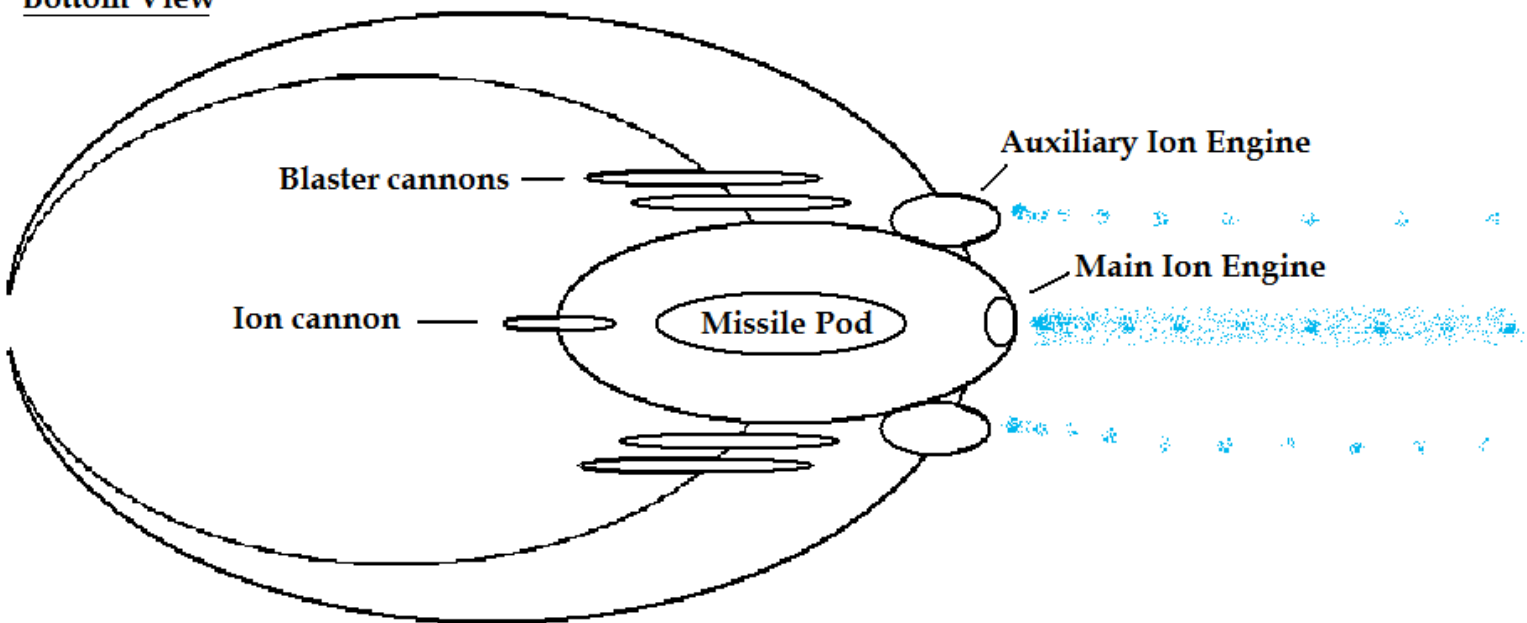




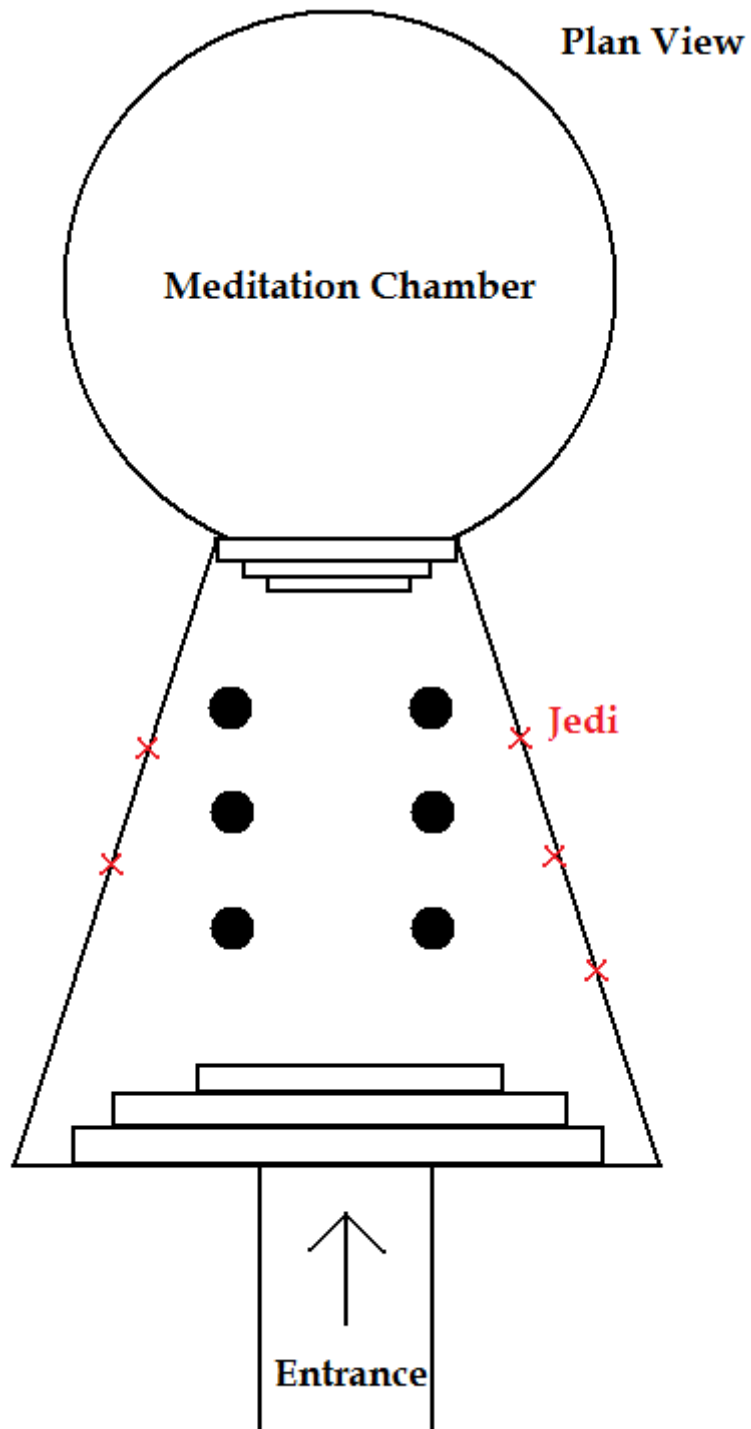
Top View

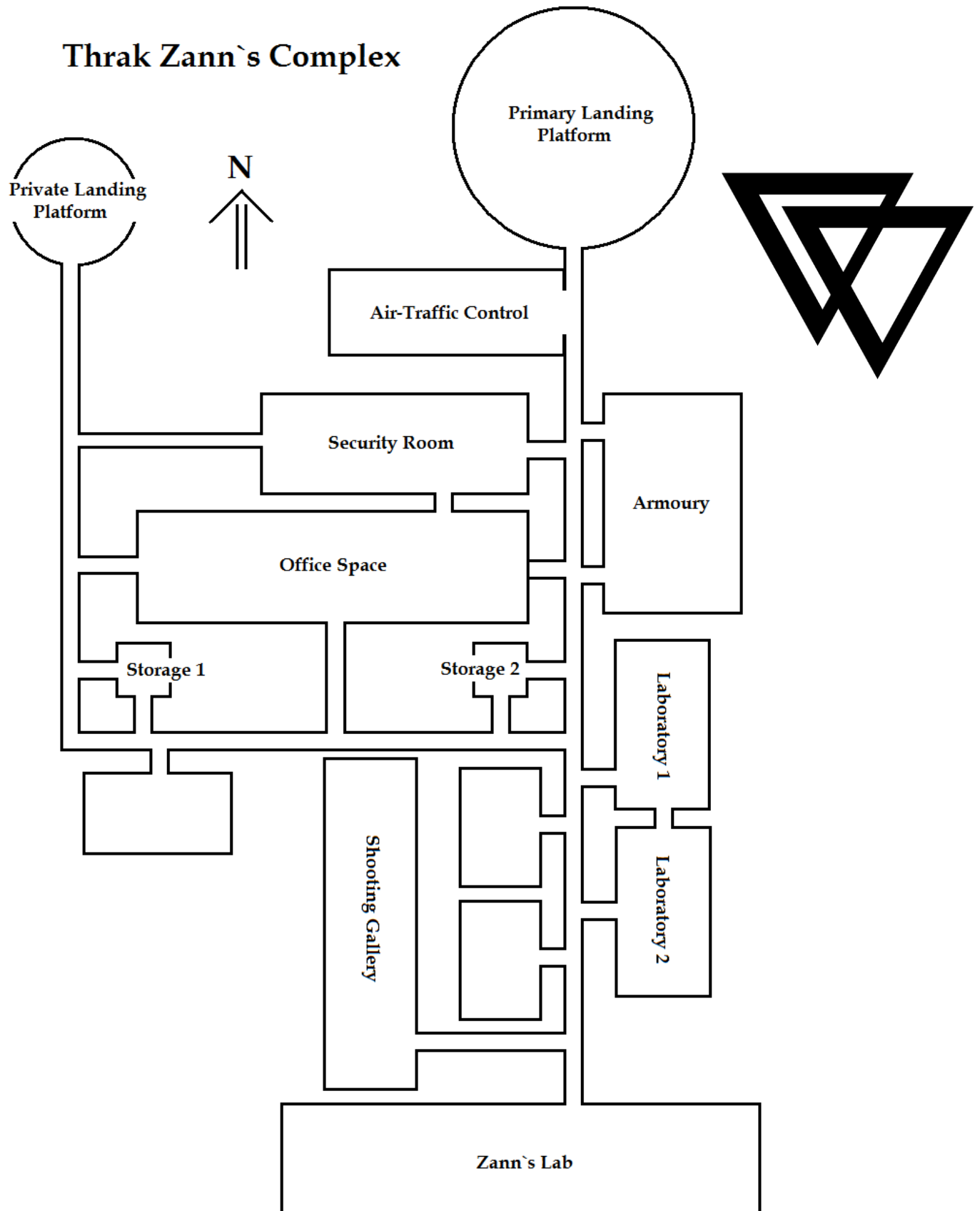


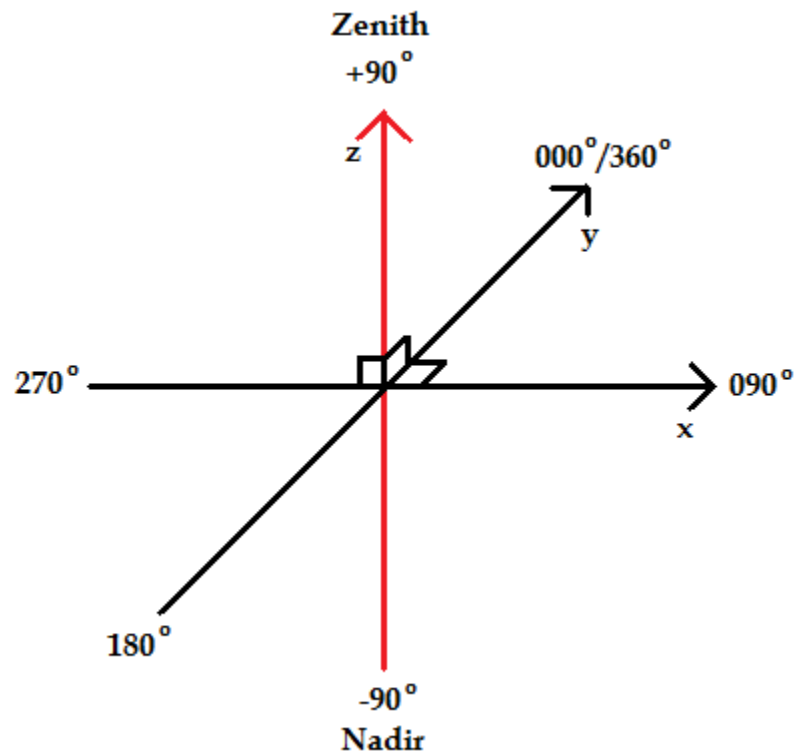
Bottom View



**Empress Amelia's Meditation Chamber onboard the *Dread Lord*:**





**Spherical Coordinate System:**

**Bearing:** denotes a direction, ranging in angles 000° through to 359° on the xy-plane

**Zenith:** denotes a vertical angle, ranging from +00° through to +90° on the upper half of the xyz-space

**Nadir:** denotes a vertical angle, ranging from -00° through to -90° on the lower half of the xyz-space

**Range:** denotes the distance an object is from the origin (0,0,0) while in xyz-space; modifiers include adding the terms 'closing' or 'retreating' to denote an object incoming or outgoing, respectively (if known, a velocity for the object may be added)

**E.g.)** Bearing two-one-zero, nadir forty degrees, range ten kilometres retreating (this denotes a target located at seven o'clock (behind you), and below the horizontal plane by forty degrees, and ten kilometres away, heading away from you)

**Author's Notes:**

The last book in the trilogy, and I must say, what a pleasure it has been to write them. Although it has been thrilling, and fun to write these novels, a dream for several years now, it is also good to finally put them behind me. Although Star Wars will always be a part of my life, being part of the franchise is agonizing work. Finally, I can relax and enjoy Star Wars like everyone else. Although I might be done this trilogy, another one might be just around the corner. Now, enough about me, let's begin the real fun stuff, philosophy.

Philosophically, this book is quite similar to the last one, Eclipse; they both have characters that start the novel in one faction, and in the end wind up in another. Tycho Xar in the last one started off as a Sith Knight, fighting for the Empire; as we know, he winds up fighting with the Resistance, against the Sith. Now, you might think, wait a minute, Jedi Malakon starts off as a Jedi, and ends as a Jedi. This is true, but you must look at the path he takes. Jedi Malakon starts off as a typical, over-idealistic, over-adventurous, gung-ho Jedi Knight at the beginning of the novel (which actually takes place during the same time period as the second novel), and over the course of the novel, his spirit breaks. As we progress through the novel, he slowly descends into madness, and slides towards the dark-side. Although he never takes on the mantle of Sith, his mind-set, and his inability to control his emotions, make him, for all intents and purposes, like a Sith. The one fundamental difference between the two characters; Jedi Malakon succeeds where Tycho Xar fails. Jedi Malakon realizes that fighting fire with fire is not the answer.

This brings us to our next interesting philosophical tidbit; can you fight fire with fire? Some people would say yes, of course you can. Someone lashes out at you, lash back and twice as hard. If the other guy is afraid of you, and fears your retribution so much so that he doesn't strike back, does it really matter how you got there? There are plenty of cases where this works; the Cold War, where the Soviet Union and the United States of America engaged in a nuclear arms race. Interestingly, as both nations stockpiled nuclear arms, they feared the other nation's retribution (or counter-attack) so much, not a single shot was fired during the sixty-plus year standoff. Now, although the Cold War didn't start with Russia and The United States waging a war in the first place, they did engage in political warfare, which some might argue is far more complicated and much more deadly. Although this might work in theory, what it really does it perpetuate the cycle. Hate perpetuates hate, and Jedi Malakon finally realizes that at the end of this novel.

One interesting thing about Star Wars is parallelism; Anakin Skywalker losing his hand, as does Luke. Luke and Leia are twins, as are Jacen and Jaina Solo; Anakin Skywalker takes on a droid control starship when he was ten standard years old, while Luke Skywalker takes on the Death Star when he was nineteen. The list can go on and on; well, what about this novel? What about this series? There are several parallels between this series and the rest of Star Wars canon. One, mentioned above, is an example of parallelism between two books within the series. Take for example the story of Tycho Xar; he was a Sith Knight, turned resistance fighter, and in the end takes on Amelia. What happens? Tycho Xar gets crushed by several tonnes of durasteel and debris, where Amelia revives him, and makes him into a cybernetic monstrosity. Where have we heard about that? Darth Vader, General Grievous, and the non-canon dark-side ending to the Force Unleashed starring Galen Marek, a.k.a. Starkiller.

Take Jedi Malakon as another example; he is a young, bright, enthusiastic Jedi Knight, who over the course of a long, gruelling, brutal war, plus some hardships, falls victim to his emotions, and slips towards the dark-side of the Force. Sound familiar? It should, because this could be a very vague story of Anakin Skywalker's childhood. Recall, Anakin Skywalker was a bright, talented Jedi, fought several battles during the Clone Wars, losses his mother, and falls in love with Padmé Amidala. Jedi Malakon also parallels two other prominent figure in the Star Wars mythos; Darth Revan, and Jacen Solo. Revan, and his apprentice Malak, were the only two Jedi Knights that went against the Jedi Council, and fought the Mandalorians during the Mandalorian War, and in doing so, turns to the dark-side. This is very similar to Master Yuun Lii and Jedi Malakon, where the only two Jedi to openly fight the Sith and Empire alongside the Galactic Alliance, even though the Jedi High Council forbid it. As a result, Jedi Malakon, while waging the war for many years, coupled with the death of his Master, fell victim to the dark-side of the Force. Jedi Malakon also parallels Jacen Solo, who during The Second Galactic Civil War (aka The Second Corellian Insurrection, aka The Galactic Alliance–Confederation War), turned to the dark-side (specifically the Sith) whom he believed could unify the galaxy, and bring peace through force. Jedi Malakon believes that by allowing his aggressive emotions take control, by falling towards the dark-side, he will have the strength to defeat Amelia, and bring an end to the war, and usher in a new peace within the galaxy.

Speaking of Jacen Solo, and The Second Corellian Insurrection, his idea that forcing a peace on the galaxy through tyranny sounds familiar, doesn't it? It should, it was the motivation behind Tycho Xar's joining the Sith. He believed that, although non-idealistic, the Sith Order under Darth Krayt, then under Amelia, could force a peace

within the galaxy, although by force. He felt that the religious struggle between the Sith and Jedi were tearing the galaxy apart (which it is), and that one faction had to go. He felt that the Jedi were too dogmatic, and too passive to sustain a lasting peace. He did believe that the Sith could impose and enforce a peace within the galaxy. Not an ideal way to usher in peace, but it is peace none-the-less.

The war that makes up the backdrop for this entire series, the Anti-Sith Insurgency (a.k.a. The Second Imperial Civil War) has many parallels to another war one hundred years previous, the Yuuzhan Vong Invasion. Before the Yuuzhan Vong Invasion of 25 ABY, the galaxy was divided and fighting amongst themselves. They never formed a collective and unified society; even the New Republic had internal conflicts, as senators debated endlessly, vied for more power for themselves, and tore down other's reputation. However, when the Yuuzhan Vong invaded the galaxy, it was the first time the various sects within the galaxy perceived a common enemy, and united to fight it. The New Republic, its ally the Hapes Consortium, and its long-time enemy, the Imperial Remnant fought together, sometimes on the same battlefield, against the Yuuzhan Vong. This is similar to the Anti-Sith Insurgency, where the entire galaxy, the Galactic Alliance Remnant, Fel's exiled-Imperials, and the Hapes Consortium perceive the Sith as an equally destructive threat, and allied together to fight it.

Another interesting parallel with the Anti-Sith Insurgency and the Yuuzhan Vong Invasion comes from the Jedi point-of-view. During the Yuuzhan Vong Invasion, the Jedi Order was split between two camps; Luke Skywalker and the "traditionalists", and Kyp Durrón, and the "new radicals". Luke Skywalker had a more holistic, more idealistic (an unfortunately unrealistic) view that the Jedi are guardians, peacekeepers, of the galaxy, not warriors necessarily; he taught a more reactive, slower philosophy towards the war. Kyp Durrón, another Jedi Master, saw the Jedi more of an active organization; he thought the Jedi should actively protect the galaxy, and to use the Force more aggressively, while not turning to the dark-side. Many Jedi fell into both of these camps, as both camps had their advantages and disadvantages. This is similar to the current views held by two Jedi factions; the Jedi Order, under the Jedi High Council, hold that the Jedi should "wait out" the war, and allow the Sith to implode on themselves. Jedi Master Yuun Lii and Jedi Knight Mathias Malakon, on the other hand, see the Sith as too great a threat be left alone; they see time as too slow a tool for them to rely on. They actively wage war against the Sith, side-by-side with other anti-Sith coalitions. These two camps of Jedi divide the entire Order, resulting in internal friction.

The story of Amelia during the first novel parallels another popular, and infamous figure in Star Wars canon; Darth Bane. Darth Bane, a simple coal miner, turned Sith, ushered in a new era for the Sith Order. How? By killing off all the other members of the old Sith Order, thereby ushering in his new Sith Order, devoted to the Rule of Two. Amelia did something similar; she, a farmer's daughter, trained by the Jedi, then by the Sith, killed off the Sith Lord's loyal to Darth Krayt and Darth Wyyrlok (III), thereby imposing her will and her regime to the Sith Order.

Amelia, to a lesser, but more significant, extent parallels Luke Skywalker. During The First Galactic Civil War, Jedi Master Obi-Wan Kenobi and Master Yoda taught Luke Skywalker as if he were going to be a warrior; they taught him only the things he needed to know in order to fight Darth Vader, and rid the galaxy of the Emperor. This more direct, and more aggressive, pathway of learning almost brought Luke Skywalker perilously close to the dark-side (the end of ROTJ, and in the Dark Empire series). Amelia was taught the ways of the Force in a similar way. After the Massacre of Ossus, Master Dwen came across Amelia, and taught her the ways of the Force; rather, she taught her to become a warrior, an instrument that could lash out against the Sith whom destroyed the Order once again. As a result, Amelia's aggression magnified, and without the typical philosophical teachings to go hand-in-hand with the combat training, Amelia was highly susceptible to the dark-side of the Force. When the Sith captured her, and taught her the ways of the dark-side, she immediately, and instinctually grasped onto it; she knew it very well, and could immediately identify with the dark-side much more than the light-side. Had Master Dwen taught Amelia the ways of the Force properly, she might not have been as susceptible to the dark-side, and the galaxy might never have been plunged into darkness for such an extended period of time.

Amelia is a very interesting character, and is the source for all major conflicts and plots throughout the series. Not only does he parallel Star Wars history, but our own as well. Compare Amelia with another historic figure, Napoleon Bonaparte. Napoleon Bonaparte, part of the French Revolution, turned General, turned Emperor. While waging his war in Europe, all other European nations allied against him; his strength and military might made him a beacon to be brought down. Nations that hated each other, allied to fight their common enemy, France, and Napoleon. Amelia, Sith Knight, turned Sith Lord, turned Dark Lord of the Sith and Empress of the Empire, waged a war against the galaxy. As a result of her power, the Galactic Alliance Remnant, the Empire-in-exile, and other renegade factions and separatists allied against her; factions

that would otherwise wage a war amongst themselves found a common enemy. Not since the Yuuzhan Vong Invasion has the galaxy seen such unity.

Even relatively minor characters have parallels with other Star Wars figure. Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo during the second and third novels parallels Princess Leia during the course of Star Wars history. Even Renz parallels Han Solo a little. These are just a few examples, rather the larger ones, that fill the novels. There are several more, smaller ones (probably more references) that fill out the rest of the novels.

With this, I leave you, and bid you a happy farewell. May the Force be with you.

*Sean Funk*

Sean P. Funk



<http://darkness.emerges.tripod.com/>