

STAR WARS

Dark Age II: Eclipse:



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Dramatis Personae

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

**Amelia*: Official Representative of the Sith Order

Anj Dahl: Rouge Leader

Antares Draco: Imperial Master

**Artemes Adoug*: Tetan High Commander

**Dannen Logan*: Imperial Rear Admiral

Fehlaur: Moff; Head of the Imperial Diplomatic Corps

**Gabriel*: Prince of Empress Teta; brother to Lerona Jade

Ganner Krieg: Imperial Knight

Gar Stazi: Galactic Alliance Supreme Commander

Geist: Moff; Head of the Imperial Army

**Havok*: Imperial Admiral; Sith Lord

**Indomita, Darth*: Sith Lord

Jhoram Bey: Galactic Alliance Captain

K'Kruhk: Jedi Master; member of the Jedi High Council

Konrad Rus: Moff; Head of the Imperial Mission

**Lerona Teta Jade*: Princess, and leader, of the Empress Teta system

**Mathias Malakon*: Jedi Knight

Marasiah Fel: Imperial Knight; Imperial heir to the throne

Morlish Veed: High Moff; Grand Admiral of the Imperial Forces

Nihl, Darth: Sith Lord; Amelia's Fist

Nyna Calixte: Moff; Director of Imperial Intelligence

Rav: Former pirate; gangster; current owner of the *Crimson Axe*

**Red*: Amelia's Claw

**Reeve Graf*: Smuggler

Roan Fel: Emperor of the Empire-in-exile

Rulf Yage: Moff; Head of the Imperial Navy

**Sarn*: Imperial Admiral

Shado Vao: Jedi Knight

T'ra Saa: Jedi Master; member of the Jedi High Council

**Thrak Zann*: Engineer; gangster

Tili Qua: Jedi Master; member of the Jedi High Council

**Tycho Xar*: Sith Knight

**Vadic, Darth*: Sith Lord

Wolf Sazen: Jedi Knight

**Yuun Lii*: Jedi Master

* Denotes original characters



Beachhead

The Razor Coast, Jabiiim: 138 ABY:

The morning fog was thick, and opaque; it lingered just above the water line. The sea was rough and choppy. The large, black coloured, heavily armoured amphibious assault vehicles rose and crashed into the waves. Luckily the top was covered, and the water wasn't allowed to spill over the top. The amphibious assault vehicles could hold up to thirty EVO troopers, a driver, and a gunner for the top, dorsal laser cannon. EVO troopers were some of the most battle hardened, most professional troopers in the Empire; they wear specialized white, hyper-hardened plastoid armour of higher-grade than standard stormtroopers that is more durable, and stronger. Over fifty amphibious assault vehicles were headed towards the Razor Coast; they were escorted by another hundred corvettes, fast frigates, and destroyers. The battleships, and the *Overlord*, were behind them towards the northeast, shelling the enemy lines. Simultaneously, enemy shells could be heard striking the choppy water around them. The impacts on the water caused the amphibious assault vehicles to rock and shake violently. *Neutralizer*-class bombers were bombarding the enemy bunker positions and trenches, while *Predator*-class starfighters were providing aerial support. As they flew over the armada of amphibious assault vehicles, the screech of their engines could be heard echoing in the troop section. Suddenly, there was an unsettling sound of an explosion nearby.

Tycho Xar, Sith Knight, was one of the few non-stormtroopers in the amphibious assault vehicles. He was wearing a tight-fitting, black, ribbed body-glove, with black durasteel armour plating overtop and an headset so he can talk to his troopers. The EVO troopers helmets were specially equipped with a voice-to-text feature that allowed them to read orders that the Sith Knights said over their headsets; this minimized confusion during battlefield-conditions, especially when artillery was pounding the ground. The high-tech equipment employed by the Empire was proven to minimize confusion during battle conditions. Tycho Xar's armour was custom fitted, and custom built. The armour plates accentuated his already muscular and physically fit body, making him look stronger than he already was. He gripped his black, durasteel lightsaber with both hands so hard, that his knuckles turned white. He then clipped the lightsaber back onto his belt, and put on his black, ribbed leather gloves. He was sweating profusely; it was incredibly hot and humid in the back of the amphibious assault vehicle. He whipped the sweat from his pale-skinned forehead, and ran his fingers through his long, dark brown hair. He didn't shave this morning, and the grizzled beard that grew last night was itching.

That's just nerves, Tycho thought.

He stared at the EVO troopers with his deep green eyes; to their credit, none of them flinch whenever an artillery shell struck the water, or when an amphibious assault vehicle ran into an underwater mine.

Tough sons of bitches, Tycho thought.

"We've reached the minefield!" The driver shouted, "One minute!"

Another *Neutralizer*-class bomber screeches overhead. At a distance, the sound of a proton bomb exploding could be heard.

"When that ramp opens, we need to move fast and clear those murderholes! Push up the beach as fast as possible and clear the way for the rest!" Tycho Xar shouted over the roar of the engines, "Knights go first, then you!"

The EVO troopers simply acknowledge the order by nodding.

"Don't bunch up!" Tycho Xar continued, "Space out and leave nothing for the enemy to hit!"

Suddenly, an adjacent amphibious assault vehicle exploded into a great ball of fire. Shards of razor-sharp durasteel flew everywhere; the fast moving projectiles pierced the armour of their amphibious assault vehicle, punching holes into the starboard side, and injured some EVO troopers. Tycho Xar didn't flinch or miss a beat.

"Keep your repeaters clear of sand!" Tycho Xar ordered, "I'll see on the beach!"

The EVO troopers locked in their energy packs, and prepared for the coming battle. Suddenly, the overhead gunner could be heard firing wildly, and screaming profanities, never the same one twice. The amphibious assault vehicle hit the black, sandy, crater-filled beach of the Razor Coast and pushed up the beach for some distance. The sudden impact of the tank-like treads hitting the beach was jarring, knocking some EVO troopers over. Luckily, Tycho Xar used the Force to stick himself firmly on the black, diamond-patterned, durasteel panelling. Tycho Xar then activated his crimson-bladed lightsaber, with the familiar *snap-hiss* sound, and prepared to exit the amphibious assault vehicle from the rear ramp.

Suddenly, the rear ramp slammed open, and Tycho Xar immediately ran down and out of the amphibious assault vehicle. The beach was completely engulfed in thick, nearly opaque, dark grey fog, and equally thick black smoke. Fine dust, presumably from the coastal bombardment, seemed to linger in the air as well. The air smelled of sea water, with a hint of ozone. Tycho Xar immediately ran towards the starboard side

of the amphibious assault vehicle; he was abruptly greeted with a barrage of heavy repeater fire that he expertly batted away. Tycho Xar found refuge behind a twisted amalgam of maroon-coloured durasteel hedgehogs, designed to impede invading forces from getting tanks and other armour onto the beach. The thirty EVO troopers that he arrived with were instantly coming under heavy fire from passed the beach; the enemy positions were completely covered by dense fog, making it impossible to locate them. The fog was so dense and thick that Tycho could only see ten metres away from him, in all directions. The Force, however, allowed him to see a lot more and for longer distances; luckily, the EVO troopers helmet are equipped with infrared vision, allowing them to penetrate the dense fog.

The beach around them was a complete mess. Craters several metres deep littered its length, and they were already filled with dead bodies. Tycho Xar looked around and saw the amphibious assault vehicles firing wildly into the fog, trying in vain to locate and kill the enemy. Enemy artillery fire was bombarding the black sand beach; occasionally, they would manage to hit one of the amphibious assault vehicles, causing it to explode in a fury of flame and shrapnel. The waves crashing on the beach were powerful, and over a metre high. It was high tide, so Tycho Xar and the rest of the EVO troopers were being bombarded by white-capped, crashing waves as they took cover behind the durasteel hedgehog. Tycho Xar batted a couple more energy bolts away.

"What the hell do we do now?" An EVO trooper shouted.

"Move up the beach!" Tycho Xar ordered.

Tycho Xar came out of cover, and had to bat a few more energy bolts as he did. He ran forward, moving around fallen troopers, and worked his way up the beach. The EVO troopers followed closely behind. Artillery battered the beach all around them, sending tonnes of sand, white plastoid armour and water fifteen metres into the air. The unsettling sound of mortars could be heard whistling in the air as well. They created smaller explosions, and smaller craters, but were still just as deadly. Finally, after a few minutes of working his way through the durasteel hedgehogs, he reached the last row. Tycho Xar looked behind him; he saw the amphibious assault vehicles returning towards the Imperial Maritime fleet, no doubt on their way to get the next wave of EVO troopers onto the beach.

In front of him was thirty metres of open beach, then beyond that were the jagged, razor-sharp black, basaltic rocks of the Razor Coast. As the enemy fired their

repeaters and blaster rifles at him, he noticed that most of the energy bolts were originating from the jagged rocks. Tycho Xar was about to move onto the beach, when suddenly, a massive barrage of energy bolts were fired his way. He expertly batted them away, but some of the EVO troopers behind him weren't so lucky. The hyper-hardened plastoid armour could withstand a couple of blaster hits, but were still inferior to durasteel armour. Suddenly he realized why he was coming under such heavy fire; he looked at the glowing red energy blade of his lightsaber.

Damn, Tycho thought.

"They see my lightsaber!" Tycho Xar shouted to his troopers.

The EVO troopers around him stared at the energy blade. It must be like a homing beacon for the enemy. He looked around, and saw several more Sith Knights running across the thirty metre stretch of beach, followed by EVO troopers. Several of the Sith Knights were immediately cut down by enemy repeater fire. Other EVO troopers were killed by stepping on mines that littered the beach.

"Move across the beach, and stay the hell away from me!" Tycho Xar ordered, "Watch out for mines!"

The EVO troopers immediately came out from behind the last hedgehog and dashed across the open, black sand beach. Almost immediately, some fell victim to the concealed mines. The mines were powerful enough to blow limbs off of the EVO troopers, and send them flying three metres into the air. Several other EVO troopers fell into booby traps laid down by the Jabiimi loyalists; they were dug out pits about two metres deep and two metres wide, with a sharpened wooden stake in the bottom, and were covered with a light layer of wicker and black sand. The EVO troopers that fell into the booby traps would be impaled by the sharp wooden stake below, killing them slowly as they bleed out.

Wolf holes, Tycho observed.

Using the Force, Tycho Xar could sense where all the mines and wolf holes were located. However, that didn't make it any easier to manoeuvre through the maze of killer implements of destruction and fallen bodies of EVO troopers and Sith Knights. Tycho Xar was running as fast as he could, following two metres behind an EVO trooper ahead. Suddenly, Tycho Xar felt a disturbance in the Force; he immediately pushed the EVO trooper in front of him with the Force, sending him flying forward. Just moments after the EVO trooper vacated the space he previously occupied, an

artillery shell exploded. The force from the artillery shell sent Tycho Xar back with a ringing in his ears. Sand rained down on top of both of them. Tycho Xar saw that the EVO trooper was alright, and the trooper gave him a thank-you nod. The EVO trooper immediately got up and started running the last fifteen metres towards the jagged rocks of the Razor Coast.

Tycho Xar remained in the prone position for a moment longer. Overhead, several *Neutralizer*-class bombers flew by and dropped their proton bombs on the enemy positions, creating a huge explosion that shook the ground. As the proton bombs fell, they glowed eerily red. The screech of the engines was both diagnostic of their presence, and psychologically disturbing. He looked around the battlefield; he saw the white plastoid armour of the EVO troopers scattered across the entire length of the black sand beach in both directions. Enemy artillery constantly bombarded the beach, sending sand high into the air. Mines would constantly go off, dismembering the troopers, and the screams of those dying in the wolf holes was a chilling juxtaposition. With only fifteen metres of open black beach between him and the jagged rocks of the Razor Coast, he needed to move fast. Already the EVO troopers started firing their repeating rifles; the red energy bolts of the EVO troopers started mixing with the green energy bolts of the Jabiimi loyalists.

Tycho Xar picked himself off the wet sand beach, and started running towards the jagged rocks. He used the Force to augment his speed, allowing to run faster and for longer than normal. As Tycho Xar charged towards the jagged rocks, enemy fire seemed to be concentrating on him. He dodged, ducked and batted away the energy bolts coming his way with grace and style. Within seconds Tycho Xar was up in front again, batting the incoming energy bolts away from the EVO troopers. He could feel their resolve and thankfulness in the Force as he took charge of the battle again. The two Sith Masters, Darth Rage and Darth Oro, are surging their battle meditation into the Force and into the EVO troopers, making them wilder, more vicious, and more effective killing machines.

Five more metres, Tycho told himself.

Tycho Xar was more determined than ever to reach the jagged rocks. Running as fast as he could, leaping over the craters and fallen bodies of the EVO troopers, he finally reached the foot of the black, jagged, razor-sharp, black basaltic rocks of the Razor Coast. He was immediately greeted by a Jabiimi loyalist who attempted to fire his blaster rifle at him. Tycho Xar batted the first two energy bolts away, and let the third sail harmlessly past him. Tycho Xar charged at the man, using the Force to speed up his

movements, and leapt into the air. With a killer blow, Tycho Xar plunged the crimson blade of his lightsaber into the neck of the Jabiimi loyalist, severing the spinal cord from the head. Tycho Xar instantly turned around, and batted several more energy bolts from another nearby Jabiimi loyalist. He sent the last energy bolt directly back towards the shooter; the energy bolt struck him square in the chest, forming a smoking crater where his sternum should be. The smell of charred flesh and smoke wafted over him as the winds changed direction. Tycho Xar took cover behind one of the larger jagged rock formations near the base of the Razor Coast. Tycho Xar looked around, and saw the EVO troopers completely in shambles; barely half of the initial wave made it to the Razor Coast.

"Maritime command, first wave ineffective! Repeat, first wave ineffective!" Tycho Xar shouted into his headset, "We do not hold the beach! Say again, we do not hold the beach!"

Suddenly, the storm system that seemed to be hammering the south rolled over them. Lightning, thunder, gale force winds, and horizontal rain swept over them. Almost immediately, the rain washed away the dense fog, and the air seemed clean to breathe again. The smell of ozone and charred flesh still lingered, but not nearly as pungent as before. Almost immediately Tycho Xar was soaked from the torrential rains, and the sky darkened quite quickly. Tycho Xar looked around, and saw the EVO troopers around him heading upward into the jagged rocks. He clearly saw the Jabiimi loyalist backtracking up towards the higher areas while firing down into the invading EVO troopers.

This is going to be a wonderful day, Tycho thought.

Tycho Xar immediately came out and around the jagged rocks, and charged into the Razor Coast. He immediately fell under enemy fire, but batted away several more energy bolts that sailed his way. All around him the EVO troopers were falling under enemy fire; some of them were hiding behind the tall, five metre high, jagged rock formations, firing behind cover. Tycho Xar continued his charge however. Suddenly, he was face-to-face with a Jabiimi loyalist, who immediately fired at him. He batted the first energy bolt away, and sent the second into his belly. The Jabiimi loyalist keeled over, clutching his gut in pain while moaning. Milliseconds later, Tycho Xar swept his lightsaber upwards towards the moaning Jabiimi loyalist; the slash cut deep across his chest and face. Behind Tycho Xar, another Jabiimi loyalist fired at him. He ducked under the first two energy bolts, and batted the third toward the ground. Tycho Xar charged at the Jabiimi loyalist, and with a swift attack, decapitated him. The Jabiimi

loyalist's head rolled down the Razor Coast. Tycho Xar looked up through the jagged rock formations and saw a whole line of Jabiimi loyalists dug in and firing wildly towards their positions.

Fighting uphill was the worst tactical position one could get themselves into, but in this case, there was no other choice. Artillery shells and mortars were still raining down all around them, shaking the ground as they struck the hard basaltic rocks. Tycho Xar led the charge; he battled his way through the torrent of energy bolts, expertly batting some back towards their shooter, while letting some sail harmlessly past him. He could feel the EVO troopers bloodlust rising as the Sith Masters poured rage into the Force. The EVO troopers followed shortly behind him, firing wildly uphill towards the Jabiimi loyalists. While running up the hill, Tycho Xar ran into two more Jabiimi loyalists taking cover behind a three metre jagged rock formation; Tycho Xar immediately thrust his crimson blade into the chest of the closest Jabiimi loyalist, and batted the energy bolts of the second back towards him. The energy bolts hit his face and chest, burning holes through the water-soaked flesh. Smoke billowed out from their bodies.

Fifty metres of jagged rocks still stood between Tycho Xar and the line of Jabiimi loyalists. The torrent of energy bolts was unrelenting, and continued to hit the basaltic rock all around him. Bits of black rock exploded from the impacts from the energy bolts, flying into his face. There were so many energy bolts being fired at them, some of the large jagged rock formations collapsed after being hit too many times; unfortunately, some of the EVO troopers were underneath the rock when it collapsed, crushing them under tonnes of black rock. Then, from out of nowhere, a massive barrage of green energy bolts fell upon them from the southwest, towards the forest covered cliffs. The energy bolts tore through the Imperial lines, killing dozens instantly. The second and third wave of Imperial EVO troopers were still crossing the hedgehogs and open beach; they were cut down by the concentrated repeater cannon fire. The energy bolts were so hot, that when they hit the black sand, it would melt it, then turn it into glass.

"We have to get out of here!" Tycho Xar shouted into his headset.

An artillery shell went off in the distance, killing even more EVO troopers.

"We have nowhere to go but up and out!" Another Sith Knight shouted over the earpiece.

Frack, Tycho thought; "Call in the bombers to take out that emplacement!" Tycho Xar ordered.

Almost before he completed the order, two *Neutralizer*-class bombers flew overhead, headed towards the forest covered cliffs; the screech of their engines was a welcomed sound. The torrent of energy bolts shifted their focus from them onto the two *Neutralizer*-class bombers in the air; they futilely tried to shoot them down, but they missed. Tycho Xar saw them release their payloads, incendiary bombs, and moments later, the forest erupted in a massive fireball. The onslaught of energy bolts ceased for a moment, and Tycho Xar immediately resumed his charge.

"Now's our chance!" Tycho Xar shouted, "Move out!"

Tycho Xar charged towards the Jabiimi loyalist that were still firing volley after volley of blaster and repeater fire at them. The EVO troopers fought hard for every metre of territory that they marched on. Fighting uphill was especially hard for the EVO troopers because of the rain; the rain made the uphill climb slippery, making them vulnerable to counter-attack. Tycho Xar continued batting the energy bolts away from the Imperial lines as best he could, however, a lucky energy bolt sailed past his crimson blade, and struck him square in the left shoulder. Tycho Xar screamed in surprise and shock, and fell to the ground. He quickly crawled behind a large rock formation, behind cover. He clutched his shoulder. Seconds later, a EVO trooper behind him came to his aid.

"Sir, you alright?" The EVO trooper worriedly asked.

Tycho Xar didn't feel any pain, just the sudden shock of the impact. He looked at his left shoulder armour plate; the durasteel plate did its job. It was cracked from the energy that struck it, but none of that energy made it through. Unfortunately, that shoulder plate was completely useless now, since it was cracked. Relief swept over Tycho Xar.

"I'm fine." Tycho Xar reassured the EVO trooper, "Let's move!"

Tycho Xar picked himself up, and batted the next three energy bolts away from him. They charged for the next ten metres; Tycho Xar tried to bat all the energy bolts back at the Jabiimi, while the EVO troopers attempted to fire up at their positions. Tycho Xar was forced to take cover behind another jagged rock formation, after his left shoulder started aching, unable to keep up with the incoming energy bolts fired at him.

Twenty metres, Tycho thought.

"Where are my snipers?" Tycho Xar shouted into his headset.

Several more energy bolts stuck beside him, sending bits of black rock flying through the air. In the distance, another artillery shell pounded the ground. Five metres behind the EVO trooper, he saw another one running up to him.

"Right here, sir." The sniper replied as he arrived next to Tycho Xar.

"Sniper, I need you to take up positions over there," Tycho pointed towards his right at a large jagged rock formation seven metres uphill, "and thin out the Jabiimi loyalists in front." Tycho Xar ordered, "From that position you should have nearly total defilade from enemy fire."

"Yes, sir." The sniper replied.

The sniper immediately ran out from cover and toward the large jagged rock formation. The formation was a seven metre tall, three metre wide, jagged basalt that slumped downhill, providing cover from enemy fire. Tycho Xar waited for several moments until the sniper was in position. Suddenly, a long streak of red energy sailed into the enemy lines. The energy bolt shot straight through several Jabiimi loyalists, putting them down instantly. The sniper continued his attack, unabated, thinning the enemy lines enough for Tycho Xar to resume his charge. Some of the Jabiimi loyalist started firing at the snipers position; the sniper immediately took cover behind the massive rock formation, but was pinned down. He swung around the other side of the formation, and resumed firing his sniper rifle. His bolts were accurate and deadly, each one killing several Jabiimi loyalists. The EVO troopers relentlessly pushed forward as the Sith Knights continued batting energy bolts back towards the enemy lines. The Imperial lines were making progress faster than before.

Ten metres, Tycho thought.

Tycho Xar continued to battle his way uphill. Suddenly, he heard the whistle of a mortar. He looked up to see a black ball about to fall on top of them.

"Mortar!" Tycho Xar shouted.

He immediately dove to the side, behind a jagged rock formation. The mortar exploded, sending little bomblets raining down upon them. The little bomblets exploded when they hit the rocks. Several EVO troopers were caught by the mortar, and were cut down by the little explosions that tore through their plastoid armour. Tycho Xar was safe behind the jagged rock formation, but was increasingly frustrated with the order of the battle.

"Nades!" Tycho Xar ordered, "Launch nades!"

Several EVO troopers loaded their grenade launchers with fragmentation and plasma grenades, or nades, and fired them towards the Jabiimi loyalists. The grenades found their mark, and exploded in the midst of the enemy lines, shredding them to pieces. The EVO troopers continued to do this until the enemy lines thinned out enough to charge again. Tycho Xar resumed his charge again, batting away the energy bolts that flew his way. The energy bolts were not coming at him with the same frequency as they were before. He soon realized that the Jabiimi were retreating. Moments later, Tycho Xar and the rest of the Sith Knights and EVO troopers reached the top of the jagged rocks of the Razor Coast. Beyond them, for about another forty metres, was another stretch of open ground, lined with barbed- and razor-wire, with repeating cannon emplacements at the far end, followed by a series of trenches.

Will this never end? Tycho grudgingly thought.

Tycho Xar could see the last of the Jabiimi running towards the trenches, weaving in and out of the razor-wire, and leaping into the open frontline trenches. The repeating cannon emplacements were not firing at this moment, because they didn't want to fire at their own soldiers. Once all the Jabiimi loyalists were within the frontline trench, the repeating cannon emplacements started firing wildly into the Razor Coast.

"Fire your nades at those guns!" Tycho Xar ordered, "Fire nades!"

The remaining EVO troopers fired their grenades towards the enemy gun emplacements. The grenades soar through the air, and exploded with a rain of shrapnel. Most of the grenades were successful at destroying the gun emplacements, however, there were just too many.

"We're pinned down, sir! There's too fracking many of them!" An EVO trooper shouted in Tycho's ear, "And that ain't fair!"

Nothing's fair in war, Tycho rebutted; "Sniper! Get up here!" Tycho Xar ordered.

The sniper was already on his way up from his former position. He ran up to Tycho Xar and took a knee beside him.

"Do your thing, sniper!" Tycho Xar ordered, "Pwn them!"

The sniper took up a prone position, and fired his sniper rifle at the gun emplacements. The sniper was surprisingly, and disturbingly, sound suppressed. The long red energy bolt streaked across the air, and hit the Jabiimi loyalists in the skull.

Blood, bone and brain matter sprayed into the air, as the energy bolt passed through the skull. But the Jabiimi loyalists just kept on coming; the ones that were killed were just pulled aside, and a new soldier takes up the gun emplacement. The sniper killed three Jabiimi before stopping.

"They're camping, sir!" The sniper shouted.

Camping, slang used to describe an enemy that remains in the same position for an extended period of time, usually to exploit a useful vantage point; everyone hates campers. Tycho Xar stared across the open plain, and looking upon the gun emplacement. The green energy bolts were relentless, tearing through the basaltic rocks, and killing the EVO troopers.

"Can you take out the gun?" Tycho Xar shouted.

The sniper nodded his head, "I think so!" The sniper replied.

The sniper took up a new target, and fired. The long red energy bolt struck the large, repeating cannon, but didn't destroy it. He fired again, and the red energy bolt struck the repeating cannon again; the Jabiimi loyalists were deterred from firing from the repeater cannon, but resumed despite their fears. The repeating cannon seemed to be shielded. Meanwhile, the EVO troopers were firing wildly towards the trenches, with little to no success.

"No go, sir!" The sniper replied, "They've got leet hacks!"

Leet hacks, slang for powerful personal shields that can't be penetrated. The EVO troopers considered it almost like cheating. Tycho Xar took a breath, trying to assess the situation.

"Yeah, I see it!" Tycho Xar replied, "Sniper, find yourself a new position and thin the lines!"

"Yes, sir!" The sniper replied.

Tycho Xar watched as the sniper ran towards the left, and then out of sight.

"We need a fracking out, sir!" An EVO trooper shouted, "We're being torn to pieces!"

Tycho Xar looked around, and watched the battle play out. The Imperial lines were being thinned out faster than the Jabiimi lines. Green and red energy bolts filled

the forty metre open stretch of ground between the two lines. The rain began to intensify, and the wind started picking up. The jagged rocks blocked most of the wind, but a large gust hit Tycho Xar's face; his soaked, long, dark brown hair flapped in the wind.

"Maritime command, we need an immediate bombing run on the southwest trench system; kill box seven-meteor! Authorization code: sabaac-echo-nebula-five-two-four-one!" Tycho Xar ordered, "This is a danger, close-fire strafing run! Requesting precision guided proton bombs!"

"Confirmed authorization." Maritime command replied, "*Bombers incoming kill box seven-meteor, danger close, friendlies in the area.*"

"We're fracking pinned down here!" Tycho Xar shouted.

Tycho Xar looked towards the darkened sky. Lightning bolts scorched the skies, and the thunder rumbled. He saw two *Neutralizer*-class bombers flying towards their positions, approaching from the southeast. The screech from their engines grew louder and louder as they approached.

"Bombers inbound! Laze the targets!" Tycho Xar ordered, "Laze targets!"

The EVO troopers did what they were ordered to, and painted the gun emplacements with their laser-targeting systems; green laser beams streaked across the muddy battlefield, and painted the guns. The two massive *Neutralizer*-class bombers approached with incredible speed; they were flying very close to the hard deck, about three kilometres off the ground. A stream of red ions trailed behind the two *Neutralizer*-class bombers as they advanced. The *Neutralizer*-class bombers opened their hinged-wings, preparing to slow down and release their payloads.

"Targets are painted." Tycho Xar informed the incoming bomber pilots, "You're clear and hot."

"Copy that." Raider One replied, "*Package is away.*"

Raiders were the most feared, most elite, bomber squadron on Jabiiim. They were notorious for their brutality, craziness, and deadly accuracy. As the *Neutralizer*-class bombers flew overhead, they dropped their payload; over five glowing red proton bombs. Proton bombs, recently retrofitted with advanced laser-guided precision computers, were incredibly powerful munitions that relied on inertia and momentum, coupled with a large baradium charge to cause significant damage to their intended

target; they were more powerful than proton torpedoes or concussion missiles, but were harder to wield. The screech of the engines was unbelievably loud as they soared overhead. The laser-guided precision proton bombs fell exactly where they were marked, and exploded about ten metres off the ground; an air burst. The explosion was nearly blinding, and the fireball that erupted from the explosion was towering.

"Direct hit, Raider One!" Tycho Xar shouted in excitement, "Nice work!"

Tycho Xar had to turn away, and shield his eyes from the blinding flash of the explosion. Before the massive fireball and the billowing smoke plume could clear, the two *Neutralizer*-class bombers were already on their way back towards an aircraft carrier a couple of kilometres off the coast. Mud and dirt rained down upon Tycho and the rest of the EVO troopers moments later.

"We're bingo fuel, and low on munitions." Raider One informed, *"We're returning to base."*

"Copy that, Raider One." Tycho Xar replied, "Thanks a lot."

"Good hunting." Raider One added.

When the smoke cleared, the gun emplacements were replaced by large craters nearly two metres deep, and the enemy blaster fire was severely diminished.

"We're in business!" Tycho Xar shouted, "Let's move!"

The Sith Knights and EVO troopers poured out of the jagged rocks of the Razor Coast, and started running across the flat, muddy, forty metre open stretch of land in front of them. The EVO troopers had to manoeuvre through the metre-tall razor-wire obstacles, while firing their repeating rifles at the remaining Jabiimi loyalists. Tycho Xar was right in front, leading the charge; he batted away the first few energy bolts that sailed his way, but mostly ducked and dodged them. From a distance, he could see that the Jabiimi loyalists were retreating deeper into the trench systems. Then, moments later, he knew why. The artillery bombardment, and mortar fire intensified as the Imperials crossed the open stretch of muddy ground between the Razor Coast and the trenches. The artillery hit them hard and fast; the shells struck the muddy ground with incredibly force, launching tonnes of mud, and troopers into the air. The mortars rained down around them, sending little bomblets flying their way. Explosions, of all sizes, filled the battlefield. Tycho Xar managed to dodge the artillery shells, and the mortars, but the EVO troopers weren't so lucky.

Tycho Xar ran as fast as he could through the thick, dense, blood-soaked, dark brown mud. His boots were getting stuck in the mud, slowing him down significantly. A mortar exploded just above him, sending little bomblets towards him. He jumped to his left, just in time to avoid most of the bomblets, except one; one of the small bomblets hit him in the right leg, exploding on impact. The durasteel armour plate that protected his thigh was not up to the task of small explosions, and shattered immediately. Razor-sharp shards of durasteel pierced through his thigh muscle; blood poured out of the wound, and Tycho Xar screamed in pain as he pulled out the larger shards of durasteel armour plating out from his leg. Three large gashes left behind from the shards were now pouring out blood profusely. Tycho Xar clutched his thigh tightly, trying to stop the bleeding. Tycho Xar reached into his utility belt, and pulled out a hyper-battle stimulant. He injected it into his leg, and could almost immediately feel the effects of the stim in his bloodstream. The hyper-battle stimulant took away all feeling of pain, numbing the body, and created hyper-awareness during combat. As the stim took its effect, Tycho Xar looked around the battlefield once more, and saw the horror of the battle. Several EVO troopers were impaled onto the razor-wire, screaming in pain as the steel razorblades and barbs pierced their bodies. Others were dismembered by artillery or mortar attacks. Tycho Xar picked himself up slowly, and continued running towards the cratered frontline trenches.

Ten metres, Tycho told himself.

Tycho Xar couldn't feel the wound he just sustained, and he kept on battling his way through the mud. The last stretch was always the hardest. Tycho Xar batted the remaining energy bolts away from him, acting purely on instinct now. The stims were really kicking in hard, making him so much more aware of everyone on the battlefield. There was an EVO trooper running in front of him; suddenly, an artillery shell exploded where the EVO trooper was standing. Limbs and white plastoid armour flew into the air, along with dirt and mud. Tycho Xar was nearly knocked off his feet, but continued to run through the raining mud.

As Tycho Xar closed in on the cratered trenches; he leapt into the air and landed in the frontline trench. Only a handful, probably five or six, Jabiimi loyalists remained in the frontline trench after it was vacated. Tycho Xar batted the first two energy bolts into the dark grey, plastoid lined trench walls, and allowed the third to sail past him. The third energy bolt passed Tycho Xar harmlessly, although he could feel the heat on his face as it did, and hit the Jabiimi loyalist behind him, striking him in the face. The forth blaster bolt Tycho deflected directly back at the shooter, hitting him in the chest;

the bolt tore apart his ribcage and sternum. The other four ran in fear, through the communication trench, towards the support trench nearly fifty metres away.

Four EVO troopers finally arrived at the foot of the frontline trench, and saw Tycho Xar standing in the trench already. They looked up, and saw the four fleeing Jabiimi loyalists running through the communication trench, and fired wildly at them. They were cut down within moments. Tycho Xar gave them a good-work nod, and they replied with a thank-you nod. Suddenly, Tycho Xar felt a disturbance in the Force, and looked up. An artillery shell blew up right beside Tycho Xar, collapsed the trench system, and killed one of the EVO troopers that just arrived. Tycho Xar was shot up three metres into the air, along with mud, soil and plastoid lining. He fell back onto the recently cratered trench, in an uncomfortable position, landing on his head first. There was a strong ringing in his ears; they were bleeding in fact. Blood poured out of this nose and out the side of this mouth; the copper-metallic taste of blood was strong in his mouth. Tycho Xar groaned in pain, and then looked down towards his leg. His lower right leg, just below the kneecap, was completely gone, and blood was pouring out profusely. Tycho Xar screamed in shock and pain. The three remaining EVO troopers climbed over the cratered trench, and to Tycho's aid.

"Sir, it's going to be okay." One of the EVO troopers said.

Tycho Xar could barely hear him over the ringing in his ears and battle in the distance. The EVO troopers immediately tied a tourniquet around the leg wound, just above the kneecap, but the blood was still pouring out. Tycho Xar groaned in pain again.

"Stim!" Another EVO trooper ordered.

He injected the stim into Tycho's thigh muscle, and almost immediately the pain started to dissipate.

"We need to stop the bleeding!" Another EVO trooper shouted.

The EVO trooper injected Tycho Xar with more stimulants. The blood kept pouring out of the gaping wound like a fountain, despite the applied tourniquet.

"Why won't it stop?" The EVO trooper frustratingly asked.

Tycho Xar felt flush, and couldn't feel anything but the cold. His skin was turning blue; he was losing too much blood. His eyes started to defocus, and he started feeling light-headed. His vision was turning black. He wasn't sure if it was the blood

leaving his body that was making his vision darker, or that night was coming. The battle seemed to have raged for hours now.

"Sir, don't you die yet!" The EVO trooper shouted.

The EVO trooper started working on the leg again, but Tycho couldn't see what he was doing. Tycho Xar was starting to blackout. Time seemed to stretch, and everything looked like it was moving in slow-motion. The ringing in his ears was still roaring however, but he could hear the EVO troopers in an echoing-like noise.

"Medic!" The other EVO trooper shouted, "We need a medic here!"

The last thing Tycho Xar saw was one of the EVO troopers running back, presumably to get a medic. Then, all there was, was blackness...

Awakening

Cinnagar, Empress Teta, the Empress Teta system: 138.5 ABY:

Lerona Teta Jade, matriarch and ruler of the Empress Teta system, marched forward toward the newly dubbed Imperial courthouse established over eight standard years ago in the capital city of Cinnagar. Walking closely behind her was a small regiment of Imperial stormtroopers, their polished white armour glistening in the daylight, their armour clanking together as they marched. As she walked through the dark-tan stone hallways of the courthouse, she reminisced about the path she took to get here. It all started going wrong shortly after the conclusion of the Sith-Imperial War over eight and a half standard years ago. After the Empire, and her Sith allies, defeated the Galactic Alliance and the New Jedi Order, they annexed Empress Teta from her grasp. She returned shortly after and evacuated as many Tetan citizens as she could, but in return, was captured and arrested herself. Luckily, because the remaining Tetan citizens were still loyal to her, the Empire couldn't kill her outright. It had taken years for the Imperial court system to rule that Lerona Teta Jade was an enemy of the Empire, a rebel, a criminal, and now she feared, doomed to be murdered by their hands. Worst thing was that over the years, she had seen how much her citizens had suffered at the hands of the Empire. She wanted nothing more than to cast them out, but with the One Sith Order in charge, she had little hope.

After walking down the echoic hallway, she stood at the precipice of the courtroom where most of her life had been destroyed. She hesitated, only for a moment, allowing her heart to slow down slightly. However, impatiently, the stormtrooper behind her nudged her forward. The sharp smack to the back annoyed her more than it hurt. Reluctantly, she proceeded forward. Inside the courtroom were many beings, all of them human and Imperial. They all looked at her as she walked pass, glaring at her with judgmental eyes. She despised every single one of them. At the front of the courtroom sat the Imperial judge, an older man probably going on sixty standard years now, who had berated her and accused her of injustices that she never committed. As she approached the desk where she had spent most of her time trying to defend herself against this Imperial scum, she noticed that the Imperial judge wore a slight grin on her face.

Inside, her heart sank slightly.

Stoically, proudly, she stood behind the desk, presenting herself as the noble that she was. Despite that every ounce of her wanted to crawl into a corner and weep, she refused to give up and die. Finally, after the stormtroopers had taken their place directly behind her, the sentencing began.

"We've listened to many testimonies over the course of the trial." The Imperial judge started, "And after looking over the evidence in great detail..."

Evidence, she thought with a hint of anger.

"... it is my conclusion that Princess Leron Teta Jade is here by guilty of crimes against the establishment. I hereby order a sentence of death by firing squad to be taken place tomorrow at twelve hundred hours, Coruscant standard time."

Although it didn't surprise her, she was still angered by the sentencing. She had done nothing wrong, and she knew it.

"What?" Leron screamed in pure anger, "This trial is a farce!" She pointed directly at the judge, "You Imperial slime! This entire system is corrupted and evil! You're all pawns in the—"

Suddenly, the butt of a blaster rifle smacked her across the temple. She immediately collapsed, first onto the desk in front of her, then onto the cold stone tiling that covered the floor. The shocking impact nearly knocked her unconscious, but she managed to keep herself awake. Just then, she realized, there was a cool trickle flowing down her cheek. She reached for it, and when she looked at her fingers, she saw blood. Suddenly, she heard the hard pounding of a gavel. The judge was in an uproar.

"Order! Order!" The Imperial judge screamed, "This trial is adjourned! Remove Princess Leron Teta Jade from this courtroom immediately!"

Leron remained on the cold floor for a couple more moments before two white armoured stormtroopers stood beside her and hauled her up. She refused to cooperate, but that didn't matter. The stormtroopers merely dragged her semi-limp body out of the courtroom. The last thing she remembered before exiting the courtroom were the people inside screaming profanities at her. Inside, she felt like she was already dead.

Jedi Knight Mathias Malakon stood in front of the forward viewport onboard the bridge of a Tetan-made *Valkyrie*-class Battlestar. The Battlestar was an incredibly elegant and deadly piece of machinery. Its arms stuck out in a star-formation, lined with turbolaser batteries and proton torpedo ports. Jedi Malakon gazed into the black abyss of open space, merely contemplating the stars in the distance. It seemed so peaceful, although he knew it was anything but. He closed his eyes and reached out with the Force.

"Magnificent machine, isn't it?" High Commander Artemes Adoug asked.

Mathias looked at the young High Commander, "Yes." Mathias answered, "A fine war machine you've got here. I'm very much looking forward to seeing them in action."

"You will, Jedi." High Commander Artemes Adoug replied, "You will."

Suddenly, Jedi Master Yuun Lii, mentor and teacher, and the prince of Empress Teta, Gabriel, walked onto the bridge. They seemed to be talking details of their strike against the capital world of Empress Teta.

"... needs to be hard and swift if are to retake the capital." Gabriel finished.

"Agreed." Master Lii replied, "The main problem will be getting her out of the detention centre."

Gabriel nodded.

"Who?" Jedi Malakon asked.

"My sister, Lerona... Princess Jade." Gabriel answered; suddenly, he became very serious, "I left her on Cinnagar, but I promised her I'd get her back. Tonight, I'm going to make good on my promise."

Mathias could see the emotion wanting to swell over and consume Gabriel at that moment. Something very terrible most have happened when they split.

Suddenly, Master Lii took over, "Then it is settled. Gabriel will lead the assault on the detention centre, High Commander Artemes Adoug will occupy the Imperial fleet orbiting over Cinnagar—"

"I will destroy the Imperial fleet over Empress Teta." High Commander Artemes Adoug corrected.

Mathias smirked.

"My apologies." Master Lii continued, "While I will disable and detain any remaining Imperial personnel at the Imperial Mission."

Confused, Mathias asked, "Where will I go?"

Gabriel answered, "With me. The detention centre could be trouble, and the expertise of a Jedi will be most welcome."

Mathias nodded and smiled, *finally, a first strike against the Empire!*

Hours had passed before they were ready for the battle. Jedi Malakon looked around the hangar bay one last time. In the gunship next to his he saw Master Lii. The Jedi Master looked calm and collected, radiating only a positive aura about him. Jedi Malakon, however, felt anything but. He was nervous, anxious, fearful, but surprisingly, excited as well. He had never been in a large-scale battle before. He had seen the great naval battles of history, ranging from the Great Hyperspace War, to more recently with the Sith-Imperial War. Beside him, Gabriel seemed just as anxious as he was. The rest of the Tetan resistance fighters, those who escaped the Empire's wrath shortly after the conclusion of the Sith-Imperial War over eight standard years ago, were just as nervous; he could feel it radiating from them.

Overhead, the intercom blared, "*Preparing to jump in five, four, three two... one... jump!*"

Suddenly, Jedi Malakon felt his stomach twist a little, and his body jerked from the inertia of the microjump above Empress Teta. Within half a standard second, the jump was complete, followed immediately by blaring sirens and flashing red and yellow lights. Immediately, the hangar door slid open, covered only by an atmospheric containment field. Outside, out in the distance, was the metropolis world of Empress Teta. It looked beautiful. On repulsorlifts, the gunship lifted up off the permacrete floor, and throttled forward into the cold vacuum of space.

Malakon had seen nothing like this before. The moment the gunship left the hangar, it pitched downward, heading nose down toward the upper atmosphere of the planet. Overhead, a flurry of giant lances of energetic turbolasers streaked across the black backdrop of space. The turbolasers struck their targets, exploding upon impact on the durasteel armoured hull of three *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers. The Imperial Star Destroyers, it seemed, were taken completely by surprise. It didn't even look like they were fighting back as Jedi Malakon peered upward, watching the naval battle unfold. The dozen or so Tetan Battlestars poured rivers of turbolasers into the metal hull, tearing the Star Destroyers apart. Just then, right before Jedi Malakon's gunship dipped underneath the high altitude cloud cover, he witnessed a spectacular sight. One of the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers exploded with ferocious force, ripping apart its armoured hull, flash melting and vaporizing metal, and pelting the adjacent Star Destroyers with high-velocity debris.

With a tinge of glee, Jedi Malakon smiled.

Lerona Teta Jade had remained in a state of limbo for most of the evening after the trial. Her head injury was worse than she thought. She drifted into and out of consciousness throughout the evening, and unfortunately, the times she remained awake, they were groggy and dizzy. This time, however, she remained lucid and stable. Then, like hitting a ferrocrete wall, she remembered.

Death.

That thought sunk into the fibres of her being, crushing her soul just a little bit with every passing second. She looked up at the beautiful, clear night sky. For some reason, the peaceful sight put her worries to rest, just for a split second. Then, she noticed the Star Destroyers hovering overhead the city. Like a smack in the face, she immediately grew angry. The three hovering Star Destroyers reminded her of her people's subjugation. What angered her more was that soon she wouldn't be able to help them. Then, as she continued to watch as the Star Destroyers maintained a geosynchronous orbit, she was taken completely by surprise. She watched as, for some reason, one of the Star Destroyers exploded overhead.

Then, for the first time, she genuinely smiled.

Hope. Hope now permeated her thoughts. Perhaps the Tetans were finally standing up to their Imperial subjugators. However, it didn't take long for the moment to be ruined. Within minutes, three white-armoured stormtroopers barged into her small, rectangular cell. Blasters ready, they pointed it at her to fire.

Immediately, she sprang into action. She leapt into the air and drop kicked the first stormtrooper, cracking the plastoid armour instantaneously under the tremendous force of the impact. The other two, taken completely aback, wildly fired at her. The red energy bolts streaked just over her head. She managed to tuck into a roll and pick up the dropped blaster rifle. Returning to her feet, she fired the blaster rifle point-blank at the next stormtrooper's chest. The energy bolt burned a black, smoking crater into his chest, dropping him immediately. The last stormtrooper, still confused, charged at her with the butt of his blaster rifle held up high. The stormtrooper swung down hard with the butt, trying to crack her skull, she supposed. Expertly, she ducked out of the way and managed to send a tremendously powerful knee into his gut. The stormtrooper doubled over, clutching his gut in agony. Instinctually, Lerona grabbed the

stormtrooper by the helmet, and twisted, breaking his neck instantly. Like a ragdoll, the stormtrooper dropped to the cold floor.

Suddenly, she realized what had happened. She was free! Quickly, almost by sheer will, she caught her breath and ran out of the detention cell that had been her "home" for the past eight and a half standard years. For the first time in a long time, she felt alive again. And it exhilarated her.

Jedi Malakon hung on for dear life as the gunship banked to port, then to starboard with surprising force. Surprisingly, or at least as it seemed to Jedi Malakon, the rest of the resistance fighters seemed calm and determined. The gunship streaked through the cool night atmosphere like a hawkbat, leaving behind it a trail of steam and smoke. Beneath him was the great city of Cinnagar. It looked peaceful from two thousand metres in the air, but he knew, if this world would overthrow its Imperial handlers, it would be anything but.

Then Gabriel pointed to the right, "The detention centre is over there!"

Immediately, the gunship banked hard to starboard. The pilot aimed straight at the detention centre, as if he were simply going to ram it. Closer and closer, the massive detention centre grew. Jedi Malakon could feel the excitement grow within him. His heart raced, pounding out of his chest harder and harder.

Then, over the comlink, *"I'll head for the Mission! Just make sure you get the Princess!"* Master Lii shouted.

Gabriel replied, "We will, Master Lii! You take care of yourself!"

"Good luck, Jedi Malakon." Master Lii added, *"I know you'll make me proud."*

There was a twinge of happiness, "Thank you, Master."

Just at that moment, powerful spotlights turned on, illuminating the dark night sky with beams of radiance. They streaked across the sky, searching for the incoming infiltrators. Suddenly, the light turbolaser emplacements mounted all along the ferrocrete wall surrounding the detention centre opened fire. Streams of red energy bolts lanced across the cool, dark night sky with ferocious accuracy.

"Evasive manoeuvres!" Gabriel screamed.

Instantaneously, the gunship banked hard to port, then almost immediately to starboard, narrowly missing the incoming lances of energy by mere metres each time. Jedi Malakon nearly fell over both times, barely being able to plant himself onto the durasteel grated floor of the gunship. With increasing rapidity, Jedi Malakon's heart beat. Sweat started accumulating on his forehead. Then, suddenly, the gunship dropped, nose pointed almost straight to the ground and buildings below. Jedi Malakon managed not to scream only because it had happened so suddenly.

Then, the pilot called out, "There's our cover!"

Jedi Malakon barely managed to see where the gunship pilot was pointing until it was almost too late. Through the sky, piercing through the clouds like arrows, a small formation of Tetan-made *Viper*-class starfighters flew by, unleashing a flurry of blaster bolts as they passed overhead. With impressive accuracy, they destroyed the firing light turbolaser batteries. With bright balls of energy and flame, the turbolaser batteries erupted. The sight excited Jedi Malakon.

"Alright! Get ready!" Gabriel shouted.

Jedi Malakon immediately sprung to life, eager to finally get some real action. He was nervous, yes, but he was also excited. For the first time in his life, he would be making history rather than just reading it. In anticipation, he held his lightsaber in his hand, activating the blue energy blade with a flick of the thumb. The sizzling rod of energy snapped to life with a *snap-hiss*. The gunship quickly got to ground, hovering a mere metre off the grassy courtyard in the middle of the detention centre. The sliding doors slid open; a cool night breeze washed over Jedi Malakon. Then, he leapt off the gunship, finally setting foot on Empress Teta. Behind him, the gunship took off. Jedi Malakon looked around, atop the massive ferrocrete wall. He watched as white-armoured stormtroopers scurried about, trying to get to their firing positions as fast as possible.

Gabriel, armed with a blaster rifle, led the charge; he screamed, "Let's go!"

Just then, the first blaster bolt from atop the wall smashed down upon them. Luckily, it had missed everyone, but burned a small smoking crater into the grassy dirt. Gabriel, not flinching at the possibility of death, led the resistance fighters into the detention centre. Jedi Malakon hung back, batting away any energy bolts that were shot his way. He had practiced deflecting blaster bolts at the academy, but when it's for real, it's something else entirely. His hands were shaking from nerves and his heart seemed erratic and chaotic.

Then, before he knew it, Gabriel had already breached the detention centre. Fearless, it seemed, he charged into the Imperial controlled building, firing wildly with his blaster rifle. Using the Force, Jedi Malakon charged forward, still batting away incoming blaster bolts. Sweat dripped into his eyes, but he simply blinked them away. Within seconds, he was inside.

Alright, now the real work, he thought.

Lerona had reached as far as she could inside the detention centre. She had not run into too much resistance from Imperial guards, and any she did encounter she dispatched quite quickly with either her blaster rifle or her fists. But now, she was stuck. In front of her, what stood between her and certain freedom, was a thick durasteel blast door. With all her might, she pounded the butt of her blaster rifle against it, but to no avail.

Damn it! She thought.

Realizing it was futile, she stopped. She knelt over, panting hard, trying to catch her breath. She stared at her hands, barely gripping the handle of the blaster rifle; they were shaking, trembling was more correct. Her knees were wobbling, and her feet hurt. She felt defeated. For the first time in her life she felt defeated.

So damn close...

In a moment of weakness, she allowed a tear. It welled up at the corner of her eye, finally streaming down her gritty cheek. Her anger, now directed inward, consumed her insides; it blackened them.

Then, narrowly missing her, a bright blue energy blade pierced straight through the durasteel armoured blast door. The glowing blue blade melted the metal instantly, making the metal radiate orange-yellow. She stood in shock and surprise. Wide-eyed, she backed away from the door and readied her blaster rifle. Suddenly, her heart started pounding out of her chest. Determined that she would not give the Imperials the satisfaction of killing her easy, she vowed to give them one hell of a fight.

Just then, the energy blade removed itself from the blast door, which moments later, opened. Instinctually, she fired a single bolt of energy. The red energy bolt streaked through the air, ricocheting off the blue-bladed lightsaber.

"Hold on!" The person behind the lightsaber shouted, holding up his hands.

She wasn't being fooled, "Who are you?"

He deactivated the lightsaber, "My name is Mathias Malakon, I'm here to rescue you!"

She hesitated for a moment and narrowed her eyes, "You're a Jedi?"

"Yes."

"I thought you'd all died out years ago." Leron asked.

He waited for a moment, "Not all of us."

She relaxed slightly. Suddenly, from behind the Jedi, she saw a familiar face running towards her.

"Gabriel!" Leron screamed in glee.

"Leron!" Gabriel screamed, clutching her sister in his arms.

They embraced for several seconds. For the first time in eight standard years, she gave a genuine smile. Then she said, "What's going on?"

"We're breaking you out." Gabriel answered with determination, "And you're taking back the throne."

Suddenly, an upwelling of emotion came to the surface. She broke out into tears. Gabriel hugged her again. Then, after a few seconds, a new feeling emerged.

Confidence.

Princess Jade watched as the gunship lowered itself into the middle of the courtyard. Immediately, it was struck with blaster bolts. Then, she ran out of the detention centre with all the strength her legs could give her. Up from above, stormtroopers pelted them with a flurry of blaster bolts. The red energy bolts streaked in front of her, and blasting the ground around her, but she was determined to take back her planet. Beside her, her new Jedi companion deflected blaster bolts that were too close for comfort. Gabriel and the rest of her Tetan citizens fired upon the stormtroopers, keeping them at bay for as long as they could.

Within seconds, she jumped into the gunship. A split second later, Jedi Malakon followed her. One-by-one, the resistance fighters piled into the gunship, firing their

blasters at the stormtroopers, determined to kill every single one of them. Gabriel was last to enter. Immediately, the side doors slid shut, and the pilot took off with incredible speed.

Princess Jade ordered, "Take me to the Iron Citadel!"

"That was the plan!" The pilot answered with a great big smile on his face, "It's good to see you again, Princess!"

She felt her heart skip a beat upon hearing the word "princess" uttered to her. For over eight standard years she had been treated like dirt, less than dirt actually. She looked through the forward viewport and saw her city from above, streaking underneath her as she passed by. Then, after a minute or two, dead ahead, she caught side of it. The Iron Citadel.

Her palace.

Suddenly, a newfound determination grew inside of her. With every passing moment, her desire to take back her palace, her planet, her citizens grew more and more. She grew angry at what the Empire and its Sith overlords had done to her and her people. They had to pay. They must pay. And she was going to be the one to make them. Within moments, the gunship touched down in the massive courtyard that opened up into the palace.

The doors slid open, but before she exited, she looked back to her brother, and said, "Hang back. I'll take care of this."

Rather than protesting, he nodded, and ordered, "Circle around and give her cover!"

Princess Jade stepped off the gunship. Immediately, the gunship lifted off on repulsorlifts, hovering in the air above her. A wash of wind and dirt flew past her. Princess Jade, self-assured of her position as the monarch of these worlds, took several steps forward, toward the main gates of her palace.

"Imperial usurper!" Princess Jade screamed, "Come out and face me, the true ruler of the worlds of Empress Teta!"

Her words echoed off the massive walls of her palace. She had not seen it in quite some time. It had seemed like a dream to her while she was imprisoned, but now, she realized, it wasn't. The palace was hers.

Then, out of the main gates, a tall, regal woman draped in luxurious, flowing fabrics walked out into the courtyard. The Imperial usurper, Kenda Zanedi, an agent of the Imperial Naval Intelligence, strode out to meet her. Her features, sharpened and honed over years of training and war, were exactly as she remembered them over eight standard years ago.

"Princess Lerona Teta Jade... I thought you had been sentenced to death this morning." Kenda Zanedi replied, "It brought me much joy, but it seems that we were a day too late." She paused metres away from Princess Jade, "I guess I'll just have to do it myself."

Princess Jade stared directly into her cold, metallic teal eyes. She answered, "You might have ruled these worlds for eight years, but they will never be yours... or the Empire's. The worlds of Empress Teta are me! And I am taking them back!"

"Only through me." Kenda Zanedi answered.

"That was the plan." Suddenly, Princess Jade shattered the blaster rifle in her hand against her knee. She tossed the mangled piece of plastoid and metal to the side, and charged forward. Kenda dropped into a defensive stance, while Princess Jade leapt into the air. Lerona's foot came forward, aimed directly at her enemy's chest. Expertly, Kenda sidestepped the attack, and Princess Jade landed on the hard stone pathway. Kenda immediately counter-attacked with a flurry of fists and elbows. Her attacks hit Princess Jade hard against her bruised and sore body, but she persisted to fight. Just at that moment, Kenda landed a solid punch against Lerona's face. Stars flashed into view, and she found herself falling backwards. Immediately recovering, Princess Jade rolled out of the way, narrowly missing a stomping foot meant for her head. Emerging onto her feet, she defended. Her attacker, now overly confident, concentrated on offensive attacks.

The Tetan princess defended as best she could, but waves of pain filled her body. Suddenly, Lerona managed to grab Kenda's forearm and twisted. Kenda screamed in pain. Instantly, with brutal might, Princess Jade elbowed Kenda in the jaw. She heard a crack as her elbow buried itself into her jaw and face.

Kenda fell backwards, and screamed, "You will die for that, Princess!"

Kenda, in a rage, charged forward. Her attacks were wild and undisciplined. Expertly, without resorting to emotions, Princess Jade parried and blocked her attacker's fists, elbows, and kicks. Suddenly, Kenda found herself off-balance from the wild

attack. Lerona immediately took advantage and pressed forward. She drove a powerful knee into Kenda's gut, doubling her over. Kenda immediately found that there was no more air in her lungs. With a powerful swing, Princess Jade drove her fist into the back of Kenda's head. The strike immediately knocked her unconscious, dropping her opponent onto the cold grassy ground permanently.

For a moment, breathing heavily, Princess Jade stood over her defeated enemy. Finally summoning the courage to leave, she turned around and headed inside the palace. Behind her, she heard, the gunship landed again, and Gabriel jumped out and detained the usurper Imperial. She walked toward the main gate, every step faster in anticipation. After proceeding through the antechamber, she walked into the Royal Chamber. It had been kept, more-or-less, exactly as she remembered it. Above her was the dome roof she remembered, and on the sides were ten arched windows draped with luxurious fabric. In front of her was the real prize, her hardened-gold armour and weapons. She quickly crossed the marble tiling and stood directly in front of them.

The gold shone onto her face, illuminating it. With great care, she took the hardened-gold armour off its rack and stared at it. Then, with eagerness, she put it on. She suddenly remembered the feel of the armour, how it had been custom-made specifically for her figure. Then, she reached up for her golden bow and whip, presents to her during her brief reign as monarch of Empress Teta. Suddenly, she paused. She looked at the two swords in front of her. The swords were modelled after the original ones used by Empress Teta herself during the Unification Wars, but were unfortunately lost. They were only two feet long, with a curved blade made of phrik, and had the head of a bird on the hilt. The entire hilt was gold-plated, while the blade itself had a silvery, polished finish. With delicate ease, she took them off their rack and slid them into her holster.

Now she was complete.

Three Days Later: Onboard the *Devastator*, orbiting above Jabiiim:

The darkness seemed to dissipate; sound was returning to him, but in a deeper, more muffled way. He was weak, and didn't have full use of all of his limbs and extremities yet. He tried to open his eyes, but his eyelids felt like there were lead-weights attached to them. He tried again, with marginal success. He managed to open his eyes, but his vision was severely blurry. He tried to turn his head to one side, then the other, with little to no luck. He could see that there was a bright bluish-white light shining up from underneath, however, but everything was just a vague impression.

Someone approached him; as the figure got closer, his eyes were able to adjust better, and he could make out some features. His face was covered in red and black, and he wore the white uniform of an admiral. He didn't know who he was. His hearing started to get better too.

"Take him out." The man in white said.

Tycho Xar could hear it. Suddenly, several beings approached him, and started punching in commands in a nearby computer. Suddenly, he realized why his vision had been so impaired, and his hearing muffled; he had been submerged in a viscous, translucent, clear to light blue coloured liquid. As soon as the liquid cleared his eyes and ears, he could see and hear a lot better, although not one-hundred-percent yet. The being standing in front of him was indeed wearing the uniform of an admiral, and his face was tattooed with red and geometric black designs. He wore a black breathing mask. The being was Admiral Havok, the Kel Dor admiral that was present during the Battle of Jabiiim. Standing in front of the computers, punching in more codes, were medical personnel; he must be in sick-bay. Suddenly, the thick transparisteel tank hissed to life, and opened up. The viscous liquid clung to his body, and when the air hit his body, he felt chills. The medical personnel helped him step out of the tank, and walked him over to a brushed durasteel medical table. The durasteel was cold, and made him shiver even more.

"Get this man a towel." Admiral Havok ordered.

His voice was still deep, but not as deep as when he was in the tank. Admiral Havok turned around, and stood next to another being. This other being was wearing a ribbed body-glove underneath an all black armour suit. The armour plating accentuated his muscular tone, and looked tough. He guess by the way the light caught the armour, that it was made with cortosis, a material that is strong enough to resist lightsaber strikes, and on occasion, cause them to surge and deactivate. His helmet was oddly similar to those of the stormtroopers, however, was also made of the same black material. Tycho Xar didn't know what to make of him.

"Where am I?" Tycho Xar asked.

"On the *Devastator*." Admiral Havok answered, "We're in orbit around Jabiiim."

Guess I never left that god-forsaken place, Tycho grudging thought.

A medical personnel finally gave him a towel and walked away. He quickly wiped off the cold, viscous liquid from his body. Goosebumps were starting to form on

his arms and legs. As he wiped off his legs, he noticed that his lower right leg was missing, and in its place was a cybernetic prosthetic. The cybernetic prosthetic was black, but functioned almost as well as the real limb would have. Cybernetic technology really improved recently; it was almost like having your real limb back. He stared at the cybernetic prosthetic for quite some time.

"Do you remember what happened to your leg?" Admiral Havok asked.

Tycho Xar stared at the cybernetic prosthetic for a moment, but didn't answer. Instead, he wrapped the towel across his body, trying to stay warm.

"An artillery shell exploded right next to you. The blast blew off your leg." Admiral Havok explained, "The shell also caused major internal bleeding, a few broken bones, and several lacerations across the chest and face."

"Damn." Tycho Xar whispered to himself.

"The EVO troopers that accompanied you, they saved your life." Admiral Havok answered, "They patched you up as best they could, but couldn't stop the bleeding. So they dragged you through the trenches until they could find you a medic. Darth Rage himself spoke to Mistress Amelia to get you shipped off-world, and onto the *Devastator*."

Tycho Xar took it all in. All those memories were so hazy. He simply couldn't remember all the exact details.

"Do you remember any of that?" Admiral Havok asked.

Tycho Xar shook his head, no, "I remember the shell, and that's about it."

"That's not surprising." Admiral Havok answered.

A moment of silence passed, and then something just occurred to Tycho.

"Wait a minute, you said Amelia?" Tycho Xar asked, "Why her?"

"She was running the entire campaign." Admiral Havok answered, "She had full tactical command."

Tycho only remembered her because of the stories that were told about her. He remembered someone telling him that she was an exiled-Sith, who just returned when the war was going well. Others told him of her physical attributes; apparently she would wear next to nothing in battle, and she was quite the looker. He never got a good

look at her, but from he heard, he wished he had. He didn't like her all that much because of that, but maybe he'd have to change his mind about it.

"She's on the Imperial council now, and official representative of the Sith Order." Admiral Havok informed.

Tycho Xar was taken completely aback, "What?"

"She's the new Regent and Voice of the One Sith Order." Admiral Havok informed, "That's all you need to know."

Tycho Xar did not like the situation; not one bit.

"Do you have a problem with that?" Admiral Havok asked in a forcible voice.

Tycho took a moment, "No, sir."

"Good, because as you know, we serve the Empire, and she and the High Moffs are the Empire." Admiral Havok clarified.

We'll see about that, Tycho rebutted.

He wanted to change the subject; after all, this was a lot of information all at once. After thinking about it for a few moments, he thought he had an answer to what that stuff was.

"How long have I been under the bacta?" Tycho Xar asked in a shaky voice.

"Six months." Admiral Havok answered, "And that's kolto, not bacta."

Tycho Xar looked at his arms and hands that still had some of the clear, viscous liquid on them.

"Kolto? I thought that they didn't produce that stuff anymore." Tycho Xar asked.

"They didn't, but with the war dragging out as long as it has, and a recent refinement to its molecular structure, kolto is just as effective as bacta now." Admiral Havok explained.

"Well, I suppose that's good for the Selkath." Tycho Xar replied. "Who altered the molecular structure?"

"The man you're about to meet." Admiral Havok replied.

Suddenly, the blast doors on the far side of the medical bay slid open, and a menacing being in black walked through. Cloaked in jet-black Sith robes, the being emanated an aura of dark-side energy unlike anything Tycho had ever felt before. The being wore a ceramic face-plate with a T-visor that reminded him of the Mandalorians, and impressive cortosis body armour to match. Then, just out of sight, Tycho noticed a metallic jet-black lightsaber on the being's belt. Tycho stared at the dark-side being as it approached closer and closer. It moved with regal grace, but menacing intensions. Tycho suddenly felt very uncomfortable around this being; it's very presence in the room felt threatening to Tycho. Then, with a clunk of its metallic boots, the being in black stood behind the Admiral.

"And who are you?" Tycho Xar asked the being in black.

"This is one of Amelia's Claws." Admiral Havok answered instead, "Almost everything about them is classified."

Classified. Interesting, Tycho thought.

"You got a name?" Tycho Xar asked the being in black, "Or should I just keep calling you Amelia's Claw?"

The creature, for a lack of a better term, simply stood with perfect upright posture behind the Admiral. Suddenly, Tycho felt an upsurge of dark-side energy, as if the creature didn't like being talked to.

Tycho gave up and asked, "So, who are we going to meet?"

"A man by the name of Thrak Zann." Admiral Havok answered.

Tycho Xar thought about it for a moment, "Never heard of him."

"As you shouldn't." Admiral Havok replied, "The man's an engineering genius."

"Then why haven't I heard of him?" Tycho Xar asked.

"Because he's also insane." Admiral Havok answered.

That makes sense, Tycho thought.

Insane people don't exactly get tenure at prestigious universities. Tycho Xar slid of the medical bed and walked up to one of the durasteel closets, and pull out some Sith robes.

"What's the mission?" Tycho Xar asked.

"Just a pick up." Admiral Havok replied, "Put your clothes on. I've got a shuttle waiting for you in the lower hangar bay."

Almost on cue, Amelia's Claw, this creature of the dark-side, turned and walked out of the medical bay, probably headed for the hangar. Tycho was almost relieved when the creature's presence was no longer in the medical bay. Tycho Xar put on the dark grey and black Sith attire that most Sith Knights wear. The comfortable, and loose-fitting attire allowed for maximum freedom of movements, which enabled for the most effective physical combat. He wondered what happened to his battle-gear, but he assumed he could get one of those nifty cortosis ones that the creature was wearing. On the utility belt was his black, durasteel lightsaber. He held it in his hands for a couple of moments, getting reacquainted with it.

When he finally finished putting on all the Sith attire, he extended his awareness in the Force to encompass the entire Star Destroyer. There were barely any personnel onboard; just a skeleton crew, Tycho Xar assumed. Tycho Xar left sick-bay, and started walking down the corridors of the Star Destroyer, making his way down to the hangar bay. He walked down to the permacrete landing deck, and entered the only *Nune*-class Imperial shuttle there. Inside, sitting motionless in the co-pilot's chair, Amelia's Claw stared out of the forward viewport, blankly. It was an odd and creepy sight that sent a shiver down Tycho's spine.

"Ready to go?" Tycho asked.

The creature gave no reply; it didn't even acknowledge Tycho's presence. Reluctantly, Tycho Xar took the pilots seat, and strapped himself in.

"I'll take that as a yes." Tycho Xar replied.

Tycho quickly ran through the pre-flight checks to make sure the shuttle was functioning properly. After getting clearance for take-off from Flight Command, their *Nune*-class Imperial shuttle took off, and made its way away from Jabim's gravitational pull.

"So are you going to tell me where we're going?" Tycho Xar asked.

After a few seconds, the creature sitting next to him reached out and punched in navigational coordinates; the motion reminded Tycho of droids, their movements

minimized for maximum efficiency. Every passing second with this creature Tycho seemed to dread even more.

When Tycho finally looked down at the coordinates, he replied, "The Ryloth system?"

Tycho Xar didn't know why they were going to the Ryloth system; nothing there but gangsters and spice. Tycho Xar didn't want to ask any more questions; Amelia's Claw sitting next to him was already getting creepy enough without making it worse with questions. Once far enough from the planet's gravitational pull, Tycho activated the hyperdrive.

One Day Later: Galactic City, Coruscant:

Moff Nyna Calixte, Director of Imperial Intelligence, quickly strode down the halls of the New Imperial Palace. Beside her was her husband and lover, Grand Moff Morlish Veed, Grand Admiral of the Imperial Forces and High Moff. It was late at night and they had been awoken with urgent and disturbing news that could not be told over the holocomm. After several awkwardly quiet but pressing minutes, both Moff Calixte and Grand Moff Veed entered the High Moff Council Chambers. Inside, Moff Fehlaaur, a Chiss and only alien Moff and the Head of the Imperial Diplomatic Corps, along with Moff Konrad Rus, Head of the Imperial Mission, already sat at their respective seats around a large round dark synthwood table. They were quietly talking to each other as she entered the room. At the center of the table was a large holographic projector, usually used for presentations, the contraption sat humming.

Moff Nyna Calixte nodded at the other Moffs as she took her seat next to her husband. Slowly, calculatingly, she looked around the table at the other empty seats. Then, almost as she had the thought, holographic projections of the other Moffs came to life. A fuzzy glowing-blue image of Moff Geist, Head of the Imperial Army, sat in his usual place. He looked agitated, as if this meeting were a waste of time. Currently, Moff Geist was leading a military ground campaign against the rebels on the world of Borosk, in the Outer Rim. Then, moments later, a holographic projection of Moff Rulf Yage, Head of the Imperial Navy and ex-husband, appeared at his seat. He too looked agitated and tired. Regent Amelia had sent him off to the Yaga system to annex the shipyards there, but the battles had not been easy.

Finally, after a few moments, Grand Moff Morlish Veed frustratingly asked, "Where is Regent Amelia?"

Just at that moment, a holographic glowing-blue image of Amelia appeared at the opposite end of the synthwood table. She looked exactly the same as she did six month ago when she approached them with a truce, confident and powerful.

Amelia, broadcasting from the Kuat system, looked right at the Grand Moff, and replied, "Right here."

Veed growled under his breath at being embarrassed like that. But before anyone could say anything, Amelia jumped right into the matter.

"It has come to my attention that the Empress Teta system has fallen out of Imperial hands." Regent Amelia started, "It seems that Princess Jade and her rebel allies attacked and captured the Imperial Mission there, and she is now in total control of her military forces again."

Nyna was startled by the revelation of news.

Amelia looked directly at Moff Rus, "What do you have to say for yourself?"

The tired old man simply bowed his head, "I am most sorry, Regent Amelia, but the Imperial Mission was not intended to be used in a military sense, but to peacefully spread Imperial influence through—"

Amelia immediately cut him off, "Your failure to request adequate security for the missionaries have been quite taxing, Moff Rus!" She snapped, "I trust this failure will not be repeated again."

"Of course, Regent Amelia." Moff Rus replied with a slight bow.

Amelia continued, "The Tetans are dangerous enemies. We must do something about this matter quickly."

"Agreed." Moff Geist replied in a deep and gravelly voice, "We must crush the rebellion there before other systems get the idea that uprising will go unpunished."

"We must be careful, however." Moff Yage added, "As Regent Amelia has mentioned, the Tetans are dangerous. They are one of the most powerful military and economic superpowers in the galaxy. They will not go down without a hard-won fight."

"Then we will give them one." Regent Amelia responded, "If we crush the Tetans through sheer military might, no system will dare go against us again. We can subjugate an entire galaxy in one fell swoop."

Moff Calixte looked around the room as they thoughtfully considered Amelia's words. Nyna quickly ran through the information she had on the Tetans. Unfortunately, there wasn't much. The Imperial spies have had problems, to say the least, at turning any Tetans into Imperial agents. She knew the Tetans were some of the most determined and loyal people in the galaxy.

Suddenly, Amelia looked right at her, and said, "What does the Imperial Intelligence have on Empress Teta?"

Moff Calixte sighed, "Unfortunately, Regent Amelia, not much. Because of their placement in the Deep Core, and the determined will of the Tetan people, we have had little success in infiltrating the system."

Amelia seemed to grow agitated and angry, "That is most unfortunate, Moff Calixte. I trust that this failure is not a reflection of you, but rather of your agents."

Moff Calixte couldn't say anything that wouldn't get her killed. She simply stared into Amelia's dark holographic eyes. Then, with a lightning fast flick of the eyes, Amelia's stare darted to Grand Moff Veed.

"Anything to add, Grand Moff?" Amelia asked.

Grand Moff Veed simply stared back at Amelia and shook his head.

"Good." Amelia replied, "Then it is settled. The Tetans must be crushed and made an example of." Then, before anyone could reply, "I will lead the military campaign against the Tetans. I will assure that Imperial victory there will be swift and total."

The other Moffs in the room nodded their head in compliance.

Then, Amelia added, "Moff Geist, Moff Yage, at this critical time I feel that the citizens of the Empire will need assurance that all is well. Having our most respected Moffs off-world battling against rebels and criminals might be seen as a failure of government. I request that you leave your campaigns and return to Galactic City at once."

Moff Geist was the first to answer, "The battle here on Borosk is almost complete anyways. I will return to Coruscant immediately, Regent."

"The Yaga system is proving more difficult to subjugate than originally anticipated, Regent Amelia." Moff Yage explained, cautiously using the appropriate

words, "We are close to capturing the shipyards, however. I will return immediately after we capture the shipyards."

"Very good, Moff's Geist and Yage." Amelia complimented, "Your successes and victories please me greatly." Then, almost to entice him further, she looked right at Grand Moff Veed as she continued speaking, "Your role in the Empire is most valuable."

"Thank you, Regent." Moff's Geist and Yage said simultaneously.

Immediately afterward, Amelia's holographic image flickered out of existence. Seconds later, Moff's Geist and Yage's holographic image also disappeared. After a moment, the other Moff's lifted themselves from their chairs, as if there was a great weight on them, and scurried off out of the room in defeated silence. Angrily, Grand Moff Veed stood up and stormed out of the chambers. Nyna knew that Veed was a proud and confident man, but after being shown such disrespect at the hands of Amelia, Veed must be steaming mad. She quickly caught up to him as he stormed down the shadowy hallways.

"This had got to end, Nyna." Grand Moff Veed demanded.

"I know." Nyna replied.

"Amelia is getting to powerful." Grand Moff Veed explained, "You saw her in there. She more-or-less demanded of us, rather than collaborated. She's got the idea that she is Empress rather than Regent."

"I agree, Morlish." Nyna replied, "But she has powerful allies in Geist and Rulf. She has the respect of the Imperial military. If we were to simply oust her, we would find ourselves with Star Destroyers bearing down on us soon after."

Grand Moff Veed growled.

"Wait and see what happens next." Nyna continued, "She will start a long, bloody, and costly war against the Tetans. After her failure there, she will soon lose respect from her military allies, and then, when her power is dwindling, we can strike and strike hard."

After several brooding moments, Morlish's mood seemed to lighten. Nyna let out a sigh of relief. Then, Veed answered, "Yes. That is correct. We will do it your way, Nyna."

Outside the Utapau system, the Outer Rim:

Supreme Commander Gar Stazi, the infamous Duros Galactic Alliance Remnant admiral who has been leading a campaign of hit-and-run guerrilla warfare against the Sith and the Empire for the past eight standard years, stoically stared out of the forward viewport on the bridge of his flagship, the *Alliance*. The bridge, the central command post on a capital ship, was nearly empty. Because of all the repairs sustained in a recent costly and brutal campaign against the Empire, with the aid of their exiled-Imperial allies, on the world of Dac, most of his personnel have been busy with other matters. Suddenly, Dac was all Supreme Commander Gar Stazi could think about. The Mon Calamari and Quarren world of Dac was just another example of the brutal tactics employed by the Sith-Imperial government. A terrible viral spore was released into the vast oceans on Dac, killing nearly everything on the world in what the Empire dubbed "The Final Protocol".

Suddenly, the images of the campaign flashed across the Admiral's mind, sending a shutter down his spine. He had wept that day after the evacuation; countless millions, possibly billions, of beings had died on Dac that day. Every ounce of him wished he could have done better. After that day, Supreme Commander Gar Stazi vowed to never fail the beings of this galaxy that poorly again.

Then, from behind, Captain Jhoram Bey, a Weequay and second-in-command, stormed onto the bridge; he shouted, "Admiral! You need to come see this!"

Supreme Commander Gar Stazi immediately turned around from his place at the viewport and quickly walked over to the holographic projector on the bridge. Jhoram Bey was punching in something into the HoloNet, then suddenly a bright cone of bluish-white light shone in front of him. The image of the planet Empress Teta rotated before the Admiral.

Confused, "What is it, Jhoram Bey?"

"Sir, the Empress Teta system has just openly attack the Imperial Mission there and declared war against the Sith and their Imperial allies." Jhoram Bey answered.

The news struck at the Supreme Commander hard; the Tetans were powerful, determined and strong, but he didn't know if they could withstand what the Sith and the Empire were willing to bring to bear onto them. Supreme Commander Stazi's heart started to beat faster.

"Bey, get me a communication with Princess Jade immediately." Supreme Commander Gar Stazi ordered.

Jhoram Bey immediately tried to get a signal through to the Empress Teta system, but all signals were distorted and full of static. He looked up at the Admiral, "Sorry sir, we're just too far out to get any signal through the Deep Core."

Supreme Commander Stazi desperately needed to get in touch with Princess Jade. The Tetans would be great allies against the Sith, but only if they survived the initial Imperial onslaught that was guaranteed coming.

"Bey, plot a course toward the Deep Core." Supreme Commander Gar Stazi ordered, "We need to get into contact with Empress Teta before it's too late."

Three Standard Days Later: The Ryloth system:

The *Nune*-class Imperial shuttle reverted to realspace, and into the Ryloth system. The Empire didn't interfere with Ryloth's affairs to a great degree; however, since many Twi'leks have shown great aptitude with the Force, Sith recruiters travel to Ryloth every few months to kidnap those whom possess even the slightest hint of Force sensitivity. Although Ryloth keeps a low profile, a token garrison of stormtroopers does exist on the scorched surface of Ryloth, with only minimal patrols through the system from Imperial Star Destroyers every few weeks.

During the trip, Tycho Xar has been re-honing his skills, trying to regain his former abilities as before, and getting used to the new prosthetic leg. During his six month recovery in the kolto tank, his muscles had partially atrophied due to the inactivity, but the medical staff did exercise his muscles with electrical stimuli, so the muscles didn't degenerate as much as they would have. Luckily, Tycho Xar had regained full use of all his muscles, and his abilities in the Force.

Tycho approached one of the five moons of Ryloth, the second planet in the Ryloth system. The moon they were approaching was the one closest to the planet, and by far the largest. The mean diameter of the moon is nearly three thousand kilometres, and orbits in a relatively close orbit around Ryloth. Orbiting around the moon, dubbed Zann One, were fifty dark-grey and black *Venator*-class Star Destroyers with the black, double-*del* triangle insignia of Thrak Zann on the port side; the black double-*del* triangle insignia was met to represent the tee and the zed of Thrak Zann. The *Venator*-class Star Destroyers were orbiting around the moon in a classic diamond formation, and are headed towards them.

"We're expected, right?" Tycho Xar asked.

Just that moment, the communication system turned on.

"*Unidentified spacecraft, transmit codes or we will fire upon you.*" Air-traffic control stated in a droid-like voice.

"Transmitting codes." Tycho Xar replied.

Suddenly, on both sides of the *Nune*-class Imperial shuttle was an escort of over a dozen *StarViper*-class attack platforms and Eta-2 *Actis*-class light interceptors were flying behind and beside them with laser cannons on standby. All of the starfighters had the Thrak Zann black, double-*del* triangle insignia painted on them. The *Venator*-class Star Destroyers were closing in, and were about five hundred kilometres away; their long dorsal flight decks opened, and pouring out the massive hangar were more *StarViper*-class attack platforms, Eta-2 light interceptors, and even some TIE/In Interceptors and a few XJ7 X-Wings. By far the most plentiful starfighter in the fleet were the *StarViper*-class attack platforms, but those designs were at least a hundred standard years old by now. The fleet was heading their way in vast numbers; at least fifty fighters were approaching.

"Boy, they're really going all out, aren't they?" Tycho Xar replied.

The only response Tycho got from Amelia's Claw was a slight surge in dark-side energies that, as Tycho took it, meant he should stop bothering the creature.

"So what's the deal with this Zann guy?" Tycho Xar asked himself.

Tycho read the dossier on Thrak Zann that was downloaded into the Imperial shuttle's computer. It looked to Tycho that he was working with the Empire to engineer new weapons for them. As Tycho interpreted it, Zann supplied the Empire and Sith with technology, and the Empire turned its head the other way on his other... dealings.

Spice, Tycho immediately thought.

It was actually quite smart using this backwater engineer to design weapons for the Empire if you don't want anyone else knowing about it. Patents and blueprints have to be handed over to government officials. If one, even one, of those government swine turned out to be a spy for the resistance, than their advantage is lost.

Moments later the communication system turned on.

"*You're clear for landing.*" Air-traffic control replied. He then proceed to give them landing vectors and a landing platform.

Despite being cleared for landing, a dozen *StarViper*-class attack platforms continued to escort them towards Zann One's surface. The surface of Zann One was rocky and hot; the terrain was covered in black, jagged, razor-sharp rocks of basalt. The surface reminded of the Razor Coast, which disturbed him greatly. The star in the Ryloth system must cook the surface of the moon.

Finally, they land on the enclosed landing platform; the *StarViper*-class attack platforms broke off their escort, and returned to orbit. The roof of the landing platform closed behind them, and Tycho Xar and Amelia's Claw exited the *Nune*-class Imperial shuttle. The landing platform was huge, but incredibly dull; it was simply a big, grey bunker-like landing platform made of permacrete. The permacrete landing pad was covered in grease, oil, dirt and other junk; off to the side were some starfighters that were in the process of being repaired. Greeting them there were several dozen BX-series droid commandoes; they were spotless, and their black bodies looked as if they were new, even though the designs were used as far back as The Clone Wars. The BX-series droid commandoes were lined up parallel to each other, and faced each other. At the far end of the two parallel rows of droids was a tall man, five foot eleven inches, with long, silky white hair, deep silver-blue eyes, and a white, grizzled beard. He was wearing silver-coloured chest armour underneath a long white robe that matched his hair. Behind him was a shorter man with dark-olive skin and black hair. Tycho Xar walked between the rows of droids and up to the man, with Amelia's Claw following closely behind.

"Doctor Zann, I'm here to pick up the package." Tycho Xar replied.

"Yes, of course." Thrak Zann replied, "This is my most loyal and trusted lieutenant, Naes Funk," Pointing to the dark-olive skin man, "Follow me."

He turned around and led them down the corridor at the far end of the landing platform; the dark skinned man followed. As they walked through the compound, Tycho Xar noticed that the facility was occupied by both droid, and organics of all types of species. The walk was longer then Tycho Xar had expected.

"Quite a facility you got here." Tycho Xar replied.

"I do what I can with what I got." Thrak Zann answered.

"I noticed." Tycho Xar replied, "Those starfighters and Star Destroyers you got are a hundred years old."

Thrak Zann chuckled, "Just because they are old designs, doesn't make them any less deadly."

Tycho Xar assumed he was correct.

"Yes, I have a lot of old technology with me. It gives me a more comfortable feeling. They were ascertained by my family for several generations, but assure you, they are just as deadly as when they were build." Thrak Zann answered.

"How can you be so sure?" Tycho Xar asked.

"Because I've retrofitted my entire fleet with state-of-the-art technology." Thrak Zann explained, "They are like new, Sith."

"And the droids?" Tycho Xar asked.

"Recovered from The Clone Wars, yes." Thrak Zann answered, "But with new attack algorithms that make them far more capable then their original programming would allow. Possibly even tough enough to handle a Sith Knight."

"I doubt that." Tycho Xar replied, "I remember history class. The Jedi cut down these clankers like butter."

"Yes, that might be true." Thrak Zann replied.

An awkward silence followed for a few moments.

"How did you acquire all this?" Tycho Xar asked.

"My family has a lot of connections with the underworld, Sith." Thrak Zann answered, "These implements of war, when they live out their usefulness, usually go to the scrap pile. However, if someone were to pay the right beings, they might be able to acquire these commodities. My family has been buying up these weapons since the end of The Clone Wars... at an extremely reduced price."

And not since The Clone Wars either, Tycho thought.

"The Separatists had vast amounts of droids that were simply deactivated at the end of the war; they were supposed to be junked or melted down, but my family

bought most of them." Thrak Zann continued, "The Star Destroyers and various fighters were acquired when the Republic fell, and then the Empire."

"Any B1 battle droids?" Tycho Xar jokingly asked.

"Heavens no!" Thrak Zann screamed in a repulsed tone, "I hate that model. Utterly useless! And every time one of those droids speaks, I feel like shooting someone in the face."

"I see..." Tycho Xar replied, "So do you only buy then?"

"No. When the Confederacy of Independent Systems was disbanded, my family acquired the rights to build most of the models you see here." Thrak Zann answered, "But of course, on a much smaller scale. After all, we're not the Empire."

"Of course not." Tycho Xar finished.

Finally they reached what looked like Thrak Zann's main laboratory. The large room looked like an utter mess of papers and scrap metal, but underneath all that was apparently important work. Thrak Zann sat in front of one of the massive supercomputers and started typing in commands. The dark-olive skin man stood directly behind Zann, as if to protect him from any danger. Amelia's Claw, whatever it was, stood at the precipice of the doorway. Zann pulled up the files that they were supposed to pick up, and copied them into a blank datachip.

Thrak Zann looked up at the creature standing at the doorway and shuttered, "I hate those things."

Tycho looked at Amelia's Claw, then back at Zann, "Why?"

Thrak Zann looked up at Tycho with a surprised expression, "Where have you been, Sith?" He asked, "Do you not know what that is?"

"I've been out of touch recently." Tycho answered.

"The exact details are classified, of course, but from what I've gathered, Regent Amelia herself had abducted beings strong in the Force shortly after birth." Thrak Zann explained, "Then, through psychological manipulations, twisted their minds into her slave. The worst part is that she corrupted their bodies with cybernetic enhancements." Thrak Zann suddenly shuttered, "They're more monsters than beings."

The new information of his "companion" disturbed Tycho in a way he had never felt before.

Changing the subject, "And her Majesties flagship?"

Thrak Zann punched in a holographic display of the new flagship. Suddenly, a gigantic wedge-shaped Star Dreadnaught appeared in front of Tycho Xar, rotating slowly to give a full three-hundred and sixty degree view.

"An impressive design, if I do say so myself." Thrak Zann complimented himself, "The exact details of the ship are classified, of course, as per Regent Amelia's orders. But you can be assured that they meet or exceed any and all of her expectations."

"Very good." Tycho Xar replied.

The data for the flagship finally finished copying. Thrak Zann pulled it out of the socket, and held the datachip in his hands. Almost immediately, Amelia's Claw, whatever it was, took its first steps toward Thrak Zann, its hand held out. Suddenly, Naes Funk violently grabbed Thrak Zann and pried the datachip from his hand. Almost as if Amelia's Claw anticipated the treachery, it had its crimson-bladed lightsaber out, prepared to behead the traitor. Before the blade could reach its mark, however, Naes Funk threw a thermal detonator into the air. Reflexively, Tycho summoned a powerful Force Push that threw himself and Thrak Zann away from the explosive device; the creature, however, simply grasped hold of the thermal detonator with the Force, and crushed it with its mind. In the ensuing chaos, Naes Funk had managed to escape the laboratory with the plans.

"Get him!" Thrak Zann demanded, "Before it's too late!"

Without hesitation, Amelia's Claw stormed out of the laboratory, running down the corridors at speeds he had not thought possible. Tycho Xar, using the Force to augment his movements, hurried down the corridor after the traitor. By the time they reached the landing platform, however, there was no sign of Naes Funk.

"Blast it!" Tycho Xar cursed; he took a long breath, "We have to get it back, and soon."

The creature standing next to him send out punishing waves of dark-side energies. Tycho immediately turned away and headed for the Flight Control Room. The room was in chaos, and full of droids futilely trying to assess the situation.

"Did he already jump out of the system?" Tycho Xar asked a BX-series droid commandos.

"*Confirmed.*" The BX-series droid answered.

"Where did he go?" Tycho Xar asked.

"*Unknown, we only have the vector the traitor took.*" Red informed.

"Give me a read out." Tycho Xar ordered.

A holographic projection of The Slice and Trailing Sectors popped up. A red arrow showing the escape vector Naes Funk took was plotted as well, as well as several statistically likely locations based on that escape vector. However, the more Tycho thought about it, the more it seemed impossible to predict where the traitor would have gone.

All of a sudden, one of the possibilities struck him, "Socorro."

"*Why there?*" The BX-series droid commando asked, "*Calculations show that Socorro is a mere ten point three, two, seven percent likelihood of—*"

"I've had dealings with intergalactic gangsters. That's where the *Crimson Axe* is located." Tycho Xar interrupted, "Socorro is the base of the Bloody Bones gang, and gangsters tend not to like other gangsters. Maybe Naes Funk has flipped over to Rav's gang."

Tycho immediately left the room and walked towards *Nune*-class Imperial shuttle they came in on. When Tycho entered the cabin, Amelia's Claw was already sitting in the co-pilots chair. Tycho Xar plotted a course to Socorro, strapped himself in, and took off from Thrak Zann's compound and away from Zann One's gravitational pull. Orbiting around the moon were the fifty *Venator*-class Star Destroyers, with some starfighters flying around in a defensive formation.

Not much good it did today, Tycho thought.

Once they were clear of Zann One's gravitational pull, and Ryloth's, they jumped into hyperspace.

Just outside the Aquilae system:

The Galactic Alliance Remnant fleet, all that has remained over the years of warfare, consisted of just over fifty capital ships. Supreme Commander Gar Stazi

watched as the fleet moved into position around and behind the *Alliance*, proud of how the beings underneath him have worked and triumphed over much adversity. Gar Stazi moved from his usual position at the forward viewport and turned to see the bridge of the *Alliance* bustling with activity once again. Naval personnel were relaying orders and confirming data streaming in at nearly a constant rate. Beside him, Captain Jhoram Bey stood confidently.

Supreme Commander Gar Stazi turned to his captain, "Get me a signal to Empress Teta."

Jhoram Bey immediately relayed the order to one of the communications officers on the bridge. Meanwhile, Supreme Commander Gar Stazi walked over to the holographic projector, eagerly awaiting a confirmed signal. He could feel the tension rise from within himself; his heart beat ever faster with every passing moment.

Suddenly, Jhoram Bey replied, "Signal's coming through, Admiral."

Gar Stazi stood proud and confident in front of the holographic projector. Then, with a shutter, a bluish-white cone of light emanated from the holographic projector. There stood a grainy holographic image of Princess Jade. She was a gorgeous female, by human standards anyways, with long flowing dark-brown hair, and piercing blue eyes. She was also wearing her traditional battle armour, a set of hardened-gold armour passed down from generation to generation of rulers, dating all the way back to the Unification Wars over five thousand years ago. Despite her physical appearance, she seemed troubled and in distress.

"*Supreme Commander Stazi!*" Princess Jade replied in surprise, "*It is good to see you again, but how can this be?*"

Supreme Commander Stazi bowed his head slightly, "Princess." He started, "It has come to my attention that you have waged open war with the Empire. I must warn you of the dangers that come of this."

"*I am well aware of the dangers of waging war against the Empire, Commander.*" Princess Jade answered.

"Yes, I'm sure you are." Supreme Commander Stazi replied, "But you must understand that Amelia and her Sith allies will not stand for such an overt action against them. They will bring nearly everything they can to arms against you."

"I had assumed that." Princess Jade answered, "We Tetans are not so weak, Commander. We are prepared to fight if we must."

"It is not my intension to question your military prowess, Princess." Supreme Commander Stazi clarified, "Merely to offer my aid."

"How so?" Princess Jade asked, "Where are you?"

"Closer then you think." Supreme Commander Stazi answered, "But it is best if I do not divulge such information over holocomm."

"You are correct, Commander." Princess Jade replied, "Sorry for asking. Admiral, if you can help us in any way, the Empress Teta systems gladly excepts you."

"You have it, Princess." Supreme Commander Stazi answered before the holographic image fizzled out.

Jhoram Bey had been standing behind the Admiral the entire time. He had a look of both excited anticipation, coupled with restrained fear. Everyone in the fleet had heard of Amelia and what she could do with her Force powers. Some claimed the stories were impossible, mere wartime myths perpetuated by the Imperials as a psychological tool against them. Gar Stazi personally knew Jedi, and knew what the Force could do.

"So we're going to Empress Teta?" Jhoram Bey asked.

"Yes. Plot a course." Supreme Commander Gar Stazi answered; then, just before Jhoram Bey could turn around and leave, he stopped him, "Oh, and captain!"

"Yes, Admiral?"

"I need you to do something for me." Supreme Commander Gar Stazi replied.

Two Standard Days Later: The *Crimson Axe*, Socorro:

Jammed into the empty sarlacc's pit, the *Crimson Axe* sits high above the black sands of the Killee Wasteland. It is home to the once-feared space pirate named Rav, a tough old Feeorin. Retired, Rav now serves the Bounty Hunter's Guild, with a safe haven and clearing-house for their marks. The pitch-black night loomed over Socorro, and darkness and shadow plunged the smoggy, polluted and rundown buildings of the city that surrounded the base of the massive, triangular-shaped *Crimson Axe*. The

sarlacc pit that the *Crimson Axe* occupied sits at the top of a gigantic mesa made of basalt.

Infiltrating the *Crimson Axe* wasn't all that easy, but wasn't all that tough, either. Tycho and his companion spent most of the night crawling through various air ducts as silently as possible, until they reached the deepest part of the *Crimson Axe*, a cantina dubbed the Golden Gorg Cantina; it was famous for its drinks, among other things. Tycho was the first to reach the Golden Gorg Cantina; he reached out with the Force, sensing if there were any other beings in the cantina. Tycho immediately sensed that there were at least four. Tycho looked through a metal ventilation grate and saw Naes Funk talking to Rav, a towering mountain of muscle, covered in bluish-green skin, with an X scar across his left eye, a robotic right leg, and golden rings around his head tentacles. The space pirate wore dark-brown chest armour and purple trousers. He was accompanied by two large Gamorrean's wearing black armour, and armed with rotary blaster cannons.

Tycho listened intently, trying to discern what they were talking about.

"With these plans, you will be able to reclaim your title of top space pirate in the galaxy once more, Rav." Naes Funk replied.

"How do I know you're not trying to make a fool outta me?" Rav growled.

"Because I wouldn't be standing here if I were." Naes Funk said confidently.

Rav stood in front of the traitor, contemplating if the deal was worth it.

"What about the Empire?" Rav asked, "They're going after pirates with bloody consequences."

"The Empire won't know a thing... trust me." Naes Funk answered.

Naes Funk took out the datachip and was about to hand it over to Rav. Slowly, Tycho pulled back the grate from the ceiling. Then, with elegant grace, dropped through. His movements were completely silent; unusually silent. Tycho Xar, wearing his black Sith attire, had his black, durasteel lightsaber in hand, but turned off.

"Hello there." Tycho Xar asked.

Suddenly, Rav went into a frenzied fury; he screamed, "*Echuta! D'emperiolo kung!*"

With lightning fast reflexes, Rav took out a hold-out blaster pistol and aimed it straight at Naes Funk's chest. He tried to scream in protest, but Rav was too quick, and fired a searing white-hot bolt of pure energy into his ribcage, blasting it apart. Naes Funk collapsed onto the ground, a smoking crater where his sternum used to be.

"Thanks." Tycho Xar said, "Saved me the trouble."

Then, out from behind Rav, the two Gamorrean's came charging at Tycho. Immediately, Tycho activated his lightsaber with a vicious *snap-hiss*. The crimson blade cast an eerie dark light onto Tycho.

"*Kako kreespa!*" Rav screamed.

The Gamorrean's gave a small grunt of acknowledgment, and then opened fire. The six barrels of the rotary blaster cannons started to spin, then fire; red energy bolts streaked across the cantina, tearing blaster holes into the walls. Tycho Xar, using the Force to hasten his movements, dove into a booth with an overturned table. The rotary blaster cannons were incredibly loud, and powerful, however, they were inaccurate and unwieldy to fire. Red energy bolts sprayed in all directions, destroying the cantina. One of the Gamorrean's started walking towards Tycho Xar, firing as he did. Tycho Xar came out of hiding, and attempted to attack the approaching Gamorrean using both his lightsaber and Force Push, but failed. The rotary blaster cannon fired too many energy bolts too quickly for him to deflect all of them. Tycho Xar was again forced to take cover behind more booths, and more tables.

Suddenly, ripping its way through the ceiling, Amelia's Claw came crashing down behind the Gamorrean standing next to Rav. The gluttonous pig-like creature tried to turn around to attack the new foe, but was quickly cut down by a swirl of lightsaber slashes. Three smoking chunks came crashing down onto the alcohol-soaked floor of the cantina. Before Rav even knew what had happened, Amelia's Claw had wrapped its gauntlet-like hands around the space pirate's neck, bringing him down to his knees. Momentary distracted, the other Gamorrean stopped attacking Tycho. That moment was more than enough time; Tycho leapt out from behind the booth he was hiding in, and struck out at the rotary blaster cannon, severing it in half. Tycho Xar then kicked the Gamorrean in the chest, knocking the hulking beast to the ground. The Gamorrean laid next to Rav, who was still clutching his right arm in pain. Tycho Xar pointed the tip of his crimson blade at the Gamorrean.

Tycho Xar looked at Rav, his face filled with anger, and said, "The plans?"

Rav refused to cooperate. Without a word, Amelia's Claw clenched down harder on Rav's neck, slowly choking the life out of the Feeorin.

"The plans!" Tycho Xar demanded, "Now!"

Rav pointed to the crisp corpse of Naes Funk. There, in the dead man's hands, was the datachip they had travelled so far to acquire. Tycho walked over and grabbed it out of the dead man's clutches. Then, he looked at Rav. The space pirate was utterly defeated, embarrassed even.

Tycho looked into the dark, ceramic T-visor mask of Amelia's Claw, and ordered, "Let him go."

Amelia's Claw refused to let Rav go. Suddenly, Amelia's Claw reared up his crimson-bladed lightsaber to cut Rav down in half. Then, Tycho held the datachip in his hand.

"Let him go!" Tycho Xar ordered, "Or the datachip gets destroyed!"

Amelia's Claw stopped in mid-swing. Tycho stared at the creature standing in front of him. After a few tense moments, the creature let Rav go and deactivated its lightsaber. Tycho's heart began to slow down, and he felt relief wash over him. Amelia's Claw looked down at the Gamorrean, however, and crushed its chest with its boot, killing the being. Tycho, dismissing the action, turned around and walked out of the cantina, Amelia's Claw right behind him.

Honour

Three Standard Days Later: The Empress Teta System:

Tycho Xar's Imperial shuttle dropped out of hyperspace within the Empress Teta system, a Deep Core system that recently became the main source of Imperial resistance and an economic powerhouse. Directly in front of Tycho Xar was a huge staging area for Lady Amelia's assault on the primary planet within the Empress Teta system, Empress Teta herself. Lady Amelia's fleet was massive, consisting of over thirty *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers, and fifty *Ardent*-class fast frigates, all fully equipped with full wings of *Predator*-class starfighters and *Neutralizer*-class bombers. The sight was awe inspiring and breathtaking, while still inspiring fear and obedience. Lady Amelia has, for the past four days, been manoeuvring and pushing through various minefields laid down by the Tetans. Now, nothing stood between Lady Amelia and the planet Empress Teta. The final preparations for the assault on Empress Teta were underway.

Tycho Xar was summoned onto Lady Amelia's flagship, an *Imperious*-class Advanced Star Destroyer dubbed the *Imperatrix*. The *Imperatrix* was incredibly large, over three kilometres in length and armed to the teeth. Tycho Xar approached the triangular hulking beast of armour and durasteel. Suddenly, the *Imperatrix* air-traffic command hailed them.

"Nune-class shuttle, transmit authorization codes immediately." Air-traffic control ordered.

"Transmitting authorization codes now." Tycho Xar replied.

Tycho Xar stared blankly into the massive flagship; he was completely speechless. Tycho Xar leaned back into the pilot's chair, taking the sight in. Amelia's Claw continued to stare blankly forward, unmoving, unchanging.

"Nune-class shuttle, authorization excepted. Proceed to docking bay twelve." Air-traffic control ordered.

"Roger, proceeding to docking bay twelve." Tycho Xar replied.

Without saying a word, Tycho landed the *Nune*-class Imperial shuttle in the massive hangar of the *Imperatrix*. After powering all the electrical systems down, Tycho Xar proceeded down the landing ramp and out into the massive hangar. The hangar was filled with *Predator*-class starfighters, all hanging on their launch racks. Off to the port side were similarly designed *Neutralizer*-class bombers hanging on their respective launch racks. Both the *Predator*-class starfighters and the *Neutralizer*-class bombers have hinged-wings, making them much more compact. The hangar Tycho Xar stepped into

was cold, and filled with white light. The sight of ferrocrete flooring, and durasteel walls was sterile and chilling. Voices over the intercom could be heard echoing off the cold durasteel walls. Various mechanics and droids were gearing up and prepping the starfighters for the coming battle; the hangar was a busy place. Walking towards him were six Imperial stormtroopers dressed in full combat gear. The first stormtrooper walked directly in front of Tycho, saluted, and stood erect.

"Sir, you are requested on the bridge!" The stormtrooper informed.

"Very well, trooper." Tycho Xar replied, and pointed for the stormtroopers to lead the way.

The six stormtroopers turned on their heels, and marched out of the hangar. Tycho Xar, however, immediately noticed that Amelia's Claw was not following him. In fact, it seemed the hulking creature was headed for the other end of the hangar, headed towards a small group of odd triangular shaped starfighters that Tycho had never seen before. Tycho didn't care; he was glad to be done with it. The stormtroopers led him through the long, black-grey hallways of the *Imperious*-class Advanced Star Destroyer. The halls were filled with grey-uniformed Imperial officers, white-armoured stormtroopers, black-armoured pilots and black-robed Sith Knights walking past them, heading in various directions. After taking a turbolift up to the bridge, the stormtroopers stood off to the side, allowing Tycho Xar to pass.

"We cannot go any further." A stormtrooper replied.

The doors to the turbolift closed, and brought the six stormtroopers back down. Directly in front of Tycho Xar were large dark grey blast doors leading into the bridge. Two Imperial officers, wearing grey uniforms, stood on either side of the blast door. They saluted when Tycho Xar passed. On the bridge, dozens of grey uniformed Imperial officers were busy preparing for the coming battle. Everyone on the bridge was human. They were frantically trying to get last minute calculations of jump coordinates, final tallies of ships and estimations on resistance; all was being conducted. No one looked at Tycho Xar when he entered the bridge; they were too busy with their work to notice, or to care. Directly in front of him was a beautiful woman, with dark red hair with black streaks, black geometric tattoos running down her left arm, and was wearing a black, heavy cloth Sith robe; she stared out of a trapezoidal window, peering into the nothingness of space, while a white uniformed full Admiral was discussing the invasion plan with her. The Admiral, an older human gentlemen, was tall, well built, and still had a full, thick set of hair atop his head, although slightly grey now. Tycho

Xar crossed the bridge in front of him, toward Lady Amelia. The Imperial officers still didn't take notice of Tycho Xar's arrival. He stood behind Amelia, who was having a conversation with an Admiral. Tycho waited for the Admiral to finish speaking.

"... are not push over's." The Admiral finished.

"Admiral Sarn, enough." Lady Amelia answered while staring out the trapezoidal window. She didn't turn around, nor look at the Admiral.

The Admiral stood with perfect posture, and didn't reveal his displeasure; through the Force was the only indication of his true feelings, "I only mean to warn you of the Tetans defences." Admiral Sarn replied in a stern voice, "The Tetans are not to be taken lightly. They will not fold as easily as other systems."

"I am well aware, Admiral." Lady Amelia answered, "That is all."

Lady Amelia waved him off. Admiral Sarn saluted, turned on his heels, and headed towards the pit in the center of the bridge. Lady Amelia finally turned around and stared into Tycho's green eyes. Her eyes were outlined with dark black eyeliner, and her lips were red, making her quite appealing. Instinctively, he bowed his head.

"You have something for me, I hope?" Lady Amelia asked.

Tycho Xar handed her the datachip. She took it, and smiled.

"It's all there." Tycho Xar replied.

"Excellent." Lady Amelia replied.

Suddenly, an Imperial officer appeared beside them. Lady Amelia handed him the datachip she just acquired. The Imperial officer saluted, turned on his heels, and marched towards the conference room. Amelia stared directly at Tycho the entire time; her blue-green eyes piercing through his mind.

"Is there anything else you require?" Tycho Xar asked.

"Only that you stick around." Lady Amelia answered.

Tycho was surprised, and confused. Amelia simply smiled, no doubt feeling his confusion through the Force.

"We are approaching a turning-point in the war; a moment that will make or break the Empire." Lady Amelia explained, "It is important that all my Knights understand this."

Tycho took a deep breath, "What's your point?" Tycho Xar asked.

Amelia didn't particularly care for the rude attitude, "My point, Knight Xar, is that the recent events that have shaped this galaxy elude you." Amelia explained further, "The times have changed, and I need you to understand them now."

"What is it that you require of me?" Tycho Xar asked.

"I require you to trust my judgement." Lady Amelia answered, "I can feel your doubts and uncertainties through the Force; your feelings are strong. However, I need you to trust *my* judgements over your own, for *I* am the one with the big picture in mind. Understand?"

"I will admit that certain recent events elude me, and my knowledge in the matter might not be complete, but asking me to trust you with my life might be a little hard to come by." Tycho Xar answered.

An instance of anger shot through Amelia, but she calmed herself, "I hear that you were on Jabiim, correct?"

"Correct." Tycho Xar replied.

"Do you know who planned that assault on Choal City?" Lady Amelia asked.

"From what I was told, it was you." Tycho Xar answered.

Amelia nodded her head, "Your information is correct." Lady Amelia replied, "You trusted me with tactical command then. All I ask is that you trust my command here and now."

Tycho Xar thought about it for a moment. That was the nature of war after all; trusting commanding officers with your life was not unusual, it was expected.

"Why are you asking me specifically? What makes me so important?" Tycho Xar finally said.

Amelia took a moment, "I sense a great future for you, Knight Xar. I just want to ensure that future will come to pass."

Tycho Xar stared at her for a moment; Amelia stared right back. After a few moments, Tycho finally came to a decision.

"I'll follow orders, but trust is another issue." Tycho Xar replied.

"Good enough, I suppose." Lady Amelia replied.

Tycho Xar stood in front of her for another moment, "Anything else?"

"No." Lady Amelia sharply said, "Get to the hangar and take a starfighter, I'll need you to be out there when the attack begins."

"As you wish." Tycho Xar replied.

Tycho bowed his head one more time, turned around and headed out the blast door. He entered the turbolift, and went down to the hangar level.

Amelia turned around after watching Tycho Xar walk out of the bridge. She stared out of the trapezoidal windows once more; she just stared at the blanket of stars in front of her. Admiral Sarn approached her from behind.

"My Lady, all preparations have been made to the best of their abilities." Admiral Sarn informed.

"Have you checked them?" Lady Amelia asked.

"Yes, my Lady. I've checked them twice; there are no errors that I can see." Admiral Sarn informed.

"There is no room for error, Admiral." Lady Amelia informed.

"Yes, I know, my Lady." Admiral Sarn answered.

Amelia continued to stare out of the window at the stars, "Proceed to microjump to Empress Teta, Admiral."

Admiral Sarn turned to face the command pit in the center of the bridge. All of the Imperial officers in the pit were staring at him with anticipation.

"Prepare for microjump to Empress Teta!" Admiral Sarn ordered.

The Imperial officers immediately began to work, powering down non-essential systems, closing hangar doors and activating the hyperdrives. Jump coordinates were checked and transmitted to all ships in the fleet.

"Admiral, all ships have confirmed jump coordinates and are prepared to jump." An Imperial officer reported.

"Good. Commence countdown." Admiral Sarn ordered.

The Imperial officer activated the countdown initiation sequence. Immediately, the fleet-wide countdown started.

"Jump commencing in five... four... three... two... one... jump." A female robotic voice spoke over the intercom.

The hyperdrives activated, accelerating the massive flagship into hyperspace. Amelia grabbed hold of the window as she stared out of it. The stars outside the window began to stretch, and then suddenly disappeared into blanket of bluish-white light.

Tycho Xar entered the hangar just as the hyperdrives activated. The jolt almost made him fall onto his back, but he used the Force to plant himself firmly on the ground. After a few moments, he began walking towards the hangar again. Tycho approached the chief mechanic, who was busy cataloguing inventory of spare parts for the starfighters and bombers.

"Are there any free starfighters here?" Tycho Xar asked.

The chief mechanic, a pale-skinned heavysset human male, turned to face Tycho. The chief mechanic was wearing grease-stained grey coveralls, and had a terrible scar running diagonally across his face. The chief mechanic stared at Tycho for a moment, then pointed to the back corner of the hangar.

"With the rest of the Knights." The chief mechanic replied.

Tycho Xar immediately turned around and headed in the direction the chief mechanic pointed. Tycho saw eight Sith Knights hanging around the launch racks for their *Predator*-class starfighters. The Sith Knights, all humans, were wearing the typical black attire of the Sith. They were casually talking about various stories they've

experienced over the past months during the war, when they saw Tycho Xar approaching. They stopped their conversation and simply stared at Tycho.

"You the new guy?" One of the Sith Knights asked.

"Yeah, my name is Tycho Xar." Tycho replied.

"Doesn't matter what your name is." Another Sith Knight replied, "You're a null until proven otherwise."

"We don't care to learn the names of null's." A third Sith Knight replied.

"Waste of time." Another added.

A *null*! Tycho Xar thought in anger. 'Null' was a fleet term for newbie's; unproven warriors. Null's were thought of as nothing, a waste-of-space. They were just more cannon-fodder for the Empire to use during battles. Tycho Xar expected this, but it still angered him.

"Lady Amelia requested we give you a starfighter." The first Sith Knight informed, "It's sitting over there." The Sith Knight pointed to the far end of the corner.

Tycho Xar looked at the *Predator*-class starfighter he was pointing to. It looked in good order; something Tycho Xar didn't expect. Tycho nodded in approval, and started walking towards the starfighter for closer inspection, when suddenly he was stopped.

"Hey!" The first Sith Knight shouted, "Welcome to Knight's Squadron."

Amelia stared out of the forward window as the *Imperatrix* travelled through hyperspace. The bluish-white sheet of light streaked across the trapezoidal windows of the bridge. Suddenly, someone shouted from the pit.

"Coming out of hyperspace!" An Imperial officer shouted.

The starlight began forming tubes of light; Amelia simply watched the stars, never turning around to look at the officers. Within moments, the stars became points of light once more; the sudden jolt from coming out of hyperspace was the only movement she showed. In front of her was the primary planet of the system, Empress Teta. The planet was green, lush with vegetation, with large blue oceans and a massive city metropolis that covered over sixty-percent of the planet surface. The ecumenopolis world was similar to Coruscant, however, was heavily armed with planetary turbolaser

emplacements and anti-orbital ion cannons. Orbiting around Empress Teta were three moons; one moon even large enough for a ring-system to form around the equator. Orbiting the equator of Empress Teta were the Tetan defence fleet.

"What are the Tetan defences?" Lady Amelia asked.

An Imperial officer, a human pale-skinned male with blonde hair, scanned the Tetan fleet and replied, "Hexagonal formation. Readouts report approximately thirty *Valkyrie*-class Battlestars..."

Battlestars, Amelia thought. The Tetan-made Battlestars were the most state-of-the-art orbital defence platforms in existence. Incredibly powerful, it used its one hundred and fifty quad-barrel heavy turbolasers and laser cannons, and sixty long-ranged turbolasers for planetary bombardment and anti-fleet warfare, and its twelve ion cannons and twelve missile ports for ship-to-ship engagements. The *Valkyrie*-class Battlestar specifically employs a symmetric three-armed star morphology, allowing it to uniformly attack its enemies from all directions.

"... and twenty *Ares*-class fighter platforms." The Imperial officer finished.

The *Ares*-class fighter platforms, another Tetan-made war machine; the large hangar platforms were designed for one purpose, to hold and launch the Tetan starfighters and swarm the enemy. Equipped with two hangar bays, they can rapidly deploy its thousand starfighter payload in a matter of minutes.

"What fighters do they have?" Lady Amelia asked.

The Imperial officer waited, "*Viper*-class starfighters mostly..."

Vipers, Amelia thought. The *Vipers* were notoriously deadly starfighters. Long, rather than wide, they were incredibly fast, matching the *Predator*-class starfighter, but were less agile and manoeuvrable. Slightly more armed and heavily armoured relative to the *Predator*-class starfighter, the dogfights that would ensue were not in Imperial favour.

"... reports also indicate *Raptor*-class bombers are present." The Imperial officer finished.

The Raptors were deadly bombers; heavily armoured and heavily armed, a small group of them could cripple a *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer with only a couple of passes. *The Tetans seemed to have pulled out all the stops*, Amelia thought.

"Any Blackbirds?" Lady Amelia asked.

The Imperial officer looked, "No indication."

Good, Amelia thought. The *Blackbird*-class stealth starfighter was the most deadly fighter the Tetans made. The Blackbirds were similar to Vipers in shape and design, but used composite material that absorbed sensory detection. Although more vulnerable relative to the Vipers, their superior speed, advanced navicomputer and upgraded Class 0.5 hyperdrive made them far more deadly.

Suddenly, another Imperial officer, a pale-skinned human female with light brown hair and brown eyes, reported in, "Incoming message from the Tetans."

Amelia walked over to the holographic projector located in the conference room. Admiral Sarn was already there, waiting for Amelia. The holographic projector activated, and a full-size image of Princess Lerona Teta Jade appeared; she was the current ruler of the Empress Teta system, and beloved by her citizens. Although the holographic image was bluish-white and grainy, Amelia knew exactly what she looked like in person. Princess Jade was a strikingly beautiful woman; Amelia hated other women, especially those who were beautiful. They made her feel insecure. To make things worse, Princess Jade was a deadly and cunning warrior who commanded respect from her soldiers. Princess Jade stared at Amelia, her deep blue eyes pierced into Amelia. Princess Jade, wearing the typical royal hardened-gold armour of her ancestors, was an intimidating figure; her muscles, hardened and toned from relentless years of training and exercise, frightened even the male Imperial officers.

"Lady Amelia, your Imperial fleet is not welcome here." Princess Jade started, *"Remove your fleet from our territory, or suffer the consequences."*

"Princess Jade... you are required by the Imperial court to submit to Imperial rule and abide by them." Lady Amelia countered.

"Tetan citizens do not recognize Imperial rules and laws." Princess Teta answered, *"We have declared sovereignty from the Imperial courts, and thus are not a part of them any longer."*

"You are foolish to think such a ploy would work." Lady Amelia replied.

"And you would be foolish to think your fleet can defeat ours." Princess Jade retaliated.

"The Imperial fleet will not submit, especially to Tetan foes." Lady Amelia countered with a sharp tongue.

"So be it, Lady Amelia." Princess Jade replied, "You just watch, your fleet will suffer a terrible loss here today."

The holographic image of Princess Jade disappeared. Amelia turned around to head back to the bridge when she stopped herself. She turned to look at Admiral Sarn, who was staring at the holographic projector, in deep thought.

"Admiral, battle is upon us." Lady Amelia ordered.

"Good, I hate long waits." Admiral Sarn replied.

Tetan High Commander Artemes Adoug stared out of the viewport of one of the Tetan-made *Valkyrie*-class Battlestars. He gauged the size of the Imperial fleet in front of him, impressed and troubled by the size. He knew that the fleet coming to bear against Empress Teta would be large, but this was something he had not properly assessed and anticipated.

Then, the holographic projector behind him shone to life. There, standing on a cone of bluish-white light, was Princess Jade. She spoke, "*The battle is on, Commander.*"

"Very well, Princess." High Commander Artemes Adoug replied, "I will remove the Imperial scum from our territories."

Princess Jade smiled, "*I have faith in you.*"

The holographic image flickered off. High Commander Artemes Adoug turned back to look at the fleet. Then, he exploded into action, "Charge all turbolasers! Prepare to fire on my command!"

Amelia walked towards the bridge, Admiral Sarn following closely behind. Amelia walked to the end of the bridge, while Admiral Sarn turned to his left and proceed around the pit. She turned around, and looked at the Imperial officers working within the pit.

"Lock firing solutions on the closest Battlestar." Lady Amelia ordered.

Immediately, the Imperial officers began inputting combat data.

"Raise all shields double front, and bring us to speed, full forward." Lady Amelia continued.

The last order made the Imperial officers skip a step. Bring the fleet to full speed while engaging an enemy was an unorthodox strategy. Amelia could even feel the anxiety from Admiral Sarn, but he was too professional to show it on his face. Nevertheless, the Imperial officers obeyed, and immediately the *Imperatrix* began to speed up. The power generators could be heard powering up, and turbolaser emplacements rotating.

"Shields, double front, and at full power, Mistress." A dark-skinned human male Imperial officer reported.

"Long-ranged turbolasers have firing solutions on the nearest Battlestar, bearing zero-zero-zero." Another Imperial officer, a black-haired, tan-skinned human male, reported.

"Give firing solution to all ships in the fleet." Lady Amelia ordered, "Concentrate all fire on the nearest Battlestar, and fire at will."

The Imperial officer relayed the order fleet-wide, and almost immediately, the long-ranged turbolasers began firing. The long-ranged turbolaser, a relatively new technology, allowed the energy bolt from heavy turbolasers to travel longer distances while still being effective. They tend to drain much more energy from the power generators, so they are often used only in long-ranged engagements.

The lights in the bridge went dim. Almost immediately after the first long-ranged turbolaser fired from the *Imperatrix*, a volley of long-ranged turbolaser fire, from the Battlestar, impacted the forward shields. The bridge shuttered from the impact, toppling over some officers; Amelia planted herself on the ground and used the Force to steady herself. The Imperial fleet, in classic wedge formation, sped full forward towards the Tetan defences. Soon after the volley impacted the *Imperatrix* forward shield, the two adjacent *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers, *Starscream* and *Rampage*, began firing their heavy turbolasers. They closed the distance between where they came out of hyperspace, to heavy turbolaser range in only a matter of seconds.

"Switch to heavy turbolasers, and fire at will!" Lady Amelia ordered, "Cut all engines, and even out the shields."

Even before the order, the Imperial officers had already sent a similar order to all batteries. Standard Imperial Navy doctrine called for the use of heavy turbolaser to

pummel the enemy at long-range. Suddenly, several more salvos of heavy turbolaser energy bolts were fired towards the Imperial fleet. The Tetans concentrated their fire on a single vulnerable *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer on the fringes of the formation; within seconds, the heavy turbolaser fire tore through the hull, ruptured the power generator, causing it to explode. Molten blobs of durasteel, and fragments of hull tore through adjacent starships. One of the *Ardent*-class fast frigates nearest to the exploding Star Destroyer was showered in shrapnel, crippling the hull and damaging its engines.

The Tetans draw first blood, Amelia thought.

Almost immediately after, one of the *Valkyrie*-class Battlestars exploded in a brilliant ball of light and fire. Amelia looked to her left, and saw the Tetan defensive formation begin to move forward to engage the Imperial fleet. Using the raw power of the Force, Amelia stretched out with her feelings, grabbed hold of one of the Battlestars, and slowly nudged it into an *Ares*-class fighter platform. The two massive warships collided, and exploded, sending fragments of armoured hull and molten durasteel blobs into nearby warships. A shower of debris rained down onto the Tetan fleet. Amelia could feel the excitement, and the lust for revenge welling up inside the Imperial officers.

"Order all batteries to fire portside!" Lady Amelia ordered.

Amelia could see from the viewport that the heavy turbolaser batteries on the *Imperatrix* began rotating to port, and began firing barrage after barrage of red energy bolts. Heavy turbolaser fire filled the inner space of the planet of Empress Teta. Meanwhile, the Tetan defences began moving around the Imperial fleet. All the Imperial ships began firing towards their portside, pummelling the Tetans with salvo after salvo of heavy turbolaser fire. The Tetans opened fire as well, showering all sides of the Imperial fleet with heavy turbolaser barrages. A massive barrage of heavy turbolaser fire struck the *Imperatrix*. The bridge shuttered and bowed violently; the Imperial officers in the pit clutched onto their stations for dear life, while Amelia simply stood calmly. Suddenly, warning sirens began to blare.

"Shields are down to eighty-percent!" An Imperial officer informed.

"Tetans are launching fighters!" Another Imperial officer reported.

"Launch all wings!" Lady Amelia ordered.

The Imperial officers relayed the order to the hangar level. Amelia closed her eyes, and began using the Force to harden her fighters, and demoralize the Tetans; it

was a technique called Perfect Corrupted Battle Meditation, a Force power only the most gifted students of the Force may harness and use. She was in a deep meditative trance, a state where she could only feel and experience everything through the Force.

"They've outflanked us!" An Imperial officer screamed, "Its a trap!"

The Tetans have indeed surrounded the Imperial fleet on both sides. The Imperials were now caught between the Tetan cross-fire from both flanks. Imperial Star Destroyers were taking heavy damage, some of them crippled beyond repair, others completely destroyed. Huge explosions rocked the Imperial Star Destroyers and fast frigates. The torrent of energy bolts fired at the Imperial fleet was amazing. The Imperial fleet was, very rapidly, being picked apart by the surrounding Battlestars. The Admiral watched as Amelia simply stood at the window. Infuriated, he turned to face the pit.

"Fire all batteries!" Admiral Sarn ordered, "Launch everything!"

The hangar screamed to life; red and yellow flashing lights flashed and sirens blared within the hangar. *Predator*-class starfighters began launching from their racks, and screeched through the atmospheric containment field. Tycho Xar immediately climbed into the cockpit of his own *Predator*-class starfighter, and awaited clearance to launch. His knee bobbed up and down in anticipation for the coming battle. Finally, he was called upon:

"*Knight Nine, you're clear for launch.*" Air-traffic control replied.

"Roger." Tycho Xar answered.

Eagerly, he disengaged the launch clams, and flew out of the hangar. The *Predator*-class starfighter was a fast ship, designed to be highly manoeuvrable and agile, but lacking in heavy armour. He immediately entered the combat zone. Just outside the *Imperatrix* were salvo after salvo of red and green heavy turbolaser energy bolts, laser cannons, and missiles streaking through the hard vacuum of space. The ship-to-ship engagement was ravenous. The *Ardent*-class fast frigates were moving out of the wedge formation, and forced themselves between the Tetan lines. They were taking extraordinary damage; Tycho even saw a couple explode in a shower of shrapnel and fire. In the distance, Tycho saw other *Predator*-class starfighters in engagements with *Viper*-class starfighters; the dogfighting already began.

Tycho, being the odd man out, was left to fend for himself; with no wingman, he was especially vulnerable. Almost immediately, a Viper fired a barrage of medium laser cannon fire towards his direction. Tycho banked left, then right, to avoid the green energy bolts. Tycho let loose a few energy bolts of his own, narrowly missing the slender body of the Tetan-made *Viper*-class starfighter. The fast Viper flew over Tycho's cockpit; Tycho immediately slammed on the decelerator, broke hard to port, and turned around. When Tycho finally came one hundred and eighty degrees around, he saw the Viper had done the same. They sped towards each other with incredible velocity. They once again passed each other, and began turning hard to port; caught in a turning engagement, the *Predator*-class starfighter had the upper hand. The Viper, although fast, was not very manoeuvrable; its long, slender body and three-wing arrangement prevented it. Tycho fought the yoke hard, trying to get his *Predator*-class starfighter to turn even sharper; he was gripping the yoke so tightly, his knuckles turned white. He grinded his teeth, and grunted to himself as he fought the forces acting against his body. Almost immediately after the turning engagement commenced, the Tetan fighter broke off, dove below Tycho, gained speed and began retreating. Tycho immediately dove to give chase. Within moments Tycho was right on the tail of the Viper; the three triangle orientated ion engine of the Viper filling the viewport of his cockpit.

"Gotcha!" Tycho Xar shouted.

Tycho immediately fired his medium laser cannons; the red energy bolts ripped through the engine, tore through the cockpit, and destroyed the Viper. Debris showered the shields of the *Predator*-class starfighter as Tycho flew through the explosion. Suddenly, Tycho could feel his bloodlust amplify; the Force was guiding him towards the Tetan lines. Tycho let out a sigh of relief, and began following his instincts. He looked at his inertial compensator; it was dialled down to ninety-percent.

No wonder I was fighting so hard, Tycho thought.

The inertial compensator created a bubble around the pilot that acted as a shield against the inertial forces, positive and negative g-forces, acting on the pilot. Tycho dialled the inertial compensator to ninety-five-percent, allowing him to feel the forces act on his body, but not hinder him.

"Admiral, we can't hold out much longer!" An Imperial officer screamed.

"Imperial fleet down to half operational order!" Another Imperial officer screamed.

Suddenly, another salvo of heavy turbolaser fire punished the starboard side of the *Imperatrix*. The salvo rocked the massive Advanced Star Destroyer back and forth, shaking the bridge violently. Several officers in the pit fell over in their chairs, others simply clutched onto their stations as hard as they could. Fear swelled up inside the Imperial officers.

"The *Imperatrix* is down to fifty-percent shields!" A third Imperial officer informed.

The Admiral stared at the pit for a moment. He shook his head.

"Order a full retreat." Admiral Sarn quietly ordered.

"What?" An Imperial officer asked.

"Order a full retreat!" Admiral Sarn shouted.

Amelia suddenly woke from her meditation and turned to face Admiral Sarn. Her eyes blared with rage and anger as they pierced through the Admiral.

"Cancel that order!" Lady Amelia ordered.

Another salvo, this time from the portside, pummelled the large Advanced Star Destroyer. The bridge pitched starboard, almost toppling the Admiral into the pit. The officers in the pit screamed in fear and surprise.

"Mistress Amelia, this battle is lost!" Admiral Sarn countered, "We must retreat, regroup and attack again!"

"Negative Admiral, this battle is just about to be won!" Lady Amelia answered.

Tycho Xar was frantically weaving in and out of engagements for the past minute or so; he stuck near the Imperial capital ships. The Imperial Star Destroyers fired heavy turbolaser fire all around him. Vipers would appear, engage, then disappear; this was the nature of dogfighting. Suddenly, an Imperial *Predator*-class starfighter streaked across his viewport, diving downward, about five kilometres out in front, with a Tetan *Viper*-class starfighter on his tail. Tycho immediately rolled his port wing over, and

dove down behind the Viper. Tycho attempted to chase the Viper, when suddenly, green blaster bolts lit up his rear deflector shield.

"Blast!" Tycho shouted.

Tycho broke hard right, and avoided another barrage of blaster bolts. Tycho looked down at his sensors; it indicated that a single Viper was on his tail. Tycho immediately began jinking and juking left and right, trying desperately to shake the Tetan pilot off his tail.

"I've got a bandit on my six!" Tycho announced.

White-knuckle fear began to grab hold of Tycho's mind as he attempted to evade his pursuer. Nevertheless, the Viper stayed on him, firing wildly; green blaster bolts streaked past his cockpit viewport.

Tycho screamed in frustration, "Get off me!"

Unexpectedly, the Tetan pilot broke off his chase. Surprised, Tycho immediately broke hard left to give chase. Suddenly, it hit Tycho; the Tetan pilot broke off his chase with Tycho in order to engage the Imperial pilot he saw earlier. Now the Imperial pilot has two Tetan Vipers on his tail. Both Vipers, firing wildly at the Imperial pilot, were bent on destroying him. To the Imperial pilot's credit, he lasted quite a while with the one Viper on him.

Closing in at a ninety-degree deflection to the Vipers, Tycho fired his medium blaster cannons at the two Vipers. One bolt ricocheted off the nose of a Viper, causing him to immediately break off the chase. The other remained for only a few more seconds, chasing the Imperial pilot. The Viper fired one last time, then broke off his attack. The energy bolts tore through the left wing of the *Predator*-class starfighter, critically crippling the ship. The Tetan Viper turned directly into Tycho; the Viper, bearing down on Tycho flew at him at full speed. With nerves of steel, Tycho accelerated full forward.

"You got the guts?" Tycho shouted, "Let's go!"

Tycho lined up the targeting reticule, and fired. The red energy bolts punched through the deflector shield, through the cockpit, and killed the pilot inside. The Viper didn't blow up, but rather shredded to pieces in a dense black cloud of smoke.

"Yeah!" Tycho screamed in excitement, "Scratch one Viper!"

Tycho dove underneath the metal debris of the Viper; only small shards of armoured metal struck his deflector shield. Sweat started to accumulate on Tycho's forehead. Tycho let out another sigh of relief. Tycho immediately began looking for another engagement. It didn't take long.

"Mistress Amelia, this is no time for your mystical garbage!" Admiral Sarn countered, "This fleet will be lost to us if we don't retreat!"

"This battle is not yet lost!" Lady Amelia answered.

Suddenly, a barrage of proton torpedoes struck the starboard hull. The explosions rupturing the thick, armoured hull, causing personnel nearby to be sucked into the hard vacuum of space, as well as atmosphere and other equipment.

"Hull breach!" An Imperial officer informed.

"Seal that corridor!" Lady Amelia ordered.

Another barrage of proton torpedoes and concussion missiles collided with the armoured hull of the *Imperatrix*. The barrage failed to penetrate the thick armoured hull, but jarred the bridge violently left and right, and up and down.

"Shields are down to thirty-percent!" An Imperial officer informed in a scared voice, "We won't last long!"

Frustrated and angry, Admiral Sarn turned to face the pit. Ignoring Lady Amelia, he began ordering the Imperial officers.

"Order the retreat—" Admiral Sarn began.

Admiral Sarn's words were immediately cut-off. At first the officers in the pit didn't know why, but they soon realized what was happening. Amelia, holding her right hand out in front, her fingers making a claw-like shape, was choking the Admiral with the Force.

"I find your lack of faith disturbing." Lady Amelia growled.

Admiral Sarn clutched his throat with his hands, trying to free himself from the invisible force crushing his oesophagus. His face turned bright red, then purple; his lips started turning blue. He made gurgling, and coughing sounds as he desperately tried to free himself. Amelia relished the fear emanating from both Admiral Sarn and the

Imperial officers in the pit. Suddenly, Amelia released her grip on him; Admiral Sarn fell onto the cold durasteel floor, gasping and coughing for air.

"No retreat!" Lady Amelia ordered, "Press the attack on the portside!"

The frightened officers immediately relayed the order. Slowly Admiral Sarn picked himself off the floor, dusted himself off, straightened his uniform, and composed himself. He stood upright, and tried not to show the humiliation he felt inside. Amelia slowly turned around to view the battle through the trapezoidal windows. Red and green energy bolts littered the black sky. Suddenly, an Imperial officer stood up and shouted:

"New contact!" The Imperial officer reported.

"Friendly?" Admiral Sarn said with a hoarse voice.

The Imperial officer waited for the report to come in, "Affirmative! Thirty Star Destroyers and fifty fast frigates have just jumped in behind the Tetan right flank!"

Amelia smiled, "See Admiral, the battle is far from lost."

Amelia closed her eyes once more, and begun her Perfect Corrupted Battle Meditation. Admiral Sarn continued to stand next to the pit, trying to regain his composure.

Tycho Xar followed a Tetan Viper through to the Tetan right flank. The defensive batteries on the *Valkyrie*-class Battlestars fired wildly at Tycho. Tycho was jinking and juking wildly from left to right, up and down, frantically trying to dodge the incoming barrage of heavy turbolaser and laser cannon fire. His knuckles were white from the tight grip he had on the yoke, and he was sweating profusely. A warning chime blared in his cockpit. The sensors suddenly gave him a readout.

"New contacts?" Tycho Xar asked himself, "What contacts?"

Suddenly, out of hyperspace, a new fleet of Imperial warships appeared behind the Tetan line, surprising them. Unfortunately, one of the *Ardent*-class fast frigate's jump was too long, and crashed into a *Valkyrie*-class Battlestar. The explosion was massive, engulfing the two large battleships. The arms of the Battlestar tore off, and were jettisoned into adjacent Tetan warships. Large chunks of debris and molten blobs of durasteel flew everywhere. The Imperial fleet immediately began pummeling the

Tetan rear, instantly destroying two fighter platforms, and a Battlestar. The Tetan right flank split its fire between the two Imperial fleets. The symmetric design of the Battlestars allowed for this, however, the salvos were no longer concentrated. The newly arrived Imperial fleet easily tore through the Tetans.

Tycho laughed from the exhilaration, "Alright!"

"*Second wind boys.*" Knight Leader replied, "*Let's make the most of it.*"

"Copy that, Leader." Tycho said.

Suddenly, an Imperial pilot shouted to Tycho, "*Nine break left!*"

Without thinking, Tycho broke hard left. Just then, the space that was formerly occupied by Tycho just moments before was filled with green energy bolts. Tycho tried to look behind; a Tetan Viper was hot on his tail. The Viper, a less agile fighter, tried to turn with Tycho, but couldn't. Tycho pitched his nose upward, and rolled over onto his left wing. The Tetan pilot passed beneath Tycho; immediately Tycho continued the roll, pitched downward, and levelled out behind the Viper. The Viper pilot tried to shake Tycho off, jinking and juking left and right frantically. Tycho kept on his tail, using all his piloting skills. Finally, Tycho lined up his targeting reticule, and fired. The medium laser cannons blew through the Viper, shredding the cockpit, and ruptured the ion engines. Suddenly, the Viper exploded and showered Tycho's *Predator*-class starfighter with shrapnel. Tycho was forced to fly through the fireball while his forward deflector shields were peppered with metallic debris.

Suddenly, Tycho Xar saw an Imperial pilot chase another Viper. The Viper was violently slamming left and right trying to avoid the Imperial pilot behind him, but the Imperial pilot was also doing the same. The Imperial pilot was about ten kilometres out. Tycho immediately rushed in to aid his fellow pilot, when suddenly he realized why the Imperial pilot is also jinking and juking, another Viper is hot on his tail.

"Just hold on." Tycho said to himself.

Tycho fell behind the last Viper, and fired his medium laser cannons. The second Viper, now realizing the Tycho was on his tail, began evasive manoeuvres. Tycho kept on him, firing his laser cannons, narrowly missing. Tycho grunted and screamed at the Viper as the pilot evaded his blaster fire.

"Hurry up and kill that Viper!" Tycho shouted to the Imperial pilot.

Moments pass, and the Viper in front of Tycho was still jinking and juking left and right, trying to shake Tycho off his tail. Finally, the first Viper goes down in a shower of fire, leaving just one Viper in between the Imperial pilot and Tycho. The Viper pilot, an especially skilled one at that, managed to get a hit off the Imperial pilots right wing, while still performing evasive manoeuvres. The Imperial pilot screamed in fear as the Viper pilot fired more blaster bolts towards his starfighter.

"Calm down." Tycho Xar replied.

Suddenly, a surge of rage and anger filled Tycho's mind; his reflexes and senses were doubled, and he felt a new sense of calm descend upon him. The Viper pilot in front of him began to lose his manoeuvring capability, no doubt from the same Perfect Corrupted Battle Meditation that was affecting him right now. Tycho lined up the targeting reticule:

"I've got you now." Tycho said to himself.

Tycho fired his medium laser cannons; the energy bolts ruptured the three ion engines of the Viper. The Viper pitched downward in a spiral, then suddenly exploded. Tycho watched the whole thing.

"No E.V.; clean kill." Tycho said with a smile.

E.V., a naval term standing for extra-vehicular; typically pilots who have enough time to eject would go E.V. in order to save their lives. Tycho immediately scanned the space in front of him for any more targets. He looked around at the right flank of the Tetan defences, and they are falling fast. Nearly all of the Battlestars and fighter platforms on the right flank had been destroyed. The newly arrived Imperial fleet pushed forward with incredible ease, losing almost no ships in the process.

"Left flank retreating!" An Imperial officer shouted in joy.

"Right flank is crumbling!" Another Imperial officer added, "Second Fleet merging with primary!"

The Admiral appeared surprised by the news of good fortune. He simply couldn't believe the battle was going so well, after it started out so badly. He was an Admiral that was used to everything going wrong. His fears started to melt away, and a sense of relief filled his heart.

"What is the status with our shields?" Admiral Sarn asked.

"Still at thirty-percent, but charging." An Imperial officer answered.

"Flights?" Admiral Sarn asked.

"We've lost forty-percent of our fighters, but the new reinforcements make up for it." Another Imperial officer answered.

Amelia smiled to herself as she watched the left flank moving farther and farther away, "It's all but won now, Admiral."

In the distance, Amelia watched as one of the Battlestars explode. She felt the deaths of everyone aboard, and bathed in the terror and anguish from the event. Not for a long time had she experienced such a powerful sensation like mass-death on the scale of a battle.

"Yes, my Lady." Admiral Sarn answered, "Congratulations."

The Admiral scowled for a moment, then returned to his military posture and composure. He watched as the officers in the pit continued to relay orders and gather information and data from the battle.

The void of space was filled with green and red energy bolts; Tycho, weaving in and out of turbolasers and debris, was chasing two Vipers. His newly acquired wingman, the one he just saved, was following his lead off Tycho's right wing. Sweat was getting into Tycho's eyes, but he simply wiped it off with the sleeve of his robe. Suddenly, two Imperial *Predator*-class starfighters streak downward in front of the two Vipers. The Vipers twist, rolled over, and dove to chase the two Imperial pilots. Almost immediately, a Viper fired and destroyed one of the Imperial pilot's. The cockpit of the *Predator*-class starfighter imploded and shattered. The other Imperial pilot broke hard right. The two Vipers broke formation, one following the remaining Imperial pilot, the other banking in the opposite direction. Tycho decided to follow the latter Viper.

"Break right, and follow that Viper!" Tycho ordered.

"Roger, Nine." The Imperial pilot replied, "Good luck."

Tycho broke hard left, while his wingman broke hard right. Tycho chased and fired his blaster cannon at the Viper. Suddenly, the Viper pilot rolled over, and dove

beneath Tycho. Tycho immediately reacted, and dove with the Viper pilot. The Viper twisted, rolled and turned violently; Tycho matched his every move. For a few moments, the dance between these two starfighters continued as the battle around them raged on. Tycho grinded his teeth as he chased the Viper pilot through evasive manoeuvres. His knuckles were white, and his robe was soaked in sweat. Without warning, the Viper pilot began to climb; the more agile *Predator*-class starfighter easily matched and surpassed the Viper's climbing rate. Then, just as suddenly, the Viper pilot rolled over, twists and began to dive again. Tycho, surprised for a moment, was forced to twist his own starfighter, and dive just to keep up with him. Tycho managed to get behind the Viper; the Viper pilot immediately began evasive manoeuvres, jinking and juking left and right violently. Tycho was forced to slam the yoke left and right violently just to match the Viper's moves.

"C'mon!" Tycho screamed.

The manoeuvres were long and frustrating; Tycho growled at every turn. Tycho managed to get a few shots off on the Viper, but always narrowly missed him. The *Predator*-class starfighter, a fast vehicle, closed the distance between him and the Viper. Suddenly, only a kilometre and a half separated the two starfighters. Tycho wildly fired his blaster cannons; the torrent of red energy bolts tore through the Viper. The Viper exploded into a massive fireball. Tycho was forced to fly through the explosion since he was so close. Suddenly, the rear portion of the fuselage slammed into Tycho's right hinged-wing.

"Frack!" Tycho shouted.

The delicate right hinged-wing of the *Predator*-class starfighter was instantly shredded by the impact of the Viper. The deflector shield could not repel such an impact. Immediately after the impact, Tycho's starfighter began pitching downward and spiralling wildly. Tycho immediately switched on his emergency channel:

"This is Knight Nine, my fighters been hit; need immediate landing coordinates!" Tycho Xar shouted.

After a few moments, "*Knight Nine, this is the Star Destroyer Onslaught, come about bearing zero-three-zero and pitch upward twenty-degrees. Hangar doors are open.*"

Tycho struggled with the yoke and the crippled starfighter. Tycho used all his might to force the starfighter to turn towards the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer *Onslaught*, one of the newly arrived Star Destroyers that has been pummelling the right

flank of the Tetans so efficiently. Tycho managed to force the starfighter towards the general direction he was ordered to, however the starfighter was spinning wildly. Tycho saw the ventral hangar of the *Onslaught*, and tried to straighten the starfighter out.

Within moments Tycho fought hard against the crippled starfighter, successfully manoeuvring it into the ventral hangar of the *Onslaught*. The starfighter crossed the atmospheric containment field, and immediately felt the exertion of artificial gravity. The starfighter fell onto the ferrocrete deck, and skidded forward, carving into the hard deck. Suddenly, the crippled right hinged-wing tore off, and the cockpit of the *Predator*-class starfighter began to roll on the deck. Tycho tried to brace himself for impact, but it did little use. The left hinged-wing sheared off from the impact, and the cockpit began to roll on its side, gouging ferrocrete as it slid. Sparks and flames poured out of the starfighter; fireteams were immediately on top of the situation. Finally, after only a few moments, the cockpit finally stopped after carving a long, linear groove into the ferrocrete deck. Tycho picked himself up from inside the starfighter; he was relieved to be alive.

Another happy landing, Tycho thought.

He checked himself out; no broken bones, and no amputations. He sighed in relief, and began to walk towards the hull. Tycho took out his lightsaber and activated it; the *snap-hiss* of the blade activating, and the hum afterwards filled the cockpit. The crimson blade bathed the dark hull and Tycho's face in dark red light. Tycho cut his way through the hull with his crimson-bladed lightsaber; the armoured hull provided little resistance to his lightsaber. The lightsaber cut a straight vertical line through the hull; sparks showered from the crimson blade, while the hull surrounding it turned into orange-yellow molten metal. Then, using a powerful Force Wave, he forced the hull to split open. He stumbled out of the crashed wreckage, and looked back at his starfighter. The hinges where the wings were once attached were sparking violently, occasionally shooting out orange flames, as were the torn off hinged-wings.

"Huh. I was wondering why it wouldn't fly properly." Tycho comically said to himself.

Emergency teams and fireteams immediately rushed to his aid. One medical personnel rushed to Tycho's side.

"You alright?" The paramedic asked.

Tycho looked into the eyes of the paramedic; she was a cute, small, blonde-haired, blue-eyed female with a nice face and great figure. He nodded his head. She helped him onto his feet. Tycho rose with a groan.

"Better than my starfighter." Tycho answered, "That's for sure."

She gave him a little smirk, and helped him dust off his black robes. His robes were completely soaked in sweat; his joints ached and his lungs had trouble holding onto the air he breathed. His hands were quivering from the adrenaline rush. His body was exhausted from the dogfighting.

"You're either very brave, or very dumb." The paramedic replied.

"Are those mutually exclusive?" Tycho comically replied.

The paramedic smiled once more. Tycho looked at her once more. He used the Force to calm himself down, and keep him from shaking. When he finally composed himself once more, he said:

"I need to talk to the chief engineer here." Tycho informed, "Where is he?"

She pointed him in the general direction. He thanked her, and quickly rushed off to find the chief engineer. He was standing next to the large gouge in the ferrocrete deck that was carved out by Tycho's landing. Tycho immediately ran up to him.

"Do you have any extra starfighters?" Tycho asked.

"Extra starfighters?" The chief engineer replied, "You want to go back out there after a crash landing like that? You're nuts!"

Frustrated, "Look, you have one or not?"

"I do, several, but there's no need." The chief engineer replied, "The battle is almost over—" Tycho was taken aback by the comment, "—so just sit back, and relax. Heck, you need it."

Angered and aggravated, Tycho turned around, and walked back to the crashed cockpit.

It isn't over, until it's over, Tycho thought.

"Lady Amelia, the Tetan right flank has been completely overwhelmed and destroyed." An Imperial officer informed.

"Second Fleet has merged with primary." A human female Imperial officer added.

"The Tetans have ordered a full retreat!" A third Imperial officer reported.

Amelia watched the battle as the information was coming in. The Tetan Battlestars were indeed retreating, but continued fighting as they did. Every once and again, a salvo from a heavy turbolaser fire or long-ranged turbolaser fire would strike the thick armoured hull of the *Imperatrix*. The bridge shuttered, but not violently. The hull of the *Imperatrix* was cratered and perforated. A sense of calm and rejoice filled the Force. Amelia allowed herself to smile. Suddenly, proximity alarms blared on the bridge, and red and yellow alert lights began to flash.

"Incoming contact!" An Imperial officer shouted.

Amelia turned to face the Imperial officer, "What is it?" She shouted.

The sirens were blaring, making voices barely audible, "It's the *Alliance*!"

Supreme Commander Gar Stazi stood at the forward viewport of the *Alliance* with anxiousness seeping into the very fibre of his being. Suddenly, the stars coalesced into dots. Then, coming up from behind the Tetan primary moon, he saw the battle unfold before him. The battle was a chaotic jumble of death and destruction. It physically pained him to see such utter destruction inflicted upon the Tetans.

Blast! Supreme Commander Stazi thought, *I got here too late!*

"Give me a damage report on the Tetan fleet!" Supreme Commander Gar Stazi ordered.

A sensor officer almost immediately replied, "They're in bad shape!"

Supreme Commander Gar Stazi had to think of something quickly; then, he shouted, "Engines on full forward and dive underneath the plane of the ecliptic!"

High Commander Artemes Adoug was drained of all hope and energy. The battle had swung terribly against them.

Suddenly, one of the sensor officers shouted, "Hyperspace disturbances!"

"Where?" High Commander Artemes Adoug asked.

"From behind the moon!" She replied.

High Commander Artemes Adoug immediately peered out from behind the moon and saw a massive *Imperious*-class Advanced Star Destroyer, along with a jumble of Galactic Alliance Remnant capital ships trailing behind her. Suddenly, a new energy infused into him.

"Flash override! Flash override! Cancel the retreat!" High Commander Artemes Adoug ordered, "Redeploy the fleet to merge with the *Alliance*! Redeploy all fighter wings to run interference for our ships while they get into place! Do it now!"

Suddenly, the bridge of the Battlestar was a flurry of activity as people ran around getting things organized and relaying information and orders. Excitement and exhilaration swept over him.

We can still win this battle, he thought.

Behind the primary Tetan moon, a massive fleet consisting of over thirty Galactic Alliance Remnant starships microjumped into the system. Over a standard year ago, the Galactic Alliance Remnant under the leadership of Supreme Commander Gar Stazi stole an *Imperious*-class Advanced Star Destroyer and renamed it the *Alliance*. Since then, the *Alliance* has acted as Supreme Commander Gar Stazi's flagship.

"Composition?" Admiral Sarn ordered.

An Imperial officer waited for the readouts, "The *Alliance*, twelve *ShaShore*-class frigates, ten *Scythe*-class main battle cruisers, eight *Tri-Scythe*-class frigates and five *Sabertooth*-class assault vehicles!"

"A full fleet!" Admiral Sarn shouted.

A salvo of heavy turbolaser fire struck the ventral hangar of the *Imperatrix*. The bridge bowed and shuttered violently; sparks from various electronic equipment

showered the durasteel floor. Amelia stared at Admiral Sarn with angry eyes. Rage started to well up inside Amelia.

"They're underneath us!" An Imperial officer informed.

Supreme Commander Gar Stazi knew his tactics were quite unorthodox. Typically naval battles were fought within the plane of the ecliptic, an imaginary plane where the planets in the system orbited around its primary star; it was simple naval doctrine.

"Lock firing solutions on the *Imperatrix*!" Supreme Commander Stazi ordered, "Blast a hole through her hull!"

Almost immediately, the heavy turbolasers from the hulking capital ship fired in unison. Gar Stazi watched as lances of bright beams of energy reached out and pummelled the *Imperatrix*. He watched as the bolts of energy racked the thick durasteel hull, exploding upon impact. With a gleeful smile, Gar Stazi felt exhilaration creep back into his soul.

Suddenly, another massive salvo from the *Alliance* and several other GA capital ships struck the underbelly of the *Imperatrix*. The bridge shook and shuttered ferociously. Small fires erupted and sparks filled the bridge as electrical equipment began to short-circuit and fail.

"Pitch us down and order all ships to engage the *Alliance*!" Lady Amelia ordered.

The large hulking beast of armoured durasteel began to pitch downward in order to face the *Alliance* and the other GA ships. The GA ships were closing in fast however, and fired wildly at the *Imperatrix*. More fires broke out throughout the ship; the thick armoured hull ruptured in some places, forcing the officers to seal them off.

"Targeting the *Alliance*!" The Imperial officer reported, "Firing solutions locked!"

"Fire everything!" Lady Amelia screamed.

Suddenly the heavy turbolaser cannon emplacements on the *Imperatrix* began firing salvo after salvo of energy bolts towards the *Alliance*. The *Alliance* did the same, and the impacts from the energy bolts rocked the bridge once again.

"Shields down to forty-percent!" An Imperial officer informed.

Suddenly, one of the communications officers on the bridge screamed out something that Amelia never thought she'd hear, "Mistress! We're being hailed by the *Alliance*!"

Suddenly, a holographic image of the Duros Supreme Commander appeared in front of her. The alien admiral wore a proud smile on his face as he stared directly at her.

"Regent Amelia, I am Gar Stazi, Chief-of-State and Supreme Commander of the Galactic Alliance." He said, "You are ordered to leave the sovereign worlds of Empress Teta or be destroyed!"

"You are in no position to order me, Stazi!" Lady Amelia bit back.

He smiled, "Incorrect. Your shields are failing, and it is only a matter of time before I destroy you. Surrender now, and perhaps we will spare your life."

"You presume too much!" Lady Amelia growled, "I will destroy you this day, and with you, the resistance against my will!"

"You have chosen." Supreme Commander Stazi replied, "I hope your soul burns in the netherworld."

With an incredible surge of anger, Lady Amelia screamed, "Concentrate all fire on the *Alliance*! I want Gar Stazi dead!"

Supreme Commander Gar Stazi was rather pleased with himself. He looked at his officers, each working to make sure all of the *Alliance*'s systems were fully functional.

He shouted, "You heard her! Give her what she wants!"

Then, with another salvo of heavy turbolaser fire, a stream of concentrated energy struck the *Imperatrix*.

Then, on the holographic projector, an image of Princess Jade flickered to life.

"Princess." Supreme Commander Gar Stazi replied, "The battle is going well."

She bowed her head, "*Thank you, Supreme Commander. The worlds of Empress Teta will always be indebted to you.*"

Gar Stazi stared at her, "It is the least I could do."

The *Imperatrix* pitched down to face the *Alliance* head on, as did other Imperial warships. The *Ardent*-class fast frigates were first, and rushed forward to overwhelm and break up the GA lines, but were immediately beaten back; several fast frigates exploded from the assault. After only a few moments, several *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers, coupled with *Ardent*-class fast frigates and the *Imperatrix* fired their first salvo at the *Alliance*. The concentrated heavy turbolaser fire rocked the massive Advanced Star Destroyer, causing the hull to breach. The GA launched another salvo of heavy turbolaser fire towards the *Imperatrix* bridge. The deflector shields held, but the bridge rocked violently; Amelia almost got knocked onto the floor.

"Shields down to twelve-percent!" An Imperial officer informed in a frightened voice.

Admiral Sarn stumbled to Amelia's side. Sweat covered his face, and fear filled his emotions. Amelia could sense his feelings better than the Admiral could.

"We are finished!" Admiral Sarn shouted, "We must retreat!"

"No!" Lady Amelia countered in an infuriated voice.

Suddenly, an adjacent *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer moved in front of the *Imperatrix*. The entire *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer filled the forward viewports. Amelia was completely stunned.

"It's *Starscream*!" An Imperial officer informed.

The *Starscream* was a *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer built after the start of the war, and one of Amelia's favourite. The *Starscream* slowly moved in front of the *Imperatrix*, shielding and protecting it. Salvo after salvo of heavy turbolasers and proton torpedoes struck and ruptured the hull. Amelia and Admiral Sarn could see the hull begin to fail and buckle under the tremendous punishment the GA was subjecting it to. Small explosions of orange fire erupted from the interior of the *Starscream*; large chunks of armoured hull and equipment were ejected into the hard vacuum of space. Suddenly, the *Starscream* exploded in a massive blue-orange fireball that engulfed the *Imperatrix*. The bow and stern of the massive *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer ripped in half, and

started to slowly drift away from each other. Huge chunks of armoured hull, and massive blobs of molten durasteel struck the topside of the *Imperatrix*. One of the molten blobs of durasteel melted through the hull. Amelia's eyes went wide with surprise and rage.

"What's our status?" Admiral Sarn shouted.

"Critical!" An Imperial officer informed, "We're not going to last long!"

Amelia turned to look at the officers in the pit. Her face was filled with pure, unbridled, uncontrollable rage. She looked directly into all of their eyes, almost like she was looking into their souls.

"I want the *Alliance* taken out now!" Lady Amelia screamed in rage.

Salvo after salvo of heavy turbolaser fire pummelled the hull of the *Alliance*. The massive turbolaser fire could be heard from inside the bridge. Amelia immediately turned back to the trapezoidal window to watch the battle. Amelia filled the Force with her rage and anger.

"The Tetans are turning back to engage!" Another Imperial officer informed.

"The *Alliance* is launching fighters!" A third Imperial officer reported, "It's Rogue Squadron!"

Rogue Leader, Anj Dahl, a young human female, swooped down in her CF9 Crossfire starfighter. Laser bolts filled the vacuum around her, but she stared directly ahead. Her target, the *Imperatrix*. She hazarded a quick glance to her right and left, thankfully seeing her wingmates at her side.

"Lock S-foils in attack position." Anj Dahl ordered, "Give the *Imperatrix* everything we've got!"

Tycho Xar had been standing next to the wreckage of his *Predator*-class starfighter for only a few minutes. The fireteams had almost put out the various fires caused by the crash landing, and he got checked out by the paramedics. Suddenly, a warning siren blared overhead. Red and yellow lights flashed within the hangar.

"*New contacts reported!*" The speaker system informed, "*Galactic Alliance ships have arrived!*"

Tycho couldn't believe his ears. The battle was almost won, and now the GA had appeared. Tycho immediately ran over to one of the free *Predator*-class starfighters, climbed in, and initiated launched sequence. Within moments he had the starfighter operational. His heart was pounding out of his chest, both out of fear, and out of anticipation. Tycho didn't wait for clearance; he simply detached the launching gear, and flew out of the hangar.

Outside the hangar, the scene was what he expected; the right flank was completely destroyed, and only small starfighter engagements were taking place. Large chunks of debris from destroyed warships littered the battlespace, so Tycho had to duck and dodge between them. Tycho immediately flew towards the *Imperatrix*; as he did, he saw an unusual sight. The battlegroup of Star Destroyers and fast frigates were pitched downward, and engaging the GA fleet.

That's odd, Tycho thought.

Tycho drove his engines full forward, trying to get to the battle as fast as possible. Suddenly, another proximately alarmed rang in his cockpit. He looked around the space in front of him; he didn't see anything.

"What contacts?" Tycho Xar asked himself.

Just as he said it, the contact revealed themselves; another GA fleet, consisting of about twenty warships, had jumped into the system behind the right flank from the other side of the planet. The one massive Imperial fleet was now caught between the two GA fleets.

This is insane, Tycho Xar thought.

Gar Stazi stared up at the *Imperatrix* as she dipped her nose headed straight for him. The unorthodox battle had made everything so much more disorientating, but he didn't care at the moment. It seemed to him that, coming from both fleets, rivers of energetic bolts poured out of each turbolaser emplacement. The battle was made even more chaotic with the starfighters, and the massive explosions of capital ships. Suddenly, several salvos of high-energy turbolaser bolts struck the bridge of the *Alliance*. The bridge shook violently, sending a stream of sparks raining down on the

Supreme Commander. Gar Stazi was knocked off his feet, but quickly picked himself up.

Suddenly, Supreme Commander Gar Stazi asked, "Where is Jhoram Bey?"

One of the naval officers answered, "Coming out of hyperspace now, Commander!"

Then, out in the distance, Gar Stazi saw the second Galactic Alliance Remnant fleet come up from behind the Imperials. He had given Captain Jhoram Bey command of a smaller GA fleet in order to outflank the Imperials. Then, almost immediately, Gar Stazi saw three huge explosions coming from the Imperial fleet. Gar Stazi smiled. Jhoram Bey was already reeking havoc on the Imperials.

Just at that moment, the holographic projector flickered on, "*I hope I'm not too late, Supreme Commander.*" Jhoram Bey asked.

"Right on time, Captain." Gar Stazi said with a smile.

The second GA fleet was closer, so Tycho Xar immediately turned around and headed for the second GA fleet. As Tycho broke hard right, he could see the naval battle engagement begin already. Within moments, three massive *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers were fired upon and completely destroyed. The massive explosions filled Tycho's viewport.

"Holy frack!" Tycho screamed.

Tycho immediately dodged the larger chunks of armoured hull, letting the smaller bits to ricochet off his deflector shields. The rear portion of the Imperial fleet began to retaliate, firing salvo after salvo of heavy turbolaser fire towards the second GA fleet. A massive naval battle between the two fleets erupted within seconds. Tycho forced his starfighter to full forward again, and raced towards the second GA fleet. Suddenly, Tycho spotted a three bomber formation consisting of BB-2 Starfire fighter-bombers diving for a strafing run on one of the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers. The BB-2 was a heavily armed fighter-bomber that can cripple Star Destroyers quite easily. Tycho began to climb over the fighter-bombers, rolled over and dove. Tycho pulled hard on the yoke; his knuckles were white and sweat poured down his face. Finally, after a few moments, Tycho levelled out behind the three bombers. The BB-2 Starfire fighter-bombers launched proton torpedoes at the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer; the powerful

proton torpedoes ruptured the hull, causing small explosions and bursts of fire to ravage the hull. Tycho lined up his targeting reticule, and fired a short burst. The medium laser cannon bolts struck the rear right fighter-bomber, but its thick armour protected it. Immediately the three fighter-bombers broke off the attack. Tycho broke hard left, and followed one of the fighter-bombers.

Meanwhile, the various GA frigates and battle cruisers exchanged heavy turbolaser fire with Imperial fast frigates and Star Destroyers. The naval battle was vicious, but with the GA surprise attack, they had the upper hand. Slowly the rear portion of the Imperial fleet began to face the second GA fleet, but they are slow to move. Already five *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers and eight *Ardent*-class fast frigates had been destroyed.

"Another GA fleet has come out of hyperspace!" A human female Imperial officer reported.

"How strong?" Admiral Sarn inquired.

"Twenty warships, sir!" The human female Imperial officer answered.

Soon, everyone stared at Amelia, including Admiral Sarn. His stare, a cold and angry stare, dug into the back of Amelia's neck. Amelia never looked away from the *Alliance*; her eyes were filled with anger and rage. Admiral Sarn walked to her side.

"We are caught between these two fleets!" Admiral Sarn informed, "We can't fight long like this!"

Amelia finally turned around to face the pit. Anger filled her heart and her mind; her emotions flooded the Force. She was moments from outright killing Admiral Sarn, but suppressed the urge.

"Split the fleet in two!" Lady Amelia ordered, "Face both fleets and engage!"

Amelia turned back to the viewport, only to see a bombing run strafe the topside of the *Imperatrix*. The proton torpedoes ravaged the armoured hull, causing even more damage to the injured flagship. The dogfighting between the Galactic Alliance CF9 Crossfire starfighter and the Imperial *Predator*-class starfighter raged just outside the bridge viewports. Amelia could see the battle rage on; she tried to delve into the Force to aid her pilots, while demoralizing the GA's.

"What's the status on the *Alliance*?" Lady Amelia shouted.

"Fifty-percent!" An Imperial officer informed, "We're just not doing enough damage to her hull!"

Amelia slammed her fist into the transparisteel window with force; the trapezoidal transparisteel window cracked under her fist. She growled with anger. Suddenly, another Imperial officer stood up:

"Rogues incoming, bearing zero-three-zero, zenith forty-five degrees!" The Imperial officer shouted, "Range thirty kilometres and closing fast!"

Amelia looked up and to the right and saw three CF9 Crossfire starfighters approaching the *Imperatrix*. The Crossfires began their diving run at the bridge. The bridge on the *Imperatrix* was silent; everyone was terrified with anticipation. The Crossfires fired a salvo of proton torpedoes at the bridge, nine torpedoes in total. The glowing red warheads flew straight towards them. Suddenly, Amelia reached out with the Force, grabbed the nine proton torpedoes, stopping them dead mid-flight, and crushed them harmlessly. The bridge gave a collective sigh of relief. Just then:

"Mistress Amelia, the *Rampage* reports critical damage!" Another Imperial officer reported, "The Commodore is abandoning ship!"

Amelia turned to face the Imperial officer, "Order the Commodore to scuttle the ship!" The Imperial officer, confused by the order, hesitated for a moment. Then Amelia repeated, "Order the Commodore to drive that ship into the *Alliance*!"

Suddenly, anxious words were muttered on the bridge of the *Alliance*.
"Commander! One of the Star Destroyers has broken away from the fleet and is headed straight for us!"

Gar Stazi immediately peered out of the forward viewport and saw the angled nose of one of the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers driving straight for him. The sight was frightening, and for the first time during the battle, Gar Stazi actually feared for his life.

"Recall Rogue Squadron!" Gar Stazi ordered, "Get them to take down that Star Destroyer! Every turbolaser, fire at the Star Destroyer!"

Rogue Leader Anj Dahl dove toward the *Imperatrix* one more time. She fired proton torpedo after proton torpedo at the massive Advanced Star Destroyer's hull, only punching what seemed like small holes into her hull. Her flightsuit was utterly soaked through with sweat, and her arms and wrists were strained to their limit from nerves.

Suddenly, over the headset, "*Rogue Squadron! Rogue Squadron! New target! Fire everything you have against incoming Star Destroyer!*"

Immediately, a foundation shaking fear permeated through her. She yanked on the yoke, pulling out of her dive toward the *Imperatrix* and headed in the opposite direction, nearly missing colliding with another starfighter. She looked back at the *Alliance* and saw a *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer bearing down on the Supreme Commander.

Instantly, she knew what stakes were involved. She immediately ordered, "All Rogues, back to the *Alliance*! We must protect the Commander!"

She retracted her S-foils for maximum speed, and punched the throttle forward. The dogfighting around her was chaotic, with starfighters streaming in from all directions, and blaster bolts flying everywhere. She jinked and juked around floating debris, other starfighters, and narrowly missed being shot down once or twice. She quickly glanced behind her; she saw her Rogues following her.

She smiled.

Finally, she was within range of the *Rampage*, the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer bearing down on the Supreme Commander. It was too close for comfort, and they needed to bring it down at whatever cost. Immediately, she lined up the targeting reticule on the bridge of the Star Destroyer. She got a good tone, the targeting reticule turned green, and she fired a salvo of proton torpedoes. An instant later, the others of Rogue Squadron did the same. She watched as the proton torpedoes streaked through the black vacuum of space, hurdling toward the *Rampage*. They struck with violent force, vaporizing metal in the massive explosion. She swooped underneath the hull of the massive Star Destroyer, and banked to port for another attack run. Then, out of the corner of her eye, she saw something spectacular. A *Scythe*-class main battle cruiser plunged into the Star Destroyer. The impact was impressive, and a huge ball of fire rocked both capital ships. Molten and vaporized metal spewed everywhere. The massive shockwave emanating from the explosion suddenly rocked her CF9 Crossfire starfighter. She hung onto the yoke for dear life, barely managing to bring it under

control again. However, when she looked at the aftermath, it seemed too late. The *Rampage* was too close. It was destined to crash into *Alliance* now.

She had failed.

"All Rogues, break! Break! Break!" Anj Dahl screamed.

Gar Stazi stood in front of the holographic image of Princess Jade. Just outside the viewports was the chaos of battle. The GA ships frantically tried to get out of the projected blast radius from the collision; meanwhile, starfighters swarmed around the ship, trying frantically to flee. Suddenly it hit him. His life was about to come to a crashing end. He had fought a long, hard battle, proud of his accomplishments, but in the end, still failed to see the end of the insidious and evil Sith warlords the plague the galaxy today. Suddenly, he felt a great pain stabbed through his heart.

"I am sorry I couldn't help more, Princess." Supreme Commander Gar Stazi apologized, "I've failed to keep up my end of the bargain. The burden is on you now to continue the resistance."

Princess Jade looked up at the humbled Duros admiral, "You didn't fail us, Commander. You saved many lives."

A tear streamed down the Duros cheek.

"I will always remember you." Princess Jade replied, "And I will always be indebted to you."

"Goodbye, Princess." The Duros Supreme Commander said.

Just then, the half-molten hulk of the doomed *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer smashed into the dorsal hull of the *Alliance*. The impact cracked the massive ship in half, buckling the metal hull, breaching the armour, venting beings and debris out into the vacuum of space. The shock rippled up the hull like a massive wave, suddenly rocking the bridge violently. The Supreme Commander found himself knocked off his feet, flying through the air. Just then, the reactor exploded, sending enormous amounts of energy outward from the core.

Rogue Leader Anj Dahl pulled hard on the yoke, trying to get as much distance between her and the colliding capital ships as she could. As she climbed, getting farther and farther away, she could help but look behind her. As if in slow motion, she watched as the half-destroyed, half-molten metallic carcass of the *Rampage* finally crashed into the *Alliance*.

"No!" Anj Dahl screamed, tears flowing from her eyes.

Immediately, a flash of blinding light rolled over her. Her eyes seared in pain from the intense and energetic radiation. Suddenly, the massive shockwave emanating from the explosion slammed into her starfighter. Blinded and disorientated, she futilely tried to regain control of her starfighter. Then, before she even knew it, the energy from the shockwave finally tore apart her starfighter.

Amelia watched as the *Rampage* came into view on the starboard side of the viewport, slowly moving forward. The *Rampage* moved passed the bow of the *Imperatrix*, and towards the *Alliance*. The Imperial warships continued firing salvo after salvo of heavy turbolaser fire at the *Alliance*, despite the *Rampage*'s movements. The *Alliance* attempted to turned away and starboard, but the large Advanced Star Destroyer was too slow and not as manoeuvrable as a smaller frigate. Futilely, the GA tried to scuttle their own ship to save the *Alliance*.

Fools, Amelia thought.

Less than a minute passed when the *Rampage* impacted the *Alliance*. The two massive warships collided; the nose of the *Rampage* tore through the thick armoured hull of the *Alliance*, digging and gouging into the other ship. Suddenly, the *Alliance* power generator ruptured, and exploded. A massive shockwave emanated from the epicentre of the explosion, instantly vaporizing metal; when the shockwave passed the *Imperatrix*, the bridge shook violently. More sparks showered from various electrical equipment, and officers in the pit toppled over. The massive fireball engulfed both ships; the explosion was blinding. Amelia had to turn away when the explosion lit up. The bow and stern of the *Alliance* broke apart, and started drifting away from one another. The two incredibly large chunks of durasteel floated away from each other in slow motion. The *Rampage* seemed to have been completely disintegrated by the explosion. Large chunks of armoured hull struck and pierced through nearby GA ships, critically damaging them. Molten blobs of durasteel shot out from the epicentre of the explosion, landing on various ships and melting through their hull's. Amelia smiled at

the sight, as did Admiral Sarn. Other officers cheered in celebration. The sudden and massive deaths of so many GA personnel brought Amelia much joy.

"Gar Stazi is dead!" "The day is won!" "The Empire forever!" The Imperial officers cheered in joy.

Amelia turned around to face the pit once more, "Sit-rep!"

An Imperial officer composed himself and said, "The GA has ordered a full retreat!"

Amelia turned back around to look out the viewport, and indeed the GA was retreating. The GA fleet was still firing salvo's of heavy turbolaser fire, but were attempting to flee as well.

"Order the rest of the Imperial warships forward!" Lady Amelia ordered, "Hunt them down and destroy them!"

"Yes, my Lady." The Imperial officer obeyed.

A calm and obviously pleased Admiral Sarn stood behind Amelia. She turned around to look at him.

"What now?" Admiral Sarn asked in a calm and cool voice.

"Prepare the landing party." Lady Amelia ordered.

Admiral Sarn nodded, and turned back to the pit.

Jhoram Bey, commander of the second GA fleet, watched in horror as the *Alliance* exploded. Tears filled his eyes as he watched the famous commander die in a fiery death. Gar Stazi had been his idol, his hero ever since he was in the GA navy. He felt a sudden pain and anger roll over the very fibre of his being. Behind him, his officers cried and wailed in horror and sadness. Eight long years together, they grew up, lived, fought and died together. They were like a family. No, they were family.

Reluctantly, with a pain in his deep, gravelly voice, Jhoram Bey ordered, "Order the retreat!"

High Commander Artemes Adoug had ordered what remained of his fleet as far away from the *Alliance* as possible. Luckily, the Tetan fleet was on the fringes of the GA fleet, so they should be able to make minimum safe distance in time. Although behind him, his officers were frantically trying to make sure everyone got clear and safe, High Commander Artemes Adoug could help but stare at the doomed *Alliance*. He watched as the reactor exploded, sending hard radiation outward. Despite their relatively far distance, enough radiation hit his Battlestar to rock the bridge violently, and cause the viewports to opaque.

Just then, the holographic projector shone on; on it was Princess Jade, "Commander."

"Yes, Princess." High Commander Artemes Adoug replied.

"*I want you to take whatever remains of our fleet and jump out of system.*" Princess Jade ordered, "*You need to save our fleet so that we can fight another day.*"

"But Princess—" High Commander Artemes Adoug said before being interrupted.

"*This is an order, Commander.*" Princess Jade sternly replied.

"Princess, you must understand, the Empire will be landing troops on Cinnagar soon." High Commander Artemes Adoug replied, "You will need—"

Princess Jade interrupted again, "*I will be fine, Commander. Just save my fleet. I'll be back to take control of her again.*"

"Yes, Princess."

Tycho Xar was in hot pursuit of two Galactic Alliance CF9 Crossfire starfighters. The Crossfire, the line of Incom starfighters that include the famous X-wing series, were heavily armed, but less manoeuvrable and agile against the *Predator*-class starfighter. The Crossfire's jinked and juked left and right, up and down, trying to get Tycho off their tails. Tycho used all his piloting skills to stay with them; he slammed the yoke from side-to-side, violently, just to match their movements. Suddenly, the Crossfire's bugged out, and broke hard right.

"What?" Tycho shouted to himself.

Tycho immediately broke hard right to chase them. Suddenly, he realized why they suddenly broke off; he saw the crippled second GA fleet retreating back towards the Tetan moon they were hiding from. Suddenly, over the intercom system, he got confirmation:

"Galactic Alliance fleets are in full retreat!" The speaker informed, *"Repeat, the Galactic Alliance fleets are in full retreat!"*

Tycho laughed to himself. Suddenly, Tycho caught sight of the two Crossfire's again. Not willing to let these two pilots go, he rolled over to his left wing, and fell behind the two Crossfire's. He immediately lined up his targeting reticule, and fired his medium blaster cannons. The red energy bolts perforated the cockpit of one of the Crossfire's, causing it to spin and dive violently. Tycho stays on the remaining Crossfire; the Crossfire began evasive manoeuvres, banking hard left, then hard right, trying to get Tycho off his tail. Within moments, the Crossfire led Tycho into the heart of the retreating GA fleet. Various *Scythe*-class main battle cruisers, *Tri-Scythe*-class and *ShaShore*-class frigates began firing laser cannons and turbolasers at Tycho.

He dove and dodged the incoming energy bolts, determined to chase and kill the Crossfire. Suddenly, the Crossfire began a high-g climb; Tycho immediately pulled back on the yoke, forcing his starfighter to climb with the Crossfire. Seconds into the climb, the Crossfire banked hard left, diving down towards one of the many *Scythe*-class main battle cruisers. Tycho broke hard left to follow; immediately, they began a turning engagement. Tycho had to force the yoke hard left, fighting the g-forces acting on his body; his knuckles turned white, his heart was pounding out of his chest, and sweat covered his face. Meanwhile, the *Scythe*-class main battle cruiser volleyed several laser cannon bolts towards Tycho. The green energy bolts streaked passed Tycho's viewport, narrowly missing his starfighter. Just as Tycho lined up his targeting reticule, the Crossfire broke hard right. Tycho reacted instantly, breaking hard right to follow. The more agile and manoeuvrable *Predator*-class starfighter was designed for this kind of dogfighting. Tycho fought the forces acting on his starfighter, trying to get the Crossfire in his sights. Suddenly, one of the laser cannon bolts struck Tycho's left hinged-wing; the cockpit shuttered violently, and the starfighter pitched downward.

"Frack!" Tycho shouted.

Tycho checked the readouts; the left hinged-wing was damaged, but still intact. The deflector shield mitigated most of the damage, and saved the starfighter. Tycho looked out the viewport once again, and saw the Crossfire, breaking hard left. Tycho, in

a lower plane than the Crossfire now, broke hard left, and pitched upward. Within seconds, Tycho lined up the Crossfire in his targeting reticule, and fired a short burst of medium laser cannon fire. The laser cannon fire perforated the cockpit and wings of the Crossfire, causing it to break apart and dive violently in an uncontrolled spin. Suddenly, another salvo of laser cannon fire shot passed Tycho's viewport.

And that's my cue to exit, Tycho comically thought to himself.

Tycho immediately broke hard left, and put his thrusters on full forward. He weaved and dodged through the incoming laser cannon and turbolaser salvo's sent his way. Within minutes, he was out from the midst of the GA fleet, and returning back to the Imperial fleet. Tycho saw several *Ardent*-class fast frigates pursuing the GA fleet, firing heavy turbolaser salvos at them, but most of the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers remained in stationary orbit on top of Empress Teta's capital city, Cinnagar.

Six Standard Hours Later: Cinnagar, Empress Teta:

I hate these things, Tycho thought to himself.

Tycho grabbed hold of the railing above his head as the *Nune*-class Imperial shuttle descended through the cloudy atmosphere of Empress Teta. The ride was jarring, and bumpy, but it was the only way to travel. Landing on Empress Teta commenced almost immediately after the GA fleets retreated. Several *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers were already on ground, unloading stormtroopers, gear, and vehicles. Suddenly, the *Nune*-class Imperial shuttle hit a rough patch of sky; turbulence jarred the shuttle back and forth, while the durasteel floor beneath him shuttered. The experience was uncomfortable for Tycho; although he fought on Jabiiim, and fought in a *Predator*-class starfighter for over an hour, this was the worst part of the battle yet. The window outside the windshield of the cockpit was filled with light grey, thick clouds. Powerful winds caused the shuttle to yaw, and pitch downward suddenly. Finally, they came out of the clouds, and clear sky was in front of them.

"Two minutes!" The shuttle pilot shouted.

Tycho looked out of the windows; he saw other *Nune*-class Imperial shuttles descending on the city too. Suddenly, an explosion violently rocked the shuttle. Then another, and another. Black spherical clouds of smoke filled the sky. Within moments, a *Nune*-class Imperial shuttle was struck; the explosion tore apart the shuttle, sending two large chunks of shuttle hurtling downward towards the city.

"Anti-air flakguns!" The shuttle pilot screamed.

"Take evasive manoeuvres!" The shuttle co-pilot shouted.

Suddenly, the shuttle banked hard left, narrowly avoiding an incoming shell. The shell exploded, sending razor-sharp pieces of metal outward; some of the shrapnel punctured the hull of the shuttle, injuring some stormtroopers. The stormtroopers cried out in pain, and blood gushed out of their wounds. More stormtroopers rushed in to provide medical assistance, but Tycho simply stayed behind and out of the way. Tycho looked out the window again, trying to block out the screams from the injured stormtroopers within the holding chamber of the shuttle. He watched as more and more *Nune*-class Imperial shuttles descended through the cloud deck.

The shuttle banked hard right, once again narrowly missing another shell. The shell exploded behind them, hitting a trailing shuttle head on. The explosion tore apart the cockpit, killing the two pilots inside. The rest of the shuttle seemed intact, but was now plummeting to the ground at terminal velocity. Tycho reached out with the Force; he could sense that some stormtroopers and Sith Knights were indeed alive in that critically stricken shuttle, and were crying out in fear. Tycho looked away, towards the massive city of Cinnagar in front of them. They were now about ten kilometres above the surface of the city now, and descending rapidly. Tycho looked back into the holding compartment; the stormtroopers had been stabilized, but the durasteel floor was now soaked with thick, red blood.

Tycho then looked forward again, through the windshield. Suddenly, a white streak appeared in front of him. The white streak appeared to be coming up at them from the ground. Tycho was confused. The white streak flashed passed the shuttle with incredible speed.

"What was that?" Tycho asked.

The pilot and co-pilot instinctively ducked, even though they were inside the cockpit. Tycho looked at their faces; they were terrified, and were covered in sweat.

"Their launching surface-to-air missiles!" The co-pilot shouted.

Tycho looked back at the windshield, now slightly more terrified than the moment previous. Suddenly, two, then four, then a dozen more white streaks filled the windshield.

"Evasive manoeuvres!" Tycho screamed.

The shuttle banked hard right, letting one of the missiles to pass mere metres away. Then the shuttle banked hard left, avoiding another. The second missile, however, struck the stern of another shuttle, causing it to explode. Fire erupted from the back portion of the stricken shuttle. Tycho couldn't help but watch as the shuttle violently descend through the atmosphere. Bodies of stormtroopers and Sith Knights were flung into the sky as the entire stern was disintegrated by the missile. Tycho looked back at the windshield, and saw another missile heading straight for them.

"Frack!" Tycho shouted.

The pilot pitched the shuttle hard down, but it wasn't enough. The missile exploded close to the stern of the shuttle, ripping a large portion of armoured durasteel hull from the portside. A massive gust of wind filled the holding compartment, threatening to suck anyone unfortunate enough right out the room. Tycho grabbed onto the railing in the holding compartment for dear life, as did other stormtroopers. Others, however, were not so lucky. Within seconds two stormtroopers were sucked out of the holding compartment and through the gaping hole. They screamed as they were lifted off the durasteel floor, and thrown out of the hole. The rest of the stormtroopers were screaming in terror; a sense of fear descended down upon the holding compartment. Suddenly, another stormtrooper lost his grip; Tycho managed to back his hands.

"Don't let me go!" The stormtrooper pleaded.

Tycho held on his all his strength, but the suction was too great. The stormtroopers hands started slipping. Tycho grunted and growled against the forces acting against him, but soon his grip slipped. The stormtrooper flew through the gaping hole, screaming the whole time. The shuttle rocked back and forth, Tycho though he too would be sucked out of the gaping hole. Less than a minute pass, and the wind started to die down. Tycho sagged in his robes from relief, then looked towards the cabin.

"We're here!" The shuttle pilot shouted, "Good luck!"

The pilot looked back towards the holding compartment and gave them the thumbs-up; Tycho gave him a nod, and turned around to exit the shuttle. Suddenly, the shuttle touched down with a hard thud, and the boarding ramp descended. Tycho led the way, and was the first one down the ramp. Almost immediately after he exited the shuttle, they came under fire. Tycho activated his lightsaber with a *snap-hiss*, and deflected two incoming blaster bolts with his crimson blade. Tycho immediately rushed into the heat of the street battle.

"Come on!" Tycho shouted to his stormtroopers.

Just then, one of the descending shuttles exploded overhead; flying debris crashed all around them. Tycho immediately performed a tuck-roll, and dodged the falling debris, but some of the stormtroopers were crushed by large chunks of durasteel. Tycho picked himself up, and took a quick look around. The former transparisteel-polished durasteel buildings around him were in ruins, crushed under the twisted hulls of Star Destroyers; debris still streaked through the sky. Most of the buildings were on fire, others were completely demolished, just twisted metal and shattered transparisteel. To his left, two massive All Terrain Armoured Heavy Transports, AT-AHTs, were moving towards the centre of the city. These hulking beasts were the successors to the classic All Terrain Armoured Transports, or AT-ATs. They stood over twenty metres tall, weighed over two tonnes, were covered in extra-thick black armoured hull, and sported four heavy blaster and heavy laser cannons; some newly upgraded AT-AHTs sported dual light turbolasers, for extra punch. They walked at an incredible speed, over eighty kilometres per hour, crushing anything and anyone in their path.

Tycho followed the direction the AT-AHTs were headed; about thirty or forty stormtroopers followed. The street battle in Cinnagar was vicious and brutal. Tycho forced his way forward through the barrage of blaster and repeater fire, trying to keep up with the rapidly advancing AT-AHTs. The Tetan army, as well as armed Tetan citizens, would use the buildings to their advantage; they used them as hiding places, fortresses, and ambush points. The streets were filled with blaster bolts; it was almost impossible to move. Tycho and the rest of his stormtroopers found themselves pinned down and hiding behind the wall of one of the transparisteel-polished durasteel buildings.

"Damn it!" Tycho shouted, "This is going to take forever at this rate!"

"What do you want us to do?" A stormtrooper shouted.

Tycho peeked around the corner. Immediately, the building across the street erupted in repeater fire, narrowly hitting Tycho in the head. Small chunks of durasteel and dust flew into the air as the repeater bolts gouged into the wall.

"The Tetans have a stronghold across the street!" Tycho shouted, "I need you guys to lay down some suppression fire, while I move in!"

The stormtrooper nodded, and relayed the message to the rest of the men. The stormtrooper tapped Tycho on the shoulder, indicating that they were ready. Tycho looked back at the stormtroopers, and said:

"Okay, on three!" Tycho shouted, "One-two-three!"

Tycho leapt from behind the wall, crimson blade activated, while the stormtroopers behind him fired wildly at the building across the street. The stormtroopers were equipped with BlasTech E-11 blaster rifles or ARC-9965 blasters. Unlike stormtroopers of previous generations, these guys were trained to shoot, and shoot well. The Tetans across the street immediately retreated behind cover, just enough time for Tycho to enter the building unharmed. The building Tycho was in was relatively small, only three levels tall. Tycho immediately climbed the first flight of stairs, seeing no resistance.

Top floor, Tycho thought.

He immediately rushed to the top floor, using the Force to augment his movements. Just as he reached the top floor, several blaster bolts struck the wall behind him. Tycho instinctively ducked and rolled on the ground, avoiding the blaster bolts. As Tycho stood back up, he immediately deflected a stray blaster bolt shot his way with his crimson-bladed lightsaber. The dozen or so Tetans fired like maniacs; Tycho mostly dodged the blaster bolts, but deflected some as well. Tycho pushed forward, towards the Tetans. In a rage, Tycho used a powerful Force Wave, sending two Tetan soldiers flying through the open window, plummeting three levels towards the hard, ferrocrete street. One clearly broke his spine and neck, the other, however, only broke his legs and was screaming in pain, trying to crawl away.

"Easy way, or hard way?" Tycho sarcastically asked.

He was immediately greeted with more repeater and blaster fire. Tycho spun to avoid most of the blaster fire, and used the crimson blade of his lightsaber to deflect the rest. The bolts were sent wildly throughout the room, bouncing and ricocheting off the ferrocrete brick walls, gouging small pits into them. Tycho leaped into the air in a forward somersault, landing behind two armed Tetans. Tycho landed, and immediately stabbed one Tetan through the spine, killing him instantly. The other Tetan, armed with a blaster rifle, fired at Tycho. Tycho grabbed hold of the barrel, and pointed it at an approaching Tetan armed with a blaster pistol; when the Tetan fired the blaster rifle, he shot the other Tetan armed with the blaster pistol, killing him. Tycho then stabbed the Tetan in the stomach, dropping him to the floor.

The other Tetans continued to fire their blaster rifles and repeater rifles at Tycho. With incredible control, Tycho threw his lightsaber into the air, towards three Tetans. The spinning crimson blade sliced through their bodies, cutting them in half. As the lightsaber returned to Tycho, he immediately deflected two more blaster bolts, sending both of them into the heart of its shooter. Tycho looked over at the three remaining Tetans, who were too struck with fear to even fire. Tycho smiled, and bathed in their fear. Tycho slowly walked towards them; they were backed up against a wall, and couldn't move. Tycho extended his right hand forward, spread his fingers apart, and sent a jolt of Force Lightning towards the Tetans. One of the bolts struck a Tetan in the chest, causing his heart to stop beating. Another Tetan was so consumed by fear, he jumped out the nearby window to avoid the lightning. Tycho stared at the last remaining Tetan, who was now curled up into a ball from fear; Tycho once again extended his hand outward, his fingers in a claw-like position, and exerted the Force on the victim. The Tetan clutched his throat in pain; his face turned red. The Tetan coughed as Tycho used Force Choke on him. Then, in an instant, Tycho snapped his neck with the Force. The Tetan's dead body dropped limp onto the hardwood floor; dust billowed upward. Tycho immediately ran to the window.

"Clear!" Tycho shouted.

The stormtroopers came out from their hiding positions, executed the two Tetans laying on the street who were crying in pain and fear, and took up defensive positions. Tycho jumped down from the window, and used the Force to soften his fall. Tycho, with his lightsaber activated, ran down the street, advancing towards the direction he saw all the AT-AHTs heading. Tycho and the stormtroopers managed to get about three city blocks down the street before running into more resistance. Two heavy repeaters perched up on top of the roof of one of the buildings fired wildly at them. Three stormtroopers fell victim to the ambush; the others dove and ducked behind whatever cover they could find. Tycho had to deflect two repeater bolts before finding cover inside of the transparisteel-polished durasteel building. A stormtrooper approached Tycho:

"Will that trick of yours work again?" The stormtrooper asked.

Tycho took one look outside, and saw that it was much more heavily defended than the previous encounter. Tycho shook his head:

"No way." Tycho replied.

The stormtrooper nodded in agreement. Suddenly, a clanking noise could be heard coming down the street. The heavy repeater emplacements suddenly turned their attention away from Tycho and his stormtroopers, onto something else further down the street. The sound was so familiar, then he realized what it was. It was an All Terrain Riot Control Transport, an AT-RCT. The two man, open cockpit, moderately-armed two-legged walker was the successor of the AT-RT from The Clone Wars, and the AT-ST from The First Galactic Civil War. The AT-RCT stood over four metres tall, and sported double medium blaster cannons, and suppression cannons, while some upgraded versions sported concussion grenade launchers.

Tycho looked out one of the windows, and saw the pilot of the AT-RCT moving forward towards their position, while the gunner was firing at the stronghold. The tall building withstood the barrage of medium blaster cannon fire, and did little to shake the foundation. Tycho then shouted:

"Suppression fire!" Tycho ordered.

Almost immediately, the thirty stormtroopers whom were left started firing wildly at the Tetans on top of the roof. The entire street suddenly erupted in blaster and repeater fire. Some of the Tetans ducked behind the ledge, but the two heavy repeater gunners kept the pressure on the lone AT-RCT. Just then, the gunner on the AT-RCT was shot in the chest, causing him to fall backward and off the four metre tall mechanical walker. Without a gunner, the AT-RCT was incredibly vulnerable now. Tycho turned back towards one of the stormtroopers.

"We've got to clear that building now, before it's too late!" Tycho shouted.

The stormtrooper waited for just a moment before replying, "Bombers inbound!"

"Do they know what building to hit?" Tycho shouted.

The stormtrooper shook his head, "It won't matter!"

Tycho looked out the window towards the sky and saw three *Neutralizer*-class bombers heading his way. The folded-wing design of the *Neutralizer*-class bombers was clearly inspired by their counterpart, the *Predator*-class starfighter; that design allowed the bombers to be more agile, while still sporting a large payload for strafing runs. Just as Tycho noticed the three *Neutralizer*-class bombers, they launched their payload. Heavy laser cannons, coupled with proton torpedoes ravaged the city. The proton torpedoes glowed red as they streaked across the sky. Buildings crumbled and collapsed from the impact. The linear strafing run was right in their path.

"Everybody down!" Tycho shouted.

Tycho covered his head with his arms, and waited for the bombers to pass. The screech of the bombers engines passed overhead, and the rumbling of crumbling buildings soon stopped. Billows of dust and shattered transparisteel filled the air; Tycho coughed in order to clear his lungs, but the stormtroopers helmets protected them from such contaminants. Tycho looked out the window again, and saw the stronghold was completely levelled by the attack.

"Alright. We're in business!" Tycho shouted.

Immediately the stormtroopers came out from behind their hiding areas, and began running down the street. Tycho grabbed one of the stormtroopers:

"How far to the rendezvous point?" Tycho asked.

"Five kilometres!" The stormtrooper informed.

Tycho nodded his head, and let the stormtrooper go. Tycho exited the building, and used the Force to leap onto the four metre tall AT-RCT. The AT-RCT pilot, just another stormtrooper, looked startled at first. Tycho looked at the stormtrooper, and pointed forward.

"Okay, we've got five kilometres to go." Tycho said, "Let's get a move on."

The stormtrooper nodded his head, "Yes, sir."

The AT-RCT started moving forward; the ride was bumpy, and uneven. Stormtroopers ran alongside the AT-RCT as fast as they could, for as long as they could. The AT-RCT was an incredibly fast two-legged walker, able to run at speeds over ninety kilometres per hour. Tycho, armed with his lightsaber, deflected any stray blaster bolts fired at the AT-RCT. The wind filled his lush brown hair; his black robe billowed from the wind, and cooled his body. Within minutes they were in sight of the rendezvous point, which was just in front of a fifteen metre tall durasteel gate that led into the Iron Citadel, the palace of Princess Jade and her royal family. The Iron Citadel was surrounded by a twelve metre tall stone wall, with watchtowers and sentries at every corner, and was covered in flowering climbing vines. Almost a dozen AT-AHTs, and double that in AT-RCTs, were in front of him, already closing in on the massive durasteel gates, along with over a thousand stormtroopers led by almost a hundred Sith Knights and Masters. The AT-AHTs were firing their massive salvos of light turbolaser fire at the durasteel gates and stonewalls, trying to bring it down. Large pits gouged out

by the light turbolaser blasts covered the stonewall and durasteel gate. The stormtroopers were closing in, firing their blasters at sentries posted atop the stonewalls. Tycho arrived just in time to see Lady Amelia fight her way forward, deflecting blaster bolts sent her way. Tycho was surprised to see her fight on the battlefield.

"I didn't think she could actually be found on a battlefield." Tycho said.

"Mistress Amelia can always be found on the battlefield." The stormtrooper pilot replied.

Tycho nodded his head; he respected a leader that was willing to fight alongside the soldiers they send into war. Tycho took a look behind him, towards the city. The transparisteel-polished durasteel buildings were completely devastated by the invasion force. Several AT-AHTs and AT-RCTs were roaming the various ferrocrete streets and avenues, firing into the buildings, and engaging resistance strongholds. Several *Predator*-class starfighters were still engaged in dogfights within the atmosphere of Empress Teta; several of these dogfights could be seen in the distance, near the cloud deck, between Imperial *Predator*-class starfighters and Tetan-made *Viper*-class starfighters. The sky was filled with the black, spherical clouds of anti-air flak, and white streaks from surface-to-air missiles. More *Neutralizer*-class bombers streaked across the sky, releasing their payloads of proton torpedoes, concussion missiles, or whatever other explosives they were carrying; the bombers levelled entire city blocks with one strafing run. In the distance, various cries and screams of war could be heard coming from the city; the street war was far from over. Tycho watched as two Sith Knights, both humans wearing black robes, were running down an adjacent, parallel street followed by several dozen stormtroopers.

Tycho turned his head back towards massive durasteel gate in front of him. The AT-RCT he was standing on began firing its medium laser cannons towards various targets atop surrounding buildings. A barrage of blaster bolts were fired his way; Tycho immediately deflected the bolts that posed the greatest threat, and let the others pass harmlessly. Tycho looked to his right, and saw a Tetan soldier take aim towards the AT-RCT; the Tetan soldier seemed to be carrying a tube-like weapon.

"Rocket!" Tycho shouted.

The stormtrooper pilot looked right and saw the rocket launcher; the Tetan soldier fired the rocket. The loud thud of the rocket launching could be heard, even so far away. The rocket streaked through the air at incredible speed. Within seconds, the

rocket struck and exploded on the right leg of the AT-RCT, causing the walker to shake violently, and limp. Shrapnel sprayed everywhere, but the cockpit was protected. A trail of white smoke and exhaust was left behind the rocket as it passed through the air.

"Get us out of here!" Tycho ordered.

Tycho then looked up again, and saw another Tetan soldier armed with a rocket launcher take aim. The rocket fired, and streaked through the air with rapid speed. This time, the rocket hit just below the open cockpit. The stormtrooper pilot was killed in the blast, and his body was thrown a metre above the AT-RCT before landing hard onto the ferrocrete street. Tycho had to shield his face with his arm; luckily, no shrapnel pierced his flesh. Suddenly, the AT-RCT pitched violently forward, and began falling forward. Instinctually, Tycho leapt into the air in front of the falling AT-RCT. He landed mere metres from the AT-RCT, rolled on the ground, and stood back up. Behind him the AT-RCT crashed into the ferrocrete street with a loud smash, and exploded into flames because of trauma. Just as Tycho landed on solid ground, he was met with more blaster fire. He deflected the bolts with his crimson-bladed lightsaber, and ran down the street towards the massive durasteel gate. He used the Force to augment his movements, and within seconds he was at the staging area.

Tycho looked around; there were dozens of AT-AHTs and AT-RCTs firing, in rapid succession, massive salvos of turbolaser or laser cannon fire towards the gate. Stormtroopers around him took defensive positions behind transparisteel-polished durasteel buildings and walls, firing towards the sentries posted atop the stonewall that protected the Iron Citadel. Several Sith Knights and Masters were standing in the middle of the streets, deflecting various blaster bolts that came their way; Amelia, however, was right in front, in the open, deflecting all blaster bolts that came her way. Tycho could feel her power, her command of the Force. Tycho could hear her give orders too:

"More!" Lady Amelia commanded as she pointed her crimson-bladed lightsaber towards the gate.

Another massive volley of light turbolaser fire would shatter the massive gate. The sound of the cannons were incredibly loud, almost unbearable. Tycho deflected some more blaster bolts, and then took cover behind a polished durasteel wall. He watched the massive durasteel gate begin to crumble under the combined fire of so many AT-AHTs and AT-RCTs. Huge pits, glowing orange from the intense heat from the turbolaser fire, littered the durasteel, as well as the adjacent stonewall. Suddenly,

after the last salvo of turbolaser fire was launched, Amelia stretched out her arms in front of her. A sudden surge in Force energy overwhelmed Tycho. He finally realized what was happening; Amelia was tearing down the gate using incredibly powerful Force powers. The gate began to creak, and bend, then suddenly, began to crumble. Large durasteel chunks fell from the shattered gate, and began to topple over. Then, with a tremendous crash, the massive durasteel gate fell to pieces, and came down.

"Move in!" Lady Amelia commanded.

She immediately rushed in, deflecting several blaster bolts with her crimson blade. Inside, behind the walls, were over a hundred Tetan royal guards, armed with an assortment of blaster rifles and repeater rifles, and wearing hardened-bronze armour; leading the Tetan royal guards was Prince Gabriel, brother of Princess Jade. Prince Gabriel was a tall man, standing six feet tall, and powerfully built. He had long, lush, flowing brown hair, and piercing blue eyes; he also has a strong, yet handsome, face. He stood behind the rows of Tetan royal guards, giving orders to his men. Amelia led the charge, immediately slashing and hacking at the various Tetan royal guards. Following behind her were the hulking AT-AHTs and the more manoeuvrable AT-RCTs; they immediately laid waste to the palace, killing several Tetans with every salvo of light turbolaser fire or laser cannon fire.

Tycho watched as the stormtroopers around him immediately rushed into the palace. They ran as fast as they could, firing wildly into the Tetans. Tycho, a few moments after, started running with them. He deflected several incoming blaster bolts with his lightsaber before he even crossed the walls of the palace. Tycho looked further ahead, and saw Amelia viciously attacking the Tetans with powerful Force attacks, and devastating lightsaber combinations; her movements were so fast and powerful. Tycho finally clashed with the first group of Tetans; he used a powerful Force Wave to send three Tetan royal guards flying through the air. Tycho immediately began slashing at the Tetans royal guards that were close by. Limbs were hacked off, and bodies were pierced. The sound of the battle was overwhelming; Tycho could barely comprehend it all. All around him were white plastoid armoured stormtroopers, viciously firing their blaster rifles at the Tetans. Behind him, the AT-AHTs and AT-RCTs were launching salvo after salvo of light turbolaser and laser cannon fire, creating craters in the grass and stone pathways. Tetan royal guards unfortunate enough to be close by when a salvo struck the ground were sent into the air; dirt, rock and bodies all came tumbling down onto the solid ground. Tycho saw Amelia point to the left side of the palace; the palace was a massive U-shape castle, with two flanks on either side. Tycho looked behind, and saw two AT-AHTs moving left. They fired several salvos of light turbolaser

fire at the palace, taking out the side of the palace. The roar of the battle was so loud, Tycho couldn't even hear the light turbolasers fire. Immediately after the side of the palace came down, the Imperial stormtroopers poured into the palace; they were met with heavy resistance inside the palace.

"Everyone else with me!" Lady Amelia commanded.

Several Tetan royal guards tried to stop her, but were met with a powerful Wave Front. The Tetan royal guards flew through the air, and landed hard on the stone pathway, breaking several bones when they did. Amelia ran towards the right flank of the palace, and used another Wave Front to bring the palace wall crumbling down. The massive stone blocks smashed against the solid ground, breaking apart and smashing with a loud thud. Dust billowed from the collapse. Tycho watched in awe; the Force powers Amelia harnessed and wielded were unimaginable.

"We're in!" Tycho shouted, "Let's go!"

Amelia was first inside the palace; she immediately stabbed the first Tetan she encountered, and decapitated another. Tycho was one of the first Sith Knights inside the palace, followed by hundreds of stormtroopers. Tycho deflected two blaster bolts with his lightsaber, followed by slashing a Tetan royal guard diagonally across the chest. When Tycho looked around, the stormtroopers were already running down the hall, following Amelia, who was already quite a distance ahead of him. Tycho immediately started running to catch up; Amelia was already fighting the rest of the Tetans, who were retreating by now. Suddenly, ahead of Tycho, he saw a massive discharge of electrical energy; dozens of blue lightning bolts shot out from Amelia's fingers. The lightning bolts melted the hardened-bronze armour the Tetans were wearing, and carved linear grooves into the marble floor and walls. Instantly, over a dozen Tetan royal guards were killed, electrocuted to death.

Impressive, Tycho thought.

Tycho managed to reach Amelia just as she stopped her Power Surge attack. She looked at him, and smiled. He gave her a smile back.

"Having any fun yet?" Lady Amelia asked.

"You have no idea." Tycho replied.

Tycho turned away and looked at the retreating Tetan royal guards. They stopped firing their blaster rifles, and instead, just ran down the hall. The Tetans

reached the main foyer, and closed the blast doors. The blast doors, made of thick durasteel, closed with a deep thud. Amelia began walking toward the blast door, lightsaber in hand.

"So futile." Lady Amelia said to herself.

Amelia plunged the crimson blade into the blast door, followed by Tycho and several other Sith Knights present. The lightsabers slowly melt through the blast door; glowing orange-yellow molten metal pour out from holes the lightsaber blades carved in. Suddenly, Amelia ripped her lightsaber out. An expression of anger filled her face.

"This is taking too long!" Lady Amelia shouted; she looked at the stormtroopers, "Blow it!"

The Sith Knights removed their lightsabers, and stood behind Amelia. The demolitions stormtroopers moved towards the pitted blast door, and planted several thermal detonators. Everyone moved away from the door, but Amelia was still the closest. Suddenly, the charges exploded with a huge roar; dust and metal fragments flew everywhere. When the dust settled, the massive blast door was still standing, although with large pits gouged into it. Amelia's anger swelled:

"Blow it again!" Lady Amelia ordered.

The stormtroopers moved forward and planted more thermal detonators onto the door. Moments pass, and the stormtroopers leave. The charges blew again, even louder than the one previous. Large clouds of dust billowed from the epicentre of the explosions. When the dust settled, the door was still standing, although with even larger pits gouged in them. Amelia screamed in anger, and then unleashed a powerful Wave Front. The pressure wave struck the blast door hard, buckling the durasteel. Amelia unleashed wave after wave of the powerful Force attack until, finally, the blast door came down. The heavy blast door crashed into the marble floor, cracking it, sending up clouds of dust and debris. The entrance to the door immediately came under fire, but Amelia charged in anyways. Amelia immediately sent several blaster bolts back at its shooter, killing the Tetans who fired them. Tycho soon charged in, followed by the rest of the stormtroopers and Sith Knights. The stormtroopers fired wildly into the Tetan stronghold located at the back of the foyer. Tycho could see two Jedi with blue lightsaber blades defending the Tetans, as well as Princess Jade. Princess Jade, a beautiful young woman, was armed with a long-sword, a bow-and-arrow on her back, and a whip on her right side. She was wearing a hardened-gold armour suit, similar to her brothers, but designed specifically for her.

Impressive arsenal, Tycho thought.

Suddenly, from the other side, the blast door across the room opened up, and more Tetans came pouring into the large foyer. Tycho recognized Prince Gabriel charging out of the blast door. Amelia caught sight of him too, and immediately engaged him. Meanwhile, Tycho looked back at the two Jedi, and charged towards them. The stormtroopers were so tightly packed that Tycho had to push through them in order to move forward.

Amelia stared at Prince Gabriel as he charged towards her. He screamed with a vicious war cry, while raising his long-sword above his head. Suddenly, Prince Gabriel lashed out at Amelia with a horizontal strike; Amelia easily parried, and pushed his blade off hers. The long-sword Prince Gabriel was wielding was made of phrik, a material able to resist lightsabers. Amelia immediately went on the offensive, pounding and slashing at Prince Gabriel. She was using a powerful, yet elegant, lightsaber technique that was a hybrid between Djem So and Makashi. Amelia's attacks were fluid and elegant, yet powerful and precise. Prince Gabriel, on the other hand, wielded his long-sword with great skill, honed by extensive training and experience. Although Amelia's attacks were lightning fast, Prince Gabriel parried and blocked every one of them. His skill with a sword was tremendous. In a rage, Amelia forsaken her lightsaber training, and raged out on Prince Gabriel; she pounded him into the ground with a series of strong overhead, downward strikes. Amelia used the Force to add extra strength to her strikes. Although the strikes were powerful, Prince Gabriel still managed to parry the strikes with an overhead horizontal block.

Suddenly, Prince Gabriel's knees gave out, and he fell onto the marble floor. Amelia immediately seized the opportunity, and lunged forward, plunging her lightsaber into the floor. Prince Gabriel moved out of the way just in time. On reflexes, Prince Gabriel kicked Amelia in the back, and rolled onto his feet. Amelia growled in anger, and moved in to attack again. Amelia immediately began a series of fluid, twisting, elegant lightsaber combinations that were a blur to Prince Gabriel. Nevertheless, Prince Gabriel parried and blocked all the strikes directed towards him, or ducked and dived the others that he didn't. Rage and anger began to swell up inside Amelia; her attacks became more powerful, although more uncontrolled. Suddenly, with a series of vicious attacks, Amelia managed to smack the long-sword out of Prince Gabriel's hands. Prince Gabriel fell onto his back, while his long-sword skidded along the marble floor. Amelia gave him a smirk, and then slashed downward upon Prince

Gabriel. He rose his arms above him; the lightsaber was stopped by his phrik gauntlets. Sparks poured from the lightsaber, partially blinding Prince Gabriel. Amelia tried to force her lightsaber through his arms, but Prince Gabriel was strong.

"Gabriel!" Princess Jade screamed as she saw the fight.

Princess Jade immediately wiped out her golden bow, loaded an energy arrow, and fired it towards Amelia. The arrow, a specially-made arrow that glowed blue when fired, streaked through the air. The arrow made a whistling sound as it sliced through the air. Amelia's lightning fast reflexes immediately deflected the arrow, destroying it upon impact with her crimson-bladed lightsaber. Prince Gabriel immediately slide away from Amelia, grabbed his sword and picked himself up.

"Thanks!" Prince Gabriel shouted.

Princess Jade gave him a slight nod, and continued to fire energy arrows at Amelia. Amelia smacked another energy arrow out of the air, then turned to attack Prince Gabriel. She viciously attacked Prince Gabriel with a series of powerful lightsaber strikes. Her attacks were less elegant, but physically stronger. Prince Gabriel was being worn down; his arms seemed heavier, and his legs didn't have the bounce they did a while ago. Despite the fact that Prince Gabriel was being worn down, he still parried and blocked Amelia's strikes.

Suddenly, Princess Jade let loose another energy arrow. The energy arrow streaked through the air, leaving behind it a blue glow. Amelia turned towards it, and rose her crimson blade. The energy arrow shattered and splintered into hundreds of small metal pieces. One of the metal pieces cut Prince Gabriel across the left cheek and across the eye. That split moment of distraction was more than enough time for Amelia to strike. With Force augmented movements, Amelia lunged at Prince Gabriel, and plunged her crimson blade into his chest. The crimson blade pierced through his phrik breast plate, shattering it, sternum, and exited through his spine, killing him instantly. His eyes were wide open, and a small gasp of disbelief left his mouth. A small trickle of blood ran down his mouth.

"No!" Princess Jade screamed in terror.

Amelia turned to chase Princess Jade, whose eyes were filled with tears, and heart filled with rage. Princess Jade immediately let loose more energy arrows, all of which Amelia deflected and shattered against her crimson blade.

Meanwhile, Tycho finally managed to shove his way forward, towards one of the Jedi he saw. As he got closer, the lines of stormtroopers started to thin out. The Jedi, a moderately tall, young human male with short blonde hair, clean shaven, and bright blue eyes, was hacking and slashing at the stormtroopers with his unusual blue lightsaber lance. The lightsaber lance was an odd weapon; the shaft was made of phrik, and was as long as his body. This gave the wielder an incredible reach, as well as the element of surprise.

Immediately, Tycho lunged at the Jedi. The Jedi rose his lightsaber lance above his head for a block, just as Tycho struck downward with his crimson blade. His blade struck the phrik shaft and stopped, but Tycho tried to force his lightsaber down. With incredible force, the Jedi kicked Tycho in the side, causing him to stumble. The Jedi slipped from underneath Tycho, and got back onto his feet. Tycho immediately engaged the Jedi, using a knighthood level Ataru. The fancy, and showy form of Ataru combined agility, and elegance of lightsaber combat, while giving its wielder the element of confusion and surprise. Tycho attacked the Jedi with vicious, rapid attacks, all of which were parried by the Jedi. With acrobatic skill, Tycho jumped over the head of the Jedi, and landed behind him. Before Tycho could attack, however, the Jedi struck Tycho in the head with the butt of his lightsaber lance. The sudden shock of the impact sent Tycho backwards, almost tumbling towards the ground. The Jedi suddenly attacked with a series of long arch-like attacks, using the lightsaber lance's long shaft to his advantage. The strikes were powerful, and awkward to block. Suddenly, the Jedi kicked Tycho in the gut, stopping Tycho in his tracks.

"That you best you got, Sith?" The Jedi taunted.

The comment angered Tycho. Tycho charged at the Jedi, lashing out with all the rage inside of him. His attacks were blocked by the Jedi's lightsaber lance shaft or blade. After a short series of attacks, the Jedi kicked Tycho in the chest, sending him backwards. With grace, the Jedi grabbed the butt end of his lightsaber lance, and swung it at Tycho's head. Tycho barely managed to get his lightsaber up in time to block the powerful attack. Tycho fell onto the marble floor; the Jedi immediately struck at him with a downward strike. Tycho managed to roll out of the way, and get onto his feet. Tycho kicked the Jedi in the jaw, and regain his composure. The Jedi was sent backwards from the kick. Tycho took the opportunity to look around, and saw the stormtroopers fighting viciously against the Tetan royal guards.

The Jedi finally recovered, and stared at Tycho. The Jedi spat out the blood in his mouth, and charged at Tycho. The Jedi performed a series of lightning fast jabs,

followed by various swings, then lunged with his lightsaber lance. The attacks were surprisingly vicious; Tycho had to use all his speed and reflexes to parry and block the attacks. The overhead smash attacks the Jedi used were particularly devastating, causing Tycho to lose his balance a few times. Suddenly, the Jedi started spinning and twirling the lightsaber lance with incredible speed; the blue blade left streaks behind as it sliced through the air. Tycho was amazed by the Jedi's control of the unusual and awkward weapon.

"Fancy twirls won't save you, Jedi." Tycho taunted.

Suddenly, the Jedi charged at Tycho, still spinning and twirling his lightsaber lance with incredible speed and control. Tycho managed to block the various slashes and attacks, but barely. In order to prevent the onslaught of attacks, Tycho had to resort to using Force Lightning. The Jedi immediately backed off, and started twirling the lightsaber in front of him; the blue lightning bolts ricocheted off the blade and shaft. Then, while the Jedi was dazed by the attack, Tycho charged. He unleashed several rapid and quick jabs and slashes with his crimson-bladed lightsaber. Finally, the Jedi managed to disrupt Tycho's attack, engaging in a sabre-lock. Sparks showered from the two lightsaber blades; the faces of both men were in anguish. Using the Force, Tycho managed to break the sabre-lock and attack the Jedi. Before the lightsaber blade could contact the Jedi, however, he jumped backwards in the air, landing on his feet.

"Nice try, Sith." The Jedi taunted.

The Jedi immediately charged at Tycho again. Before the Jedi could get close, Tycho unleashed several Force Wave attacks, sending him backwards. The Jedi crashed into the marble floor with such force, the marble cracked. The Jedi let out a cry of pain as his body impacted the hard floor. Seizing the opportunity, Tycho charged at the Jedi. Suddenly, the dead body of one of the stormtroopers smacked Tycho in the back. Then another hit him in the chest. Tycho finally realized that the Jedi was throwing the dead bodies of stormtroopers at him. Tycho managed to dodge the third, and slice through the fourth. Within moments, the two were face-to-face again, engaged in another sabre-lock. The light emanating from the two lightsaber blades was blinding, and sparks showered onto the floor. The crackling of the lightsabers was almost deafening. Both men were in anguish during this sabre-lock. The Jedi managed to kick Tycho in the side, breaking his concentration and the sabre-lock. With a vicious strike, the Jedi swung at Tycho's head. The blue lightsaber blade almost cleaved Tycho's head off. Tycho managed to roll out of the way, and kick the Jedi in the gut, sending him stepping backwards a few steps. Suddenly, Tycho heard:

"No!" Princess Jade screamed.

Tycho looked over and saw Princess Jade in a fury. She was firing energy arrows towards Amelia, who was easily blocking and deflecting them with her crimson-bladed lightsaber. Princess Jade was charging at Amelia, firing as many energy arrows as she could. Amelia simply walked forward, easily deflecting all arrows sent her way. Suddenly, the second Jedi Tycho saw came into view. The second Jedi, an older human male, with dark olive skin, long black hair and dark brown eyes, looked over at the younger, blonde Jedi.

"Malakon, get back!" The older Jedi ordered.

The older Jedi, presumably the Master, was running towards Princess Jade. Tycho finally picked himself up, and stared down at the younger Jedi he had just been fighting. Reluctantly, the Jedi ran back towards the antechamber, the next room over in the palace.

"Fall back!" Jedi Malakon shouted.

The Tetans immediately started to retreat to the antechamber in the next room. Meanwhile, the Jedi Master grabbed hold of Princess Jade, holding her back. Princess Jade, tears flowing down her cheeks, was struggling to get free.

"We have to go!" The Jedi Master shouted.

"Let me go, Master Lii!" Princess Jade ordered.

"If you die, Teta dies!" Master Lii shouted back.

Amelia was still a ways away, but now running towards Princess Jade and Jedi Master Lii, but several Tetan royal guards got in the way, slowing her down. Reluctantly, Princess Jade followed Jedi Master Lii towards the antechamber, and retreated. They reached the antechamber just in time, and closed the blast door. Amelia, infuriated with the situation, turned to look at the remaining stormtroopers. Not many were left after the battle in the foyer; hundreds of dead Tetan and stormtrooper bodies littered the marble floor. The fog of war lingered at ankle level in the foyer.

Tycho was already at the blast door when Amelia arrived. She pounded her fist against the durasteel door; a loud audible thud resonated within the metal. Amelia turned to look at Tycho, just for a moment, then back at the stormtroopers and Sith Knights.

"Plant the charges on the wall!" Lady Amelia ordered.

The demolitions stormtroopers immediately came forward, and planted the thermal detonators. Amelia, and everyone else, stood back while they worked. The entire rim of the blast door was lined with charges. Amelia gave a nod, and the stormtroopers detonated the charges. A huge explosion ripped through the marble wall, sending chunks of rock and dust into the air. A billow of dust filled the foyer; Amelia used the Force to swipe the dust away; the blast door was still standing. Amelia reached out with the Force, and tore down the blast door. Within only a few moments, the blast door ripped off its hinges, and came crashing down. The heavy door cracked the marble floor when it crashed into the floor.

Immediately the entrance to the antechamber filled with blaster bolts. Amelia deflected several with her crimson blade, and an armada of stormtroopers ploughed into the antechamber, also firing their blaster rifles. The Tetan royal guards could be seen running up the staircase onto the second floor.

"Follow them!" Lady Amelia ordered.

The stormtroopers, doing as ordered, ran up the staircase. They met heavy resistance from the Tetan royal guards; several stormtroopers were killed, and stumbled backward and down the stairs. Meanwhile, Amelia was walking forward towards the Royal Chamber. Tycho immediately ran to her side.

"I'm coming with you." Tycho said.

Amelia looked at him, "Fine."

They both walked into the Royal Chamber unchallenged. The Royal Chamber was a long, rectangular room, made of marble and various other precious metals. Ten pillars, five on each side, stood off to the side of the room. The roof was a dome shape, with a skylight, allowing sunlight in. Ten arch-like windows with transparisteel surround the room; they are covered in luxurious fabric curtains. At the far end of the room, the throne sat atop a small rise in the floor with three steps leading up. Inside the luxurious Royal Chamber stood Master Lii and Jedi Malakon, both armed with their respective lightsabers. Princess Jade stood behind the two Jedi, anger clearly filling her mind and her heart. Amelia approached first:

"I'll take the Jedi." Lady Amelia ordered, "You take the Princess."

Reluctantly, Tycho nodded his head in agreement. Amelia charged at the two Jedi first, swinging and slashing at them with incredibly power attacks. The vicious attack allowed Tycho to get around the two Jedi and confront Princess Jade. He was immediately greeted with an energy arrow; Tycho deflected the first energy arrow, shattering it against his crimson blade. He allowed the second the pass harmlessly by him, and deflected the third. Princess Jade ran out of energy arrows, and tossed the golden compound bow aside.

"No where left to go, Princess." Tycho taunted.

Suddenly, Princess Jade took out her whip. The whip was made of Mandalorian Iron, an incredibly strong substance that can withstand lightsabers, and had razor-sharp edges. The whip itself was very long. With expert precision, Princess Jade cracked the whip. Tycho dodged the razor-sharp tip. The sonic boom that resulted from the cracking of the whip was incredibly loud. Tycho immediately went into a defensive stance, using a knighthood level Soresu as his lightsaber form. Princess Jade again cracked the whip towards Tycho. The whip travelled through the air so fast that Tycho couldn't even see it. The razor-sharp tip sliced through Tycho's right cheek; his cheek bled profusely. Tycho placed his palm on his bleeding cheek in disbelief. The sudden pain from the whip had already dissipated.

"You're not the only one with skills." Princess Jade replied.

Tycho's hand was covered in blood. Princess Jade attacked again with the whip. Tycho immediately used his lightsaber to counter and block the attacks, or rolled and ducked out of the way. After a series of attacks, Tycho managed to successfully block the whip; the whip wrapped itself around Tycho's crimson blade, and get wedged in place. Princess Jade tried to pull back on the whip, but Tycho fought against it. With a sudden surge of Force energy, Tycho managed to dislodge the whip from Princess Jade's grip. The whip went flying through the air, and onto the marble floor. Immediately the Princess took out the two small swords that were holstered around her waist. The two small swords were modelled after the long lost knives of the original Empress Teta; they were only two feet long, with a curved blade made of phrik, and had the head of a bird on the hilt. The entire hilt was gold-plated, while the blade itself had a silvery, polished finish.

Surprisingly, Princess Jade was the one to charge and attack. Princess Jade's attacks were fast and powerful, but less elegant and more brutal. Princess Jade's fighting style was different than that of lightsaber techniques; her skills had been honed

through years of rigorous, and extensive training, and experience. Although her attacks were strong and fast, Tycho could still parry and block the strikes. The two weapon style Princess Jade employed was expertly wielded, making Tycho work twice as hard. Suddenly, in a surprisingly fast spin, Princess Jade managed to get through Tycho's defences, and elbow him in the nose. A terrible crack could be heard when her elbow met the cartilage in his nose. Blood poured down his nose profusely, and tears welled up in his eyes. Seizing the opportunity, Princess Jade kept up the attack. Tycho kept on parrying both short-swords, but his vision was slightly distorted from the tears. With another surprising move, Princess Jade drop kicked Tycho in the chest. Tycho stumbled backward onto the marble floor, while Princess Jade landed on her back as well. Tycho fell with a thud.

"This can't be happening." Tycho said to himself.

They both rose at the same time, and this time Tycho charged at her. He was filled with rage and anger. Tycho, using a knighthood level Ataru, used fast, and quick attacks, coupled with acrobatics to confuse the opponent. Although Tycho was still fast, Princess Jade still managed to protect herself. Then, with a downward overhead strike, Tycho lunged forward. Princess Jade blocked the powerful attack with both her short-swords in an X-block. The force of the impact caused Princess Jade to fall to one knee; she struggled to keep the lightsaber off her. Sparks showered onto her; strain started to creep onto her face. Tycho kept the pressure on her, forcing the lightsaber down. Suddenly, Princess Jade rolled away, and kicked the legs out from under Tycho. Tycho landed hard on his back, smacking his skull onto the marble floor. Tycho's vision was blurry, and he saw stars. Tycho let out a groan, and slowly started to stand up. Princess Jade rolled away and picked herself up.

Amelia was in the heat of battle against Jedi Master Lii and Jedi Malakon. Amelia utilized a powerful, yet elegant, lightsaber technique that combined the strength of Djem So, and the fluidity of Makashi. Her attacks were strong, powerful, yet fluid and precise. Her opponents, however, utilized different techniques. Jedi Master Lii, wielding a single hilt blue-bladed lightsaber, tended to use mastery level Soresu, a more defensive lightsaber form. Jedi Malakon, on the other hand, using a lightsaber lance, used a more aggressive mastery level Djem So. Amelia spun and twisted, blocking and parrying the various attacks from both her opponents. Her attacks were fast; their swings and strikes were mere blurs to her vision. Amelia had to use all her training, and all her skill, to keep up with both her attackers. Jedi Malakon was, by far, the more

aggressive of the two. Although more aggressive, he also tended to leave himself vulnerable to counter-attacks. Master Lii tended to be more conservative; biding his time, looking for the correct opportunities.

Suddenly, Jedi Malakon lunged forward at Amelia with his blue-bladed lightsaber lance. Amelia moved her head out of the way, and grabbed hold of the phrik shaft. With a powerful strike, Amelia smacked the lightsaber lance out to the side, and swung at Jedi Malakon's head. The tip of the crimson blade missed his face by mere millimetres; Jedi Malakon fell backwards, onto his back. Master Lii immediately came in to his apprentice's aid. Master Lii attacked Amelia, the few times he did during the engagement. Amelia immediately counter-attacked, and the tide of the engagement shifted towards Amelia's favour. Amelia slammed her crimson blade against Master Lii's; the shower of sparks and explosions of light blinded Master Lii momentarily. Finally, Jedi Malakon recovered from his near-miss, and came to his Master's aid. The powerful arch-like swings from the lightsaber lance pounded against Amelia's crimson lightsaber blade. More sparks showered onto the marble floor. Jedi Malakon pressed the attack, swinging and slamming his lightsaber lance against Amelia's crimson blade. Although the weapon tended to be awkward to wield, Jedi Malakon used the lightsaber lance expertly. Jedi Malakon took a long, powerful swing, low, against Amelia. She jumped over the blade, and next to Jedi Malakon. She kicked him in the side, sending him toppling onto the marble floor. Just then, Master Lii came in and attacked Amelia. Master Lii's attacks were fast, but Amelia's were faster. Amelia almost immediately regained the offensive, and started attacking Master Lii. She pounded against Master Lii's blue blade. With a powerful overhead, downward slam, Amelia engaged Master Lii in a sabre-lock. More sparks and explosions of light emanated from the two lightsabers. Master Lii strained to keep the lightsaber away from his body; Amelia forced hers down with ease.

Jedi Malakon suddenly leapt into the air with his lightsaber lance overhead. Amelia immediately moved out of the way as Jedi Malakon slammed his lightsaber blade into the marble floor with incredible force. The lightsaber blade shattered and cracked the hard marble floor; the tip of the blade, mere centimetres from Master Lii. Jedi Malakon engaged Amelia with a flurry of attacks. Jedi Malakon utilized incredible control and accuracy with the various twists and spins he used with the lightsaber lance. The blue blade at the end of the lightsaber lance was only a blur. With a sudden rage, Amelia unleashed a forceful Power Surge; dozens of blue electric bolts shot out of Amelia's fingers, and streaked through the air. Jedi Malakon spun his lightsaber lance

with impressive speed, deflecting the lightning bolts from passing him. Amelia pressed the Force attack, sending wave after wave of lightning bolts into the air.

Tycho, finally getting the upper hand, was on the offensive. Tycho viciously attacked Princess Jade with various slashes, overhead strikes, and lunges with his crimson-bladed lightsaber. Princess Jade, although not Force-sensitive, managed to parry and defend herself just as well as most other Jedi or Sith. The clash of the phrik short-sword against the crimson blade of the lightsaber still made sparks shower onto the marble floor. Slowly, Princess Jade's arms began to tire after the relentless attacks. Tycho kept up the pressure, viciously and brutally attacking her with lightning fast combos and acrobatic movements.

With a sudden overhead, downward strike, Tycho pounded Princess Jade onto her knees. Tycho continued with a series of powerful, relentless, overhead, downward strikes. Princess Jade managed to block every single one of the blows with a horizontal parry with her short-swords. Suddenly, Princess Jade kicked the left knee of Tycho, making him stumble and lose his balance. Princess Jade rolled out from under him, and regained her footing. She rolled onto her feet, and prepared for a counter-attack. It didn't come; instead, Tycho was hunched over, rubbing his kneecap. Tycho cringed in pain, and wiped the blood from off his face. He looked up to stare at her.

"You're one tough broad, I'll give you that." Tycho replied.

"I'm just getting started." Princess Jade countered.

Tycho laughed to himself, then stood upright. Both locked eyes onto each other. Suddenly, with incredible speed, Princess Jade lunged forward. Lightning fast slashes and strikes directed towards Tycho came out of nowhere. Tycho was forced to parry and block the attacks, but just barely. The strikes were incredibly fast, comparable to even Jedi and Sith. Suddenly, Tycho left himself open for just a split second, however, that was enough for Princess Jade to land a blow. Her phrik short-sword managed to slice across Tycho's belly. Tycho screamed in pain, and from the sudden shock of the blow. Luckily, the blade didn't carve in deep; it was only a flesh wound. Tycho immediately jumped backwards to avoid a second attack, and to regain his composure. Tycho slowly rose from his kneeling position; his left hand clutched the bleeding flesh wound. Blood profusely poured out of the wound, soaking into his robe and shirt.

"Not bad for a broad, huh?" Princess Jade taunted.

Tycho, angry at himself for leaving himself open, replied, "Yeah, not bad."

Princess Jade charged once more, both phrik short-swords twirling and spinning with lightning fast movements. Using the Force, Tycho leapt over Princess Jade and landed behind her. With a powerful diagonal strike, Tycho slashed at her back. The crimson blade carved a deep, linear groove into her hardened-gold armour. Princess Jade screamed in shock and stumbled forward, landing face-down. The golden armour glowed orange around the linear groove the lightsaber carved out. Surprisingly, Princess Jade was still alive, and seemingly unharmed.

"What?" Tycho Xar asked himself.

"Phrik chain-mesh armour." Princess Jade informed.

Tycho sagged in his robes for a moment. Tycho slowly shook his head in disbelief. Meanwhile, Princess Jade, utterly exhausted from the confrontation, slowly tried to crawl away from Tycho. Her breathing was laboured, and her muscles were twitching uncontrollably. She found it very difficult to move any longer. She was injured, but not from the lightsaber attack.

"Frack..." Tycho Xar said to himself.

Amelia jumped into the air, and kicked Master Lii in the face with her boot, then landed gracefully. Master Lii immediately stumbled backward, and fell onto his back. Jedi Malakon took a long swing at Amelia's head with his lightsaber lance; Amelia ducked under the attack and used a powerful Wave Front attack to send Jedi Malakon backwards. Amelia charged forward, swinging her lightsaber with incredible speed, and spinning her body in acrobatic movements. Jedi Malakon parried the blocks from off the floor, but soon was at a disadvantage. With powerful overhead downward strikes, Amelia pounded her crimson blade against the phrik shaft of Jedi Malakon's lightsaber lance. After a series of powerful blows, Amelia forced her crimson blade against the phrik shaft. Sparks showered from the lightsaber. Suddenly, Amelia unleashed a surge of electrical energy through her lightsaber, and into the phrik shaft. The electrical bolts shocked Jedi Malakon; pain surged through Jedi Malakon. Jedi Malakon tried to kick Amelia free, but she didn't budge. Instead, she sent another discharge of electrical energy through her lightsaber and into Jedi Malakon. Jedi Malakon screamed in pain as the electricity coursed through his body. Wildly, Jedi Malakon kicked Amelia repeatedly on the side; she wouldn't relent. Suddenly, Jedi

Malakon landed a strike on her knee, causing her to break the sabre-lock. Jedi Malakon crawled away from the engagement; tears of pain filling his eyes.

Meanwhile, Master Lii finally picked himself up, and rushed to the aid of Princess Jade. He lunged forward, and blocked an overhead, downward strike from Tycho, directed at the downed Princess Jade. The two blades made contact; showers of sparks and explosions of light emanated from the two lightsabers. Tycho looked at Master Lii with disbelief. Suddenly, Master Lii broke the sabre-lock, and kicked Tycho out of the way. Tycho flew through the air, and smacked against a marble pillar. Tycho, upon smashing into the marble pillar, was knocked out. Quickly, Master Lii went to Princess Jade's side, and held her in his arms; she was injured, and exhausted from the lengthy duel with the Sith Knight.

"Are you okay?" Master Lii asked in a worried voice.

"Master Lii?" Princess Jade answered, "Where'd you come from?"

"That doesn't matter now." Master Lii replied, "We have to leave."

"I thought I was dead for sure." Princess Jade answered.

"Not on my watch." Master Lii answered.

Amelia, in the meantime, kept charging at Jedi Malakon. He finally picked himself up, and began blocking and parrying Amelia's relentless attacks. Exhaustion started to set in, and Jedi Malakon's arms began to tire; he wasn't as fast as he once was, and his reflexes weren't as sharp. Suddenly, Jedi Malakon shouted:

"Exit!" Jedi Malakon screamed.

Master Lii looked towards the large, stone and gold throne. He looked back to Princess Jade.

"Can you run?" Master Lii asked.

She nodded her head, and Master Lii help pick her up. Princess Jade limped towards the throne, and activated the right armrest. A series of buttons revealed themselves, and she pushed one of them. Suddenly, from behind the throne, a trapdoor opened. Master Lii smiled, and then looked back to Jedi Malakon, who was still defending himself from Amelia's powerful and relentless attacks. Master Lii looked back at Princess Jade:

"Go!" Master Lii ordered.

Princess Jade nodded her head, and climbed down the trapdoor. Master Lii lunged towards Amelia, engaging her in battle. Jedi Malakon was on the brink of defeat from Amelia's seemingly endless stamina and strength. Master Lii used a powerful Force Wave attack to distract Amelia for just a moment. Amelia, powerful as she was in the Force, merely rose the palm of her hand to block the Force attack. Master Lii ran to Jedi Malakon's side. Master Lii pointed towards the trapdoor.

"You too!" Master Lii ordered.

Suddenly, both of them ran towards the trapdoor. Amelia immediately charged at the both of them, slashing with her lightsaber. She caught up with Master Lii, and unleashed a Force Crush onto his body. Amelia lifted Master Lii into the air, and began crushing his bones and organs. Master Lii could hear his bones creak as they began to strain and bend under the Force power; Master Lii screamed in agony. Jedi Malakon turned around, and realized that his Master was in trouble. Simultaneously, both Jedi used Force Wave to jar Amelia from the attack. Both Force powers broke Amelia's concentration, releasing Master Lii from her grip.

Jedi Malakon helped Master Lii into the trapdoor, then they both descended. Just then, Tycho awoke, and saw Jedi Malakon retreating into the trapdoor behind the throne. Tycho immediately picked himself up, but couldn't help but groan at the pain. He rushed forward, along with Amelia, and jumped down through the trapdoor. Tycho landed on hard brick, and saw a long, linear, straight tunnel running underground. He saw the Princess Jade, Jedi Malakon and Master Lii running along the corridor. The sound of clacking on the stone brick echoed in the tunnel. Using the Force to augment his movements, he use Knight Speed to rush through the tunnel. Although he was fast, he wasn't fast enough. At the end of the tunnel was an gaping hole; the roar of a waterfall could be heard resonating within the tunnel. Suddenly, up ahead, a Tetan gunship appeared with its side doors opened. Within moments, Princess Jade and the two Jedi jumped onto the gunship, and sped away from the tunnel. Tycho, seconds later, reached the end of the tunnel; he watched as the gunship flew through the waterfall, and into orbit.

"Damn it!" Tycho shouted.

Angry with himself, Tycho punched the stone wall of the tunnel; the stone shattered under the force. Slowly, Tycho walked back towards the trapdoor. He climbed out of the trapdoor and saw Amelia standing nearby.

"And?" Lady Amelia asked.

Tycho shook his head, "They got away in a gunship."

Anger started to build up inside Amelia; Tycho could feel it through the Force. Nevertheless, she didn't lash out on him, although she could have. Instead, Amelia just stared at him with her angry eyes. Her blue-green eyes slowly faded into red-violet; the thick, black eyeliner around her eyes made a bold impression. She looked at Tycho for a moment; he had been injured a great deal during the battle. His face was bloody from the broken nose, and his gut had been sliced open; various small cuts and bruises covered his body. His robe were soaked in sweat and blood. Suddenly, stormtroopers pour into the Royal Chamber.

"Mistress, the palace is ours." One of the stormtroopers informed.

"Excellent." Lady Amelia replied, "Let's begin sweeping the city of any more resistance."

"Yes, my Lady." The stormtrooper answered.

Tycho watched as Amelia walked away. Tycho didn't know where to be scared for his life, or what. Moments later, Tycho began walking across the Royal Chamber, and exited the palace. Outside, the palace was in ruins, and the city was almost completely destroyed.

All this, and for what, Tycho thought, What was the point?

On the Tetan Gunship:

The Tetan gunship streaked through the atmosphere and then through the clouds. The gunship rocked back and forth quite violently because of the turbulence. Princess Jade, still exhausted from the battle, could only stare out the transparisteel windows of the gunship. She stared at the ruined city of Cinnagar; she saw crumbled buildings on fire and completely destroyed; the sky was filled with black smoke, billowing out from the gigantic infernos throughout the city. A single tear ran down her cheek.

"I vow, on my life, on those of my ancestors, I will retake my city, and reclaim my honour." Princess Jade vowed.

Master Lii put his hands on her lap, and nodded in agreement. He smiled at her.

"And we'll be there to help as much as we can." Master Lii added.

They left the atmosphere behind, and flew through the hard vacuum of space. They saw several *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers and *Ardent*-class fast frigates orbiting around the planet, hovering a couple hundred kilometres above the city of Cinnagar. A ring of debris and dead bodies surrounded the battlespace where the massive naval battle took place. Suddenly, the Tetan pilot turned around and shouted over his shoulder.

"Master Jedi, the Galactic Alliance reports that they need your aid on the sanctuary moon of Endor!" The pilot shouted.

"What is it about?" Master Lii asked.

"I'm not sure, Master Jedi." The Tetan pilot answered, "They just requested your assistance."

"Okay then." Master Lii answered, nodding his head. He then turned back to look at a depressed Jedi Malakon, and an angry Princess Jade, "A Jedi's work is never done, huh?"

He watched as Jedi Malakon stared at Princess Jade, while she was staring at her home planet. Master Lii rose an eyebrow, and then sat back into his chair, and smiled. Slowly, he shook his head, and let out a long sigh.

Duty

Two Standard Days Later: Cinnagar, Empress Teta:

Tycho walked the ruined streets of Cinnagar alone; he hadn't shaved since the invasion, so a two-day beard was setting in. On either side of him were partially demolished buildings, crumbling from the recent invasion. The buildings were simply massive, smoking rubble piles of twisted durasteel and shattered transparisteel. Large columns of black smoke rose into the sky. The sky itself seemed to die, turning a dark orange-red colour. Wisps of clouds filled the sky; the air was eerily calm. Dead bodies still laid inside the buildings, mostly Tetan citizens. Now that the once tall buildings were toppled, Tycho could see much farther into the distance. He saw massive, black AT-AHTs walking the streets, trampling buildings, and occasionally firing a salvo of light turbolaser fire at enemy strongholds. The clanking of their legs were still audible, even kilometres away. Even more AT-RCTs patrolled the street, the open cockpit allowing the two stormtroopers atop a full panoramic view. Tycho continued walking down the street. Suddenly, an AT-RCT came up beside Tycho, and stopped.

"Knight Xar, Mistress Amelia requires your attention." The stormtrooper pilot informed.

"Where is she?" Tycho asked.

"The Iron Citadel; where else?" The stormtrooper asked in a sarcastic voice.

The AT-RCT began walking in its original direction; the clanking of the legs were loud, as Tycho cringed at the sound. Tycho picked up his pace, and hurried to the Iron Citadel. As Tycho approached, the Iron Citadel didn't fare much better than the rest of the buildings around Cinnagar. Half of the massive palace was in ruins, with large fires still raging. Massive rubble piles were being accumulated inside the Iron Citadel walls to collect all the ruined stone. Amelia was already standing outside the palace, just inside the wall where the massive durasteel gate used to be.

"Move that walker out of here!" Lady Amelia ordered.

She was pointing at one of the massive AT-AHT's, still within the walls of the Iron Citadel, that was involved in the initial assault. The lumbering mechanical giant began walking; the massive feet caused the ground to shake. Suddenly, Amelia turned around and looked at Tycho. He instinctually bowed his head.

"Oh, it's you. Good." Lady Amelia replied, "I have a job for you."

Tycho rose his head, "What is it, my Lady?"

Amelia gave a small smirk, then said, "There seems to be a disturbance on one of the Mid Rim worlds that I need you to take care of."

"Is that so?" Tycho asked.

"Yes." Lady Amelia answered, "The monarchy on Naboo seems to be having a hard time adapting to... Imperial authority."

"What is it you require, my Lady?" Tycho asked.

"I need you to travel to Naboo, and crush the resistance there." Lady Amelia informed.

"Alone?" Tycho asked.

"Nonsense. There are already Imperial forces there." Lady Amelia informed, "You just need to make sure that the monarchy is eradicated. Understand?"

"Yes, my Lady." Tycho replied.

Amelia nodded, "Good. You leave later today. Dismissed."

Tycho bowed his head, "Thank you, my Lady."

Tycho turned around, and began walking back towards the ruined city. Amelia watched him leave with great intent. Slowly, she let herself smile at the thought.

One Day Later: Galactic City, Coruscant:

Moff Nyna Calixte had just learned of the news from Empress Teta. Word of the recent, overwhelming success from the rebellious world roused huge celebration on Galactic City, as well as many Imperial-loyal worlds. She sat in her office, watching live footage of the aftermath through the HoloNet, while getting simultaneous streams of data from agents on the Imperial fleet.

Nyna shook her head in disbelief.

Suddenly, Grand Moff Morlish Veed stormed into her office. He wore an angered and enraged face. He stared directly at her with light, almost metallic, blue eyes. Then, in a sudden burst of rage, he grabbed her by the throat, choking her. She tried to scream, but the air was cut off from her lungs. Nyna suddenly feared for her life. She hit him on the chest with her fists as hard as she could, but his chiselled, battle-hardened body merely absorbed the impact. Then, just as suddenly, Veed let her go.

The sudden rush of air back into her lungs was fresh and welcomed. She coughed violently at first, then began to heave as her body absorbed as much oxygen as it could.

"You have failed me, Nyna." Grand Moff Morlish Veed growled.

After she stopped coughing, she managed to ask, "What do you mean?"

"What do you think I mean?" He screamed, "Regent Amelia has defeated the Tetans! Her power grows ever more! Now it will be almost impossible to remove her from her position without causing civil war and unrest!"

"Perhaps." Nyna said, merely to fill the air with something as she recovered from her violent assault.

"No, Nyna. Not perhaps!" Grand Moff Morlish Veed shouted, "She now has complete control over the Imperial military. She already has Moff Geist and Moff Yage eating out of her palm. Now because of this, it will be impossible to remove her!"

"There is always a way, Morlish." Nyna quietly said, "It just takes careful timing, and vicious execution. Wait and see, Amelia will be vulnerable one day... and soon."

"Now I think your just fooling yourself." Grand Moff Morlish Veed replied.

"No matter." Nyna answered, "However, I suggest that if any planning of Amelia's removable should happen, it must happen after Moff Geist and Yage leave Galactic City."

Morlish Veed seemed to calm down slightly; then, finally, after a few tense moments, he answered, "Yes. You are correct."

Two Standard Days Later: Naboo:

The *Nune*-class Imperial shuttle dropped through the atmosphere with incredible speed. The shuttle's windshield was covered and draped with white cloud. Visibility was down to mere metres. The shuttle rocked back and forth due to turbulence, but Tycho wasn't worried.

Can't see enough to be worried, Tycho thought.

Suddenly, the shuttle plunged through the clouds, and the lush green vegetation of Naboo filled the viewport. The sight was awe inspiring. Never in his life had he ever seen such a beautiful world. Large continents filled with lush, green vegetation,

surrounded by massive greenish-blue, sparkling, crystal clear oceans, was all that Tycho saw.

Incredible, Tycho thought.

Naboo had once been an allied world of the Galactic Empire under Emperor Roan Fel; since most of its population had been human, the transition into Imperial leadership had been relatively smooth. In fact, Naboo embraced Emperor Roan Fel to such a high degree as to harbour one of the largest Imperial Mission sites in the entire galaxy; the people of Naboo truly believed that Emperor Roan Fel could bring peace to the galaxy. However, when Darth Krayt usurped the throne, all that changed. Naboo was subjugated to Sith tyranny, and has been ruled by a Sith Lord ever since Darth Krayt took power. It has been recently revealed that the people of Naboo have been secretly supporting the Empire-in-exile, while undermining Sith and Imperial authority. Open warfare in the streets of Theed have erupted as a result.

"Coming up on the city of Theed." The Imperial pilot informed.

The Imperial pilot banked the shuttle hard right, and suddenly, a small beige-tan blip appeared on the continent's surface. The shuttle descended further; the outlines of buildings appeared on the horizon. Soon, the architecture of the buildings became apparent; large, cylindrical and rectangular beige-tan stone buildings, with green domal-roofs, and spires were the typical architecture. Columns of black smoke, presumably from a recent street battle, rose from the streets. As they descended further, Tycho could see various AT-AHTs patrolling the outer fringes of the city, with AT-RCTs patrolling the city streets. Finally, the shuttle touched down on the Palace Plaza, in front of Theed Royal Palace; behind them was the city of Theed. Outside, two lines of white armoured stormtroopers lined parallel and facing each other awaited Tycho; the stormtroopers were armed with blaster rifles, and stood perfectly still. At the end of the corridor made by the stormtroopers was another Sith Lord, wearing the typical black robes and attire of a Sith. Tycho walked towards him. Tycho reached him, and bowed his head; the Sith Lord reciprocated.

"Welcome to Naboo, Knight Xar." The Sith Lord replied, "I am Darth Vadic, and I am the appointed ruler of Naboo."

Darth Vadic was a tall, muscular red-skinned male Twi'lek. His barrel chest was large, and built; his arms were as thick as tree trunks. His right lekku, or brain-tail, was partially amputated; the tip was cut off, presumably from battle. Gold rings adored the left lekku. His skin was tattooed with various black, geometric patterns, and his iris'

were red and sulphur-yellow. The nails on his fingers were long, black and rotten; Tycho assumed they were probably razor-sharp as well.

"I hear the monarchy is giving you some trouble." Tycho Xar replied.

Darth Vadic began to walk towards the palace, "Those loyal to the monarchy have begun putting up some resistance against Imperial occupation." Darth Vadic began, "The streets have erupted into chaos and warfare."

"I don't really see what more I can do for you, my Lord." Tycho Xar replied.

Darth Vadic turned to look down at Tycho, "You are a new face here on Naboo; you may be able to acquire information about the resistance groups here that I cannot."

Tycho nodded his head, "Interesting idea."

"We are unsure how they are being funding, and who is supplying them." Darth Vadic informed, "If we can crush their logistical abilities, we can crush them."

"You haven't tried just waging open war with these resistance groups?" Tycho asked.

"There is no way to wage open war with terrorists cells." Darth Vadic informed, "They are underground societies; impossible to crush through conventional means."

Tycho nodded his head in agreement. Tycho stopped and looked at Darth Vadic, "I'll see what information I can gather."

Darth Vadic bowed his head, and continued walking towards the palace. Tycho immediately set out to prepare for the undercover work ahead of him.

Three Standard Weeks Later:

For the past three weeks, Tycho had been living on the outskirts of the city of Theed, trying to gather information on possible smuggling activities in the area. The outskirts of Theed have become a haven for rebels, resistance fighters, criminals, and the like. For three weeks, he's turned up very little; a few names of possible contacts, rumours, and a lot of big talk from big nobodies. Tycho walked into one of the makeshift bars that, presumably, a big time smuggler named Reeve Graf supposedly hangs out. Wearing dirty, old, civilian clothing, he looked normal around here. The bar was small, with very few customers. With only one bar, a few tables and chairs, the place couldn't accommodate any more. The walls were made of corrugated durasteel,

and wood planks, and the place was in desperate need of a hose down. There were very few lights; this was a typical bar on the outskirts. Tycho sat at the bar; the stool was uncomfortable, but he'd sat on worse. The bartender, a old, heavyset, human male with greying hair and a large beard, walked over.

"What'cha take?" The bartender asked in a growly voice.

"Whatever beer you have in a bottle." Tycho answered.

The bartender grabbed a bottle, twisted the cap off with his bare hands, and slid it towards Tycho. Tycho grabbed it calmly, and coolly, and watched as the bartender walked away. Tycho took a sip of the beer; some beer ran down his beard. Tycho looked around the bar for any possible contacts; he didn't see anyone obvious outright. With only a few more sips of the beer, Tycho polished off the bottle. Tycho waved the bartender over.

"If I needed something... transported... who would be the person to talk to around here." Tycho asked.

Tycho had learned that, although smuggling was illegal, in the outskirts, almost everything was illegal. The beings living here seemed to be a lot more open than he previously would have thought. Tycho decided about a week ago to be a little more open, but still remained discrete.

"You're not from around here, are ya?" The bartender rhetorically asked.

"Not exactly from around here." Tycho answered.

The bartender smiled, "You want Graf."

"Where do I find him?" Tycho asked.

"Her." The bartender corrected. He then pointed to an obscure corner of the bar, "Anything else."

"Get me two beers."

The bartender reached down and grabbed two more bottles; they were different than the one he had been drinking. He twisted the caps off the bottles, and handed them to Tycho.

"She likes Alderaan beer." The bartender informed.

Tycho nodded, "Thanks."

Tycho left thirty credits on the bar table, took the two beers, and walked towards the obscure corner at the back of the bar. As Tycho walked closer, the lights seemed dimmer. He only saw one person back here; he assumed it must be Reeve Graf. As he walked closer, he noticed that she was very cute. Long brown hair, nice face, great body; what else was there? She was already chugging down, what seemed to be, her fifth bottle of Alderaan beer. She looked up, and saw Tycho approaching with two bottles in his hands; she looked surprised, or drunk, or both. Tycho sat down across from her, and placed the two bottles of beer on the table. Tycho looked at her for just a moment; she was wearing a tight fitting, dirty, white crop-top blouse, with a black synthetic leather jacket over top. Her pants, from what Tycho saw from before he sat down, were fit fitting Corellian military-issue, with a yellow stripe running down the side; she wore high boots as well, and had a blaster pistol holstered on her side.

"Are you the new waiter?" Reeve Graf asked.

"Are there waiters here?" Tycho asked.

Reeve Graf laughed out loud, "No!"

"Well then, I must be here for something else." Tycho said, then slid the bottle of Alderaan beer towards her.

She grabbed it before the bottle could slide off the table. She turned the bottle to see the label, and smiled, "My favourite. How did you know?" She asked in a sarcastic voice.

Tycho chuckled a bit, then looked at the empty bottles around, "Lucky guess."

She took a sip of the beer, "You're trying to get me drunk."

"I think you already covered that for yourself." Tycho responded.

She laughed again, and took another sip, "Perhaps. What you got in mind?" She said in a suggestive voice.

"I think we have some business to take care of." Tycho replied.

"Do we?" She said in an innocent voice.

"I hear that you're the one to talk to about... imports." Tycho replied.

"Oh." She said as she sat back, "Too bad, you have real pretty eyes."

Tycho smiled, "Sorry. So, how about it?"

"What's the cargo?" Reeve Graf asked.

"Some supplies, and gear." Tycho answered, "And no Imperial involvement."

"Well, that's the trick, isn't it?" Reeve replied. She looked at Tycho for a few seconds, and nodded, "Weapons."

Tycho took a moment, "Possibly."

"No, you misunderstand." She replied, "It wasn't a question."

Tycho stared at her for a moment, "What do you know about it?"

"I know that, if you really want to help around here, smuggling in weapons is the only way to do it." She answered.

"You caught me, now what?" Tycho asked.

She smacked the palm of the hands onto the table, causing the empty beer bottles to jump, and then topple over, "Sorry, guy, but you got the wrong girl."

"So you won't help?" Tycho asked.

"It's not like I don't want to help," She replied, "but that's not my thing."

"So what is your thing?" Tycho asked.

She smiled, "Are we still talking about the same thing?"

Tycho didn't reply; he simply stared at her with a cold face.

"Okay, my bad" She said, "I only transport beings out of here, not 'supplies'."

Tycho slammed his fist against his lap. He started looking around the bar, staring at nothing. He finally turned back to look at Reeve Graf, who was finishing off the beer he bought. When she finished, she turned back to look at Tycho.

Feeling sorry, "You might want to look for a man named Renz." She replied, "He might have the 'services' you're looking for."

"Where do I find him?" Tycho asked.

"Not on-world." She answered, "Check out Ohma-D'un, he might be there."

She got up from her chair, and stumbled a bit. She composed herself and walked towards the exit. Suddenly, she grabbed Tycho and leaned in towards his ear.

"You going to let a lady walk home alone at night?" She whispered.

The Alderaan beer was strong on her breath.

"I don't follow strange, drunk women home." Tycho replied.

"Oh c'mon!" She suggested, "Besides, who say's I'm drunk?"

Tycho thought about it for a moment, then got up with her. They exited the bar together, Tycho, more-or-less, holding her up as they walked.

One Standard Week Later: The Moon of Ohma-D'un:

Ohma-D'un, the largest moon of Naboo, dubbed the Water Moon because of its lush swamps filled with green vegetation and lively fauna. Apparently, Tycho learned, the supplies that fuel the resistance on Naboo have been smuggled to the moon, instead of Naboo herself; the smugglers would unload their cargo onto the swamp moon, then at certain times during its rotation, transport the cargo the short distance to Naboo, at a specified rendezvous site. This allowed the smugglers for the resistance to circumvent the tight security around the numerous spaceports in the city of Theed.

Tycho had landed on Ohma-D'un yesterday on a *Nune*-class Imperial shuttle with a company of stormtroopers; the stormtroopers were fitted with custom green-camouflage hardened-plastoid armour, so they would blend into the environment. A geospatial scan, performed by one of the orbiting *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers, of Ohma-D'un showed that there are scattered settlements on the swamp moon; official Imperial records indicate that the Gungan species inhabited the moon over a hundred years ago. Tycho has set a plan to scout and recon one of the settlements that came up on the geospatial survey.

The night was cold and dark; the sky was pitch black and filled with tiny white specks of stars. Tycho, accompanied by a company of camouflage stormtroopers, was trudging through the thick swamp. The swamp water was waist-high, and filled with dead vegetation and various other organic matter. Large, twisted trees that stood as tall as a building filled in the swamp. Sheets of organic mats of algae or other types of vegetation covered most of the surface of the water; amphibians, reptiles and other faunal life filled in the rest of the swamp. The swamp bubbled with methane produced

by various species of bacteria. Tycho decided to head west, towards the closest settlement, presumably occupied by Naboo resistance fighters. Following behind Tycho were over a hundred swamp-camouflaged stormtroopers, all armed with various types of blaster rifles. They moved in three parallel, single-file, lines; Tycho led the group. Tycho had his lightsaber at hand, but not activated; the light from the lightsaber blade would give away their position. Tycho looked back at the stormtroopers; their helmets allowed them to see in the dark.

Never thought I'd have to do this, Tycho thought.

Tycho walked forward, trying to keep as silent as possible. He scanned in front of him; no hint of danger. Suddenly, six huge fireballs erupted behind them, towards the east. The yellow-orange fireballs were massive, and rose into the air, as if in slow motion. The roar from the explosion was deafening. Everyone turned to stare at the rising fireball. The fireballs were so large that the tops of the surrounding trees were on fire and burning.

"Contact?" Tycho asked.

"Negative contact." A stormtrooper sergeant reported.

Everyone was on high alert. The stormtroopers were using their enhanced vision, provided by their helmets, to scan the direct vicinity. Tycho used the Force to sense his surroundings; the hairs on the back of his neck suddenly rose. Moments later, a torrent of repeater fire and laser cannon fire from the southwest erupted out of nowhere. The barrage of energy bolts hit a handful of stormtroopers outright, killing them, plunging their dead bodies into the thick, swamp water.

"Ambush!" The stormtrooper sergeant shouted out.

"Over there!" Tycho shouted, while pointing towards the source of the repeater fire.

Tycho activated his lightsaber; the crimson blade sounded with a *snap-hiss*, then a hum. Immediately he deflected three energy bolts fired his way. The stormtroopers trudged through the waist-high water, trying to get behind the cover of the large trees around them. The high water level, plus the organic-filled floor, made it hard to walk. The energy bolts perforated the bark of the trees, splintering and shattering them apart. Tycho immediately tried to run towards the source of the enemy fire, deflecting energy bolts as he did.

"Fire!" Tycho ordered, "Fire at will!"

The stormtroopers popped their heads out and fired their blaster rifles towards the general direction of the shooters. The torrent of energy bolts didn't relent. Tycho took cover behind one of the large trees; green energy bolts whizzed past him. Tycho deflected a few energy bolts that came his way, but he let most pass him by. The stormtroopers were firing wildly, and blindly, towards the source of the energy bolts; they didn't seem to have any affect. Suddenly, the stormtrooper sergeant trudged through the waist-high water, towards Tycho.

"We can't stay here long!" The stormtrooper sergeant informed.

Tycho looked towards the enemy location; it was quite far to run from where they were, "I know!"

"We've been made!" The stormtrooper sergeant continued, "We need to fall back, regroup, and come in from a different direction!"

Tycho thought about it for a moment, "Okay! Fall back towards the north!"

The stormtrooper sergeant nodded in agreement, then relayed the order. Tycho continued to deflect energy bolts from behind the tree. Tycho looked back to see the stormtroopers fall back towards the north; they were still firing their blaster rifles as they retreated. Tycho was the last one to leave; as soon as he moved away from the cover of the tree, he came under heavy fire. Tycho deactivated his lightsaber, and trudged through the waist-high swamp, headed north.

Suddenly, a bright purple particle beam, coming from the treetops, streaked through the air, and hit one of the retreating stormtroopers. The hot particle beam seared through the stormtrooper's plastoid armour, killing him instantly. The stormtroopers made it just under five hundred metres northward before coming under attack again. More and more purple particle beams streaked through the air, killing dozens of stormtroopers.

"Snipers!" Tycho shouted, "From the treetops!"

Hiding behind trees did little help; the hot plasma that composed the particle beam shot straight through the bark and wood. The stormtroopers instinctually fired their blaster rifles towards the treetops. Cries of fear and pain from the stormtroopers echoed in the swamp. Tycho ran forwards, trying to get to the snipers position; midway, he had to hide behind a tree. A particle beam shot straight at him, pierced

through the wood of the tree, and narrowly hit Tycho's head. The tree started to topple over; Tycho immediately ran over to the side, and watched it fall. The tree splashed in the water with a huge thud and crack.

Damn, Tycho thought.

Tycho came under fire once more; he immediately started heading north again, trudging through the waist-high water of the swamp. The stormtrooper sergeant started running towards him.

"We're sur—" The stormtrooper sergeant shouted before a particle beam shot through his helmet.

The stormtrooper sergeant's body toppled over into the water, and sank to the bottom. Tycho watched in disbelief. Suddenly, more repeater and laser cannon fire erupted from the south. The torrent of energy bolts coming from the south, and the particle beams from the north meant they were pinned down.

We're fracked, Tycho thought.

In the distance, Tycho could hear shouting and screaming, but not from the stormtroopers. He wasn't sure who they were from. The screaming intensified. Suddenly, reports of hostiles coming from the northwest started pouring in over his headset. Tycho was confused by the various reports, but believed them.

The coup de grâce, Tycho thought.

Tycho immediately started heading northwest, trying to get in front in order to fight. He activated his lightsaber, and used the Force to push his way forward. Stormtroopers were dying left and right. Tycho deflected several more blaster bolts coming from the incoming hostiles; the blaster bolts ricocheted into the water or into the surrounding trees. Suddenly, he saw who the hostiles were; they were a mix of humans armed with blaster rifles, and Gungans armed with their own traditional weapons. The first Gungan came directly towards him; Tycho immediately raged out, and decapitated him. Another came from the side, and grabbed onto Tycho. Tycho immediately elbowed the Gungan in the face, making him let go; he then proceeded to kick the Gungan in the chest, and plunge his lightsaber through his ribcage.

"Come on!" Tycho taunted.

Suddenly, a torrent of blaster bolts were fired in his direction. Tycho deflected the first three, then let the next two pass harmless by. Tycho rose his lightsaber once

more to strike at an oncoming resistance fighter, but a particle beam struck the crimson blade. The blade immediately surged with excess power, and violently shut off; the lightsaber shot out of Tycho's hands and fell into the water. Tycho screamed in pain.

"Frack!" Tycho screamed.

Suddenly, the first resistance fighter, a human male, was on top of him. Tycho immediately punched him in the face, breaking his nose. Another was on him; Tycho got punched in the gut hard. Tycho grunted in pain, then used the Force to push the guy off of him and into a tree. A third was on him instantly, and grabbed Tycho and forced his head underwater. Tycho struggled for his life, trying to punch the guy. His head was underwater for nearly a minute. Suddenly, the guy let go, letting Tycho rise out of the water and take a much needed breath. Tycho cleared the swamp water out of his eyes, and looked around; he was surrounded by a dozen armed resistance fighters, both human and Gungan. Tycho didn't say anything. Suddenly, a voice from behind:

"Take him." A female voice ordered.

One of the resistance fighters suddenly walked forward, towards Tycho, and cracked the butt of his rifle against Tycho's skull. The strike was so hard that it instantly knocked him unconscious, and into the water.

The Next Day:

A sudden splash of ice-cold water woke Tycho up. He was tied down with lasercuffs at the wrists and ankles, onto a chair. Tycho's head was pounding, and arching; a steady stream of blood gushed out from the wound where he was hit in the head with the butt of the rifle. He was cold, and shivering; his vision was blurry, and he felt tired and groggy. Tycho let out a moan.

"He's awake." A man in a deep voice said.

"Good." A female voice replied.

"What is this?" Tycho asked.

There was a pause, "This is us holding you captive." The female said.

Suddenly, the man punched Tycho in the gut. Tycho felt a sudden surge of pain, and felt like vomiting. He couldn't breathe all of a sudden, not even to cry out in pain.

"Enough." The female replied in a stern voice.

"He's an Imp, and a Sith at that." The male voice replied, "Why should we care?"

"If we treat them the same as they treat us, then we are no better than they are."
The female voice reasoned.

The male let out a growl, "Sounds like gibberish to me."

Tycho finally regained some of his composure, and started to look up at the two beings in the room. Their faces were still blurry, but he could see that the male was a rather large human, but the female remained hidden within the shadows. The room was dark, with only one light above his head; the walls seemed very close, indicating a relatively small room.

"You won't get any information out of me." Tycho informed.

The male cracked his knuckles, "We'll see."

"Wait." The female said; she then turned back to Tycho, "Why so resistant?"

"Why so serious?" Tycho countered.

Suddenly, the male punched Tycho in the jaw, "Smart mouth, huh?" He shouted.

Tycho's jaw was throbbing from the pain; the shock of it amplified the pain. He was seeing stars again, and bleeding from out the corner of his mouth.

"Hold!" The female ordered.

"This is garbage!" The male shouted.

"Get out!" The female ordered; there was a pause between the two, and then, "I gave you an order. Get out!"

The male stomped out of the room, grumbling about something that Tycho couldn't hear, or comprehend. Tycho slowly rose his head upright again. His body ached, battered and bruised, and his muscles were sore. Tycho could hear the woman walking around the room, then suddenly, she was standing right in front of him, facing him. His vision was still a little blurry, and he couldn't focus his eyes properly. She leaned in with a moist cloth, and cleaned the blood from around Tycho's mouth. As she leaned in, he could see her face. His eyes widened in surprise.

"I know you." Tycho replied.

The face in front of her was that of a young woman, probably only twenty standard years old. Her face was beautiful, with full lips and brown eyes; her hair was full, lush, flowing and brown with a streak of white on the left side. She finished cleaning his wounds, then stood back up, turned around, threw the cloth off to the side, and returned to the shadows. She leaned against the wall; the dim lights obscuring her features.

"What's the point, I already know how you are." Tycho replied again, "I thought I recognized your voice."

"That you should have." The female replied, "Since you know who I am, you know who I'm fighting for."

Tycho nodded, "You're Marasiah Fel, heir to the deposed throne, Imperial Knight, and, I presume, leader of this sorry bunch."

Marasiah Fel was the daughter of the deposed Emperor, Roan Fel. She had been trained to be an Imperial Knight, a faction of Force-practitioners that were loyal to Roan Fel and the Empire, as well as worked for the Imperial Mission, an organization that spread the influence of the Empire through diplomatic means by providing aid to those in need. At the conclusion of the Sith-Imperial War, Darth Krayt and the One Sith Order annexed the throne from Roan Fel, claiming it for themselves. The Empire split between the two factions: one loyal to Roan Fel, the other following the One Sith.

"This 'sorry bunch' managed to eliminate over half your troopers, and capture you." Marasiah Fel countered.

Tycho nodded, "Point taken."

"But you're wrong about one thing." Marasiah Fel informed.

"Oh yeah, about what?" Tycho asked.

"I'm not the leader of this 'sorry bunch'." She answered.

"Really?" Tycho said in a genuinely surprised voice, "That's hard to believe."

"Really?" She asked, "Why?"

"Cause of who you are." Tycho answered, "There's no way you're here, and not giving the orders."

"Fair enough." She replied, "I only recently came here to help the Naboo."

"I didn't know that Roan Fel and the Empire cared about Naboo." Tycho countered.

"We care much for the people of Naboo." She explained, "Once they were finally forced to confront the Sith in open warfare, we couldn't do nothing. Any resistance to the corrupted Empire and diabolical Sith is worth our time and effort."

"Nice." Tycho whispered.

"I hate to get right to business, but we do have things to talk about." Marasiah Fel replied, "First things first: how did you find the settlement?"

Tycho chuckled, "I'm not tell you anything."

"Really? Cause I can let Bruno back in here and let him do whatever he wants to you." Marasiah Fel threatened.

Tycho laughed, "Empty threats aren't your thing, your Highness."

"The Imperial Knights may follow the light-side of the Force, but that doesn't mean we're Jedi." Marasiah Fel informed, "We have... other... means of persuasion."

"Bring it on. I like a challenge." Tycho countered.

Marasiah Fel walked around the room, then took something from a drawer. She returned, and placed something around Tycho's head.

"What is this?" Tycho asked.

Marasiah Fel shook her head, then left the room. Suddenly, the lights went out. The room was pitch black; the only light came from underneath the door Marasiah Fel walked out of. The room started to get colder all of a sudden. Tycho began to shiver in his chair; the robe and clothes were wet, making it even more unbearable.

"This is it!" Tycho screamed, "This is nothing!"

Tycho closed his eyes and tried to use the Force to keep his body warm. Suddenly, a shock of electricity surged through his body. The electrical shock wasn't life threatening, but it was enough to break his concentration. Suddenly, more shocks surged through his body; the shocks, although mildly unpleasant, were at irregular intervals. This was a well known technique to deal with Force-practitioners; irregular electric shocks caused the Force-user to lose their concentration, while not being able to block out the external stimuli. Basically, it hindered the ability to use the Force.

Frack, Tycho thought.

The electric shocks continued at irregular intervals. The room got colder and colder. Tycho's muscles began to seize; they spasm uncontrollably. Tycho's teeth began to chatter from the cold, and suddenly, he felt very sleepy. His eyelids became heavy, even though the electric shocks were keeping him awake.

* * *

Tycho was incredibly tired, very cold, and his body wasn't functioning as it should be. The electric shocks weren't just hindering his ability to use the Force, it was pissing him off too. Unable to sleep, use the Force, or control his body, Tycho was becoming infuriated. His wrists and ankles were killing him because during his fits of anger, he tried to pull the lasercuffs apart; the lasers ended up cutting into his flesh a little. Tycho was coughing too; his lungs felt as if they were filled with fluid. His joints ached, and his muscles were tired, bruised and sore. His jaw hurt more now than it did after that guy, Bruno, punched him.

Frack my life, Tycho thought.

Suddenly, the door opened, and a bright light shown in. The light was blinding, and Tycho cringed at the sight. Silhouetted in the door way was a female figure, presumably Marasiah Fel. She walked in, and turned on the lamp above his head. Tycho cringed again. Marasiah closed the door behind her, and stood in front of Tycho. She took the thing off his head, and placed it back in the drawer. The room got warmer, and his muscles didn't twitch as much as it had previously.

"How's it been?" Marasiah rhetorically asked, "Fun?"

"Frack you." Tycho whispered.

Marasiah Fel laughed a little, "I thought it would be easy for you."

"What time is it?" Tycho asked, "How long has it been?"

"That's the thing about your... treatment, you lose your sense of time." Marasiah Fel informed.

"How long?" Tycho asked.

"Two hours."

Tycho couldn't believe it. He figured at least a day, probably more, "Two fracking hours!"

Marasiah Fel smiled, "That's correct."

Tycho sagged in his chair a little, and groaned. Tycho shook his head in disbelief, and depression. He closed his eyes in order to save his dignity from further embarrassment.

"Don't feel too bad, most beings crack in less than an hour." Marasiah Fel informed.

Tycho looked back at her. He noticed that she was holding a datapad, "What's that?"

Marasiah Fel looked at the datapad, "Well, while you were in here enjoying our deluxe spa package, I was doing some research." She informed, "Specifically, about you."

"Huh?" Tycho replied.

"Yes, quite a fascinating story you've got here." She continued; she looked down to the datapad and read, "Tycho Xar: thirty-two standard years old, born on Coruscant, where you were immediately brought into the Jedi Order; dedicated hero by nineteen, then suddenly, you just up and left." She looked back up at Tycho, "I wonder why." She inquired.

Tycho shook his head defiantly.

"You just dropped off the grid after you left the Order; then, all of a sudden, you turn up fighting for the Sith." Marasiah finished, "How does that work?"

Tycho didn't say anything; he just looked blankly at the floor.

"You weren't born a Sith." Marasiah started, "So you made a choice to join them; an unusual choice for a Jedi."

"Lots of Jedi turned towards the Sith." Tycho countered.

"True, but your profile doesn't seem like the type." Marasiah Fel inquired, "No reports of bad behaviour, uncontrolled emotions, unlawful conduct..." Marasiah chuckled, "... not even a parking ticket. You had none of the usual signs."

"What can I say, I'm unique." Tycho replied.

"Funny guy." Marasiah Fel dryly said, "So, why did you join the Sith ranks? Better wardrobe?"

Tycho laughed a little, "Let's just say that I had a different opinion than the Jedi."

"Well, let's just say, that I think your full of crap." Marasiah Fel countered.

"Tough." Tycho replied.

"Really? You really want to go through another two hours of that?" Marasiah Fel threatened, "'Cause I'm telling you, you won't last another two hours."

Tycho looked away. Marasiah Fel stormed forward, and grabbed Tycho by the jaw, and forced him to look at her.

"Why did you join the Sith?" She asked in a stern voice.

Tycho tried to move his head, but couldn't get free, "'Cause they were the only ones that could bring stability to this galaxy!"

Marasiah Fel let go, and laughed for quite some time, "You think that the goal of the Sith is to bring peace to the galaxy?"

"I didn't say 'peace', I said 'stability'." Tycho corrected, "There's a difference."

Marasiah Fel stopped laughing, and looked back down at Tycho, "Why?"

"Why what?" Tycho asked.

"Why do you think the Sith will bring stability?" She asked.

Tycho thought about it for a moment, "The Sith at least fight for what they want, for what they believe." He begun, "The Sith are the only force that can unify the galaxy, even though it's through war." Marasiah listened, "The Jedi... they walk through life with the blinders on. The Jedi are the cause for most of the galaxies troubles, and they don't even know it. Their false sense of nobility, of privilege, of wisdom, of righteousness, is the sole cause for the galaxies hardships."

"You truly believe that?" She asked.

"I've lived with the Jedi; I've been one." Tycho answered, "They are dogmatic fools, policing a galaxy that wasn't theirs to police in the first place."

Marasiah thought about it for a moment, "Point taken."

"I don't care if you believe me or not." Tycho Xar replied.

Marasiah Fel approached Tycho, and kneeled down in front of him. She smiled, and looked into his green eyes.

"I believe that you believe that." Marasiah Fel replied, "However, I know you are wrong."

Tycho shook his head, "Typical."

Marasiah Fel grabbed Tycho by the jaw, and forced him to look at her, "No. Your philosophy on the Jedi is a common one in today's galaxy... but I know you're wrong about the Sith."

"What do you know about it?" Tycho bitterly replied.

Marasiah Fel paused for a moment. Suddenly, she stood up, "I'll show you."

She walked around Tycho, and let the lasercuffs around his wrists go. Tycho was completely surprised. Bruno immediately rushed in:

"What are you doing?" Bruno shouted.

"It's fine." Marasiah Fel assured.

"You are not letting an Imp go!" Bruno shouted.

"We're not letting him go." She assured. She looked back at Tycho, "We're removing the blinders."

Tycho, undoing the lasercuffs around his ankles, looked up at Marasiah. She was looking down at him; her eyes pierced through his. Bruno stormed out of the small room, and shouted something. Tycho finally got the lasercuffs around his ankles off. Then, Bruno and three other men armed with blaster rifles stormed into the room; they pointed their blaster rifles at him. Instinctually, he raised his hands.

"Wait!" Marasiah Fel ordered.

"If you are talking the Imp for a walk, my men are coming along to make sure nothing happens." Bruno replied.

"Okay." Marasiah Fel agreed. She looked over at Tycho, "Alright, come on now."

Marasiah Fel led the way out. Tycho reluctantly stood up; he stared at Bruno, who was pointing a blaster rifle directly at his face. He stood still, just for a moment. Marasiah Fel looked back.

"Come." She said in a stern voice, "We have much to show you."

Tycho followed Marasiah Fel out of the room. Bruno, and his three goons, trailed Tycho, with their blaster rifles trained on him the entire time. As Tycho walked out of the small room, he noticed that it was a separate room from the rest of the settlement; more of a tool shed, than a building. The settlement he was in was built on one of the few dry places on the swamp moon; the buildings were made of wood, and whatever other organic material they could scrounge around out there. Using the existing flora for building material made it particularly difficult to pick up on scanners, except when you're specifically looking for it.

Various humans and Gungans were mingling around the settlement, performing a variety of tasks and errands. As Tycho walked with Marasiah, he was rubbing his sore wrists. The dirt he was walking on was soggy and muddy, but it was drier than the swamp itself. As he looked around the settlement, the humans and Gungans he passed by stared at him with angry, or confused, or surprised eyes. The humans looked familiar to him; in fact, they were part of the 1st stormtrooper division, dubbed 'The Big Red One' after their famous shoulder patches which bears a large red one symbol. The 1st stormtrooper division defected over to the Empire-in-exile shortly after Roan Fel took Bastion; they swore allegiance to Roan Fel, and were assigned to Marasiah Fel as her own personal division. They didn't say anything, but Tycho could feel their emotions through the Force. As he walked further, he noticed a makeshift prison outside, built out of wooden bars, holding only a dozen stormtroopers. They were sitting down in their small cells, with their helmets off. Tycho heard a loud roar from engines, and then looked up into the greyish-blue sky; a white and grey YT-2400 light freighter with a large red-diamond logo lifted off from the settlement, and took off into the upper atmosphere.

Maybe that was Renz, Tycho thought.

"Where are we going?" Tycho asked, "You're not leading me out to the middle of nowhere to execute me, are you?"

Marasiah Fel shook her head, "No, only to open your eyes."

Tycho looked at Marasiah; she was wearing a tight-fitting, black and green gown, minus the typical robe, with matching high-heels. The outfit highlighted her fantastic athletic figure; no doubt from years of training to be an Imperial Knight. Suddenly, an overpowering stench hit Tycho. The foul odour was so great, tears started to well up in Tycho's eyes. Marasiah Fel covered her mouth and nose with her hand to hinder the smell; Tycho did the same. Bugs relentlessly buzzed around the area; some even bit Tycho's sore skin. Suddenly, Tycho realized why.

"This is Sith stability, Tycho." Marasiah Fel informed.

Tycho was completely breathless and shocked. In front of him were massive piles of dead, rotten Gungans. Huge mountainous piles of half decayed, putrefied, oozing corpses of the amphibious beings stretched out as far as he could see. The Gungans were simply dumped in the swamp; one piled on top the other. The area was cleared of trees, allowing more bodies to be dumped here. At the base of the rotten pile of bodies, the swamp water mixed with the blood and decomposing flesh, yielding a putrid, foul mix that wrenched at the stomach. Atop the piles, bugs hovered and buzzed about, eating away at the decomposing flesh. The humidity and warm climate of the swamp moon just made things worse, amplifying the decomposition process. As Tycho looked out at the vicious sight, one of the dead Gungans caught his eye. The Gungan, probably a female, had her tongue sticking out of her half rotten mouth; her big, eye, dead eyes stared directly at him. Her swollen, decayed, greyish-tan flesh was oozing and liquefying almost in front of him, with bugs picking at her.

"What is this?" Tycho asked in a shaky voice.

"What does it look like?" Marasiah Fel asked, "This is just one of many killing fields all over the moon, as well as Naboo."

"Killing fields?" Tycho asked.

"Mistress Amelia ordered the genocide of Gungans after they opposed Imperial occupation and governance." Marasiah Fel explained, "The Gungans were made an example of, according to the Empire... to the Sith."

Tycho couldn't stop staring out into the massive piles of dead Gungans. This was like nothing he had ever seen or experienced before. The putrid, rotting, almost liquefying flesh almost made him want to vomit. Some of the bodies were more decayed than others; some were mere skeletons with chunks of flesh loosely attached to

dirty, tan-brown bones. The bugs were particularly horrendous; they constantly bit at Tycho's flesh, and the buzzing sound made it hard for Tycho to hear anything else.

"They weren't the only ones." Marasiah Fel continued, "The Mon Calamari, the Ewoks, the Duros, the Sullustans; all were made examples of by Mistress Amelia."

"How many?" Tycho asked.

"How many what?" Marasiah Fel asked.

"How many are here, dead?" Tycho asked.

"This field alone harbours over one hundred and fifty million dead Gungans." Marasiah Fel informed, "Hard to believe you can stack that many bodies in one place, huh?"

Tycho was completely speechless.

"There are dozens more like this around the moon." Marasiah Fel continued, "Double that on Naboo."

"This is... so... vicious." Tycho replied.

"This is stability according to the Sith." Marasiah Fel explained, "Kill and massacre anyone and everyone who doesn't conform to their ideals. This is not the work of beings who want stability in the galaxy, it's the work of mass murders who want power only for themselves!"

Tycho paused for a moment, "One hundred and fifty million." Tycho whispered to himself.

"The Mon Calamari were the first to be subjugated to Sith wrath, after they helped the Galactic Alliance steal the *Imperious* from their shipyards; after they killed Gial Gahan, a former member of the Triumvirate, they fought back." Marasiah Fel informed, "The Gungans probably got it the worst."

"How?" Tycho asked in a stunned voice.

"Imperial stormtroopers, and armoured walkers just started trolling the forests and lakes, killing everyone in sight." Marasiah Fel explained, "The Bosses were first, then they started killing everyone. Pretty simple when you get right down to it."

Tycho, still shocked, "How long has this been happening?"

"The genocide of the Gungans started maybe a month ago." Marasiah Fel explained, "They were murdered with incredible speed. Mistress Amelia wanted the retribution to be swift. Now they're almost completely extinct."

Tycho shook his head again, as if they was going to change what his eyes were seeing.

"That's not even the whole story." Marasiah Fel informed, "Everything the Sith have told you was a lie."

"What do you mean?" Tycho whispered.

Marasiah explained, "The Sith were the ones to start the war; they were the ones who sabotaged the Yuuzhan Vong terraforming project. They framed the Yuuzhan Vong, using the galaxy's fear of them as a catalyst to start a war with the Galactic Alliance. The Sith-Imperial War was a sham."

A tear ran down Tycho's left cheek; his eyes filled with tears. After a moment, Tycho finally turned around, to look away from the gut wrenching sight. This stomach was reeling from the overwhelming odour; the horrible sight he just witness was burned into his mind. He couldn't get rid of it, no matter how hard he tried. Tycho fought back the urge to vomit, but soon failed. Like a hurricane, it all came out. Marasiah Fel turned back around, and patted Tycho on the back. She handed him a cloth; he took it, and cleaned himself up.

"This happens to everyone." Marasiah Fel consoled.

Tycho immediately stood back up, and started marching towards the settlement. Bruno rose his blaster rifle, prepared to shoot, but Marasiah Fel stopped him. She ran after him, catching up with him in no time.

"Where do you think you're going?" She asked.

"Away from here." Tycho answered.

Marasiah Fel jumped in front of Tycho, stopping him in his tracks. She looked deep into his eyes.

"Hey, this is reality here!" Marasiah Fel screamed, "We aren't fighting for governance, or for honour, or for freedom! We are fighting for our right to live!"

Marasiah pushed her finger into Tycho's chest. Angrily, Tycho pushed Marasiah out of his way. She immediately turned around, and used the Force to slam him back into the muddy ground. Tycho hit the soggy ground hard; drops of mud splashed onto his face and body. She walked over to Tycho, and placed her right boot on his chest; she looked down on him.

"The blinders are off." Marasiah Fel informed, "There are no excuses now."

"What are you talking about?" Tycho asked.

"Are you just going to lay there and protect the Sith, even after you know what they've done? What atrocities they've already committed?" Marasiah Fel asked.

"What the frack do you want from me?" Tycho screamed.

"Your help." Marasiah Fel sternly answered.

She took her boot off his chest, and held out her hand. Tycho took it, and she pulled him up.

"I've read your profile, remember?" Marasiah Fel informed, "You were characterized as a true warrior; a Knight in the strictest sense." Marasiah pointed towards the killing field, "That is not a warrior's task; not a knightly deed. The Sith are wrong!"

Tycho looked over at the distant killing field once more. The sight of it made him want to vomit again. Tycho shook his head in confusion; he looked towards the ground, as if that would clear things up for him.

She's right, Tycho thought.

Marasiah Fel stared at Tycho as he thought about the situation. She had her hands on her waist, impatiently waiting for his response. Tycho looked back up to Marasiah; he looked her straight in the eyes.

"What do you want from me?" Tycho asked.

Marasiah sighed in relief, "We have a plan."

Tycho nodded his head, then walked back towards the settlement. He walked with his head down, as if he were ashamed. In reality, he was in deep thought about his philosophical choices. Bruno immediately ran up to Marasiah Fel and grabbed her by the arm.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" Bruno demanded.

"He's agreed to help with our plan." Marasiah Fel explained.

"Oh yeah? What if he's just fracking with you?" Bruno countered.

Marasiah looked back at Tycho, then back to Bruno, "I sensed no deception in him."

"You *sensed* no deception?" Bruno sarcastically repeated, "No offence, but I don't care what you sense."

Marasiah Fel snapped back to Bruno, "This isn't the first time a former Sith has help us in the past." Marasiah Fel countered, "The Force knows we need all the help we can get."

Bruno turned to his three armed goons, "Follow him. Don't let him out of your sight. If he tries anything, shoot first and ask questions later."

His goons nodded their heads, and ran after Tycho. Bruno soon left after him as well, leaving Marasiah alone. She looked up at the sky; it was cloudy, and the wind started to pick up. Goosebumps rose on her bare arms.

"This is going to be one hell of a day." Marasiah Fel whispered to herself.

Three Standard Days Later: City of Theed, Naboo:

Tycho was released by the resistance fighters, pretending to have escaped instead. He ran through the swamps, trying to find any sign of Imperial presence; within a day, he ran into a small, only a dozen, group of stormtroopers that managed to evade capture during the ambush. They retreated back to their backup pickup-site, and got shuttled off-world. After a day of medical attention and debrief, Tycho was sent back to Theed to report on the matter.

The city of Theed was in an uproar; street fighting doubled while he was captured. Several columns of black smoke rose into the air; the once elegant and beautiful buildings, were now ruins. Hulking AT-AHTs and AT-RCTs were the main bulk of the fighting force, indiscriminately firing salvo after salvo of energy bolts into buildings and at beings on the brick streets. Tycho, having landed within the Palace Plaza, the wide, open avenue that connected the Theed Royal Palace to the rest of the main city. As Tycho descended from the ramp of the *Nune*-class Imperial shuttle, Darth Vadic was awaiting his return.

"I hear your little adventure has been most taxing." Darth Vadic replied.

Darth Vadic started walking towards the Theed Royal Palace; Tycho followed. Tycho looked over at Darth Vadic with angry eyes, "It was not all for nothing."

"How so?" Darth Vadic inquired.

"When I escaped from my captives..." Tycho started, "... I managed to eliminate former-queen of Naboo, whom was hiding on Ohma-D'un." Tycho lied.

Darth Vadic rubbed his chin, "Yes, I have heard as much." He started, "An uproar, as you can see," pointing to the city, "has begun. News of the dead monarchy has created a great disturbance to the beings here."

"What is the next move?" Tycho asked.

"We will continue fighting the rebels here." Darth Vadic informed, "You, however, have other things to attend to."

"Such as?"

"Mistress Amelia has requested an audience with you." Darth Vadic informed.

"Concerning?" Tycho inquired.

"Matters that are not to be discussed in the open." Darth Vadic replied.

Tycho nodded, and followed Darth Vadic into the Theed Royal Palace; the massive palace was impressively spacious and luxurious. They walked through the decadent polished marble halls until they reached the Throne Room; they were silent the entire time. Finally, upon entering the Throne Room, Darth Vadic sat down on the throne, sitting in front of a large marble table that housed a holographic projector. Tycho stood at the side of Darth Vadic. Darth Vadic punched in a series of numbers, and then suddenly, a holographic image of Lady Amelia appeared. The holographic image was the typical blue-white grainy image.

"Greetings, Mistress Amelia." Darth Vadic welcomed, "Knight Xar has, fortunately, returned from his ordeal on Ohma-D'un."

Tycho bowed his head, "My Lady."

"So good to see that you are unharmed." Lady Amelia replied, "The Gungans are a primitive, and savage species. I would have thought they would have killed you outright, but I'm glad to see otherwise."

"Yes, my Lady." Tycho replied.

"Alas, we must continue onto business." Lady Amelia continued, "After the destruction of the exiled-Imperial's base on Bastion, our intelligence has reported that they relocated to Dantooine." Lady Amelia explained, "The whereabouts of deposed Emperor Roan Fel is of the utmost importance. Until now, we had no idea where he was hiding; however, recent intelligence gathered reported that Roan Fel plans to travel to the Hapes Consortium in order to strike an alliance with the neutral world."

Tycho listened to the report, "What is it you require, my Lady?"

"Travel to the Hapes Consortium, and kill Roan Fel." Lady Amelia said in a cold voice, "With their Emperor dead, they will be demoralized, and easy to defeat. We will wash their filth from the galaxy, once and for all."

"The exiled-Imperials will still have a claim to the throne, my Lady." Tycho informed, referring to Marasiah Fel.

"It is no concern of yours. We have ways of dealing with her." Lady Amelia replied, "You just get to the Hapes Consortium."

"Will I be going alone?" Tycho asked.

"No, Lord Nihl will accompany you to the Hapes Consortium." Lady Amelia informed, "He will act as my eyes and ears on the mission."

"Understood, my Lady." Tycho replied, with a bow of the head.

"Make no mistake, Knight Xar." Lady Amelia warned, "Roan Fel is a worthy adversary, and will require all your skills to eliminate."

"Of course, my Lady." Tycho replied.

The holographic image of Amelia suddenly disappeared. Tycho looked down towards the table, in deep thought. The sudden appearance of the long-sought after deposed Emperor Roan Fel was intriguing. He pondered the situation carefully. Suddenly, Darth Vadid rose from his throne, and looked over at Tycho.

"A shuttle is waiting to take you to the Hapes Consortium." Darth Vadic informed.

Tycho shook his head, "The Hapes Consortium is a large region of independent space, consisting of over sixty worlds. How am I going to find Roan Fel?"

"There is a data package on the shuttle for you." Darth Vadic informed.

Tycho nodded his head, and exited the Throne Room, heading for the Palace Plaza.

Exposure

Three Standard Days Later: Orelon, The Hapes Cluster:

Darth Nihl, a former Nagai warlord turned Sith Lord, was Lady Amelia's new Fist and current Supreme Commander of the Imperial Armed Forces; second only to Lady Amelia and High Moff Morlish Veed, he holds the highest title within the Imperial military structure. Both Darth Nihl and Tycho, along with a company of stormtroopers, approached the outskirts world of Orelon, near the Transitory Mists. Orelon was an odd world within the Hapes Cluster; a volcanically active world, the planet was covered with a thick ocean of basaltic lava that covered over eighty-percent of its surface; the world was constantly bubbling and turning. So far from its primary star, scientists were baffled by Orelon's volcanic activity. Scientific readings performed by probes show incredibly high levels of radioactivity at the surface, which is the most probably source of Orelon's source of heat. Thin crusts of black rock floated atop its surface, while its surface temperature sourced over a thousand degrees centigrade. The world was completely uninhabitable. Orelon also had an unusually strong, quadrupolar magnetic field that even encompassed its nearby orbiting moon. The moon of Orelon was unusually large, almost sixty-percent of its primary's diameter. While Orelon was a volcanic world, its moon was completely frozen. Plunged in perpetual darkness, the moon is coated with a thick layer of water ice; temperatures varied from just above freezing, to well below minus one hundred degrees centigrade. Together, the two planetary bodies were commonly referred to as the "Antagonistic Pair".

Darth Nihl, in the pilot's seat, brought the *Sigma*-class long-ranged shuttle, a much larger and more luxurious shuttle than the *Nune*-class, towards the moon of Orelon. The large vessel plunged into the moon's thin atmosphere; the shuttle barely rocked or jerked as it descended. Tycho looked at the sensors for any settlements or colonies on the icy moon's surface; thousands of years ago, this hidden planetary body adjacent to the Transitory Mists, a region of ionized space surrounding the Hapes Cluster, was used as an outpost for space pirates that roamed Hapes. Later, pirates operating within the Hapes Cluster would use the moon as a detention centre, holding slaves, prisoners, or other beings of interest in place. Although the pirates were gone, their complexes remained. Meanwhile, as Tycho was checking for settlements, atmospheric readouts came online.

"The air is breathable, but just barely." Tycho informed.

Darth Nihl didn't say a thing. He simply stared out the windshield, looking towards the shiny, glittery icy surface.

"Breathing the air would give us one hell of a headache after a while though."
Tycho continued, "We'd better bring breathers with us."

"Fine." Darth Nihl replied in a deep, growly voice.

Tycho looked over, then back towards the monitors. Before they landed, Tycho wanted to learn more about his opponents. The first dossier he pulled up was of Roan Fel, deposed and exiled Emperor. As he read through his history, he came across two names that he had only heard of in passing before. The first was Imperial Knight Ganner Krieg; he seemed to be most famous for participating in the destruction of Darth Krayt, former Emperor of the Sith-Imperial alliance. The second was Imperial Master Antares Draco; the most loyal servant to the exiled-Emperor, he too aided in the destruction of Darth Krayt, and as rumour has it, lover of Marasiah Fel.

The lucky bastard, Tycho thought.

Suddenly, one of the permacrete buildings that had once been used by the Empire over a hundred years previous came up. The building, more of a bunker really, was only the surface expression of a much larger complex that ran deep into the crust of the icy moon.

"Got it." Tycho informed.

Darth Nihl banked the *Sigma*-class long-ranged shuttle hard right, bringing the shuttle towards the former-Imperial complex. They were approaching at incredible speed.

"Fitting that Fel would use an old Imperial complex to hide." Tycho nervously said.

Darth Nihl coolly set the long-ranged shuttle down on the icy surface of the moon. There wasn't much topography on the moon; except for some highlands and depressions, the icy moon's surface was relatively flat. The icy surface was incredibly slippery, and coated the entire surface of the moon. Darth Nihl lowered the rear boarding ramp, letting the stormtroopers exit first. Tycho was the next to descend down the ramp, followed by Darth Nihl; both were wearing complete astro-suits. The atmospheric pressure, according to the sensors Tycho monitors during the shuttles descent, was just under half of standard pressure; the temperature at the surface was a cool minus thirty degrees centigrade.

"This way." Tycho pointed.

They were fairly close to the former Imperial complex. The stormtroopers fell behind Darth Nihl and Tycho; above them, towards the sky, was an incredible aurora of blue and green lights. The ionized space of the Transitory Mists, coupled with the unusually strong magnetic field from Orelon, made for some spectacular auroras. Tycho was in awe for a moment, then snapped back to the task at hand. Within minutes, they reached the airlock doors of the former Imperial complex. The airlock door closed behind them, and the room immediately began decompression procedures. The air inside the room fogged and hissed loudly. After five minutes, the inner airlock door finally opened. Tycho and Darth Nihl immediately removed the astro-suits they were wearing.

"Where do you think he is?" Tycho asked.

"I don't know." Darth Nihl answered, "But he probably already knows we're here."

The long-haired, white and black tattooed Nagai took his sabre-cane, and started walking into the complex. Darth Nihl had an artificial right arm; it was replaced with a Yuuzhan Vong biot, that was black and grungy. Darth Nihl wore his typical armour attire, the one he's worn almost throughout his career as a Sith Lord. Tycho removed his black durasteel lightsaber from off his utility belt, and followed; the stormtroopers followed Tycho, armed with a variety of blaster rifles. The corridors were made of permacrete, and were thinly coated by water ice. It was dark and chilly inside the complex, cold enough to see your own breath. Tycho laboured hard; he wasn't sure if it was nerves, or the cold, but he had a hard time breathing.

They descended down several flights of stairs until they reached the main detention hall. The detention hall was a large, wide open room, with several small cages lining either side, facing each other. The detention hall was empty, supposedly, and was the coldest room in the entire complex. Tycho looked back up at the fifty or so stormtroopers behind him.

"Go back upstairs and check the other rooms." Tycho ordered, "Call in anything suspicious."

The stormtroopers nodded, and then climbed up the durasteel stairs they just came down. The boots they were wearing clanked loudly as they walked upstairs; the clanking echoed in the large detention hall. Darth Nihl stood at the entrance to the detention hall, then looked at Tycho.

"Know something I don't?" Darth Nihl asked.

Tycho shook his head, "Just a precaution."

Darth Nihl then turned and walked into the detention hall; the room was longer than it was wide. The end of the detention hall was covered in shadows, plunged in darkness. Confidently, Darth Nihl walked through the detention hall; Tycho followed, keeping a watch out. Suddenly, the power generator turned back online; the lights in the detention hall started to flicker on and off. Darth Nihl and Tycho looked around, confused by the sudden activity.

"What's going on?" Darth Nihl asked.

Suddenly, the entrance to the detention hall, the one they entered through, slammed shut; a thick durasteel blast door descended and sealed in the room. After a few moments, the lights returned to normal, and stayed on. The end of the hall, once shrouded in shadows, was now completely lit. There, stood deposed Emperor Roan Fel, smiling. Roan Fel was an older man, although he was still physically fit. He wore a black, ribbed body glove, with black plastoid armour over top, covered with black robes. His face had some wrinkles, but his hair was still black, except for a white streak that ran across his hair on the left side. His blue eyes still showed the determination and strength of a younger man.

Suddenly, from the second floor of the detention hall, two silver-bladed lightsabers activated. The *snap-hiss* from the two lightsabers echoed within the walls of the detention hall. Standing on the top floor were Master Antares Draco, and Imperial Knight Ganner Krieg, wearing the typical crimson armour of the Imperial Knights. The crimson Imperial armour was unique; it was mainly made of plastoid, but had phrik, a lightsaber resistant metal, weaved into its matrix. They also wore cortosis, a material that could deactivate a lightsaber for about two minutes, weaved gauntlets on their right forearms. Master Antares Draco was a fairly young man, with short, curly black hair. He had a strong face, with thick black eyebrows, and even blacker eyes. He had a scar just under his eye; a distinguishing mark. His body was tough and muscular. Imperial Knight Ganner Krieg, on the other hand, was more elegant. His face was soft, and unassuming; his long, lush red hair, coupled with his beautiful green eyes, made him popular among women, one in particular. Every bit as athletic, and strong as Antares Draco, he had become a prominent Imperial Knight. Darth Nihl stared at Roan Fel with rage-filled eyes; the red and sulphur-yellow iris' pierced through Roan Fel.

"Bold of you, pretender." Darth Nihl replied.

"This is only the beginning," Roan Fel countered.

Darth Nihl activated his own yorik coral sabre-cane; the crimson blade made a vicious *snap-hiss* that echoed throughout the detention hall. Tycho activated his own black durasteel lightsaber. Suddenly, Tycho pointed the tip of his crimson blade towards Darth Nihl.

"Surrender, Lord Nihl, or face certain death." Tycho threatened.

Darth Nihl looked behind him, staring at Tycho. Darth Nihl growled at the treachery, "All death is certain, traitor." Darth Nihl countered, "I should have known you were too weak for the Sith ideal."

"The Sith are lost beings in the galaxy, tearing its soul to pieces." Tycho explained.

"And you think these pathetic Imperial Knights are the answer?" Darth Nihl countered.

"Probably not, but they are the lesser to two evils." Tycho answered.

"So be it, coward." Darth Nihl finished, "Lady Amelia figured as much."

With lightning fast speed, Darth Nihl charged at Tycho, and attacked. With a single, powerful overhead strike, Darth Nihl struck down upon Tycho. Barely parrying the enormous attack, Tycho blocked the strike with a horizontal parry. The force from the attack caused Tycho to stumble backwards. Darth Nihl spun and twirled his sabre-cane with amazing precision and speed, then attacked Tycho once more. Meanwhile, Master Draco and Knight Krieg dropped down from the second floor with their silver-bladed lightsabers at hand; Roan Fel approached the battle, his silver-bladed lightsaber activated as well. Tycho managed to block and duck underneath the powerful sweeping attacks of Darth Nihl, but he was far stronger than Tycho. Master Draco and Knight Krieg charged at Darth Nihl. With a Force-augmented strike, Darth Nihl slammed his crimson blade into the permacrete floor; the force from the strike cracked and shattered the permacrete, sending both Imperial Knights flying into the air. Flying through the air in two different directions, they both smacked against the durasteel bars of the cages on either side of the hall.

Meanwhile, Tycho finally picked himself up, and attacked Darth Nihl. Tycho attacked with a flurry of lightsaber slashes and stabs, but Darth Nihl dodged and blocked every single one of them with ease. With a lightning fast dodge, Darth Nihl

returned to the offensive with long sweeping slashes and powerful overhead strikes. Each attack knocked Tycho off balance momentarily; each strike knocked him backwards. Suddenly, the two Imperial Knights picked themselves up, and attacked Darth Nihl. Darth Nihl kicked Tycho in the chest, then spun in the air to engage the two charging Imperial Knights. Master Draco slashed at Darth Nihl's side, while Knight Krieg came in with an overhead strike. Darth Nihl blocked Master Draco's attack, while reached out with the Force and choked Knight Krieg. Knight Krieg hovered in mid-air, choking to death as Darth Nihl exerted himself through the Force; meanwhile, Darth Nihl strained against Master Draco's silver-bladed lightsaber. Darth Nihl, in a rage, unleashed a powerful Force Wave attack that sent both Imperial Knights flying backwards.

Suddenly, Roan Fel engaged Darth Nihl. After a flurry of quick parries and attacks, they were engaged in a sabre-lock. Roan Fel struggled against the crimson blade of Darth Nihl.

"You will die here Fel!" Darth Nihl taunted, "The Mistress has foreseen it!"

"Your Mistress is a liar and a fool!" Roan Fel countered.

Darth Nihl suddenly kicked Roan Fel in the knee, sending him toppling forwards. Before Darth Nihl could strike Roan Fel down, Tycho lunged toward to block the attack. Darth Nihl growled in anger at Tycho.

"Brave of you boy." Darth Nihl replied, "Perhaps less of a coward, and more of a fool."

Tycho immediately broke the sabre-lock, and attacked Darth Nihl. Meanwhile, the two Imperial Knights remerged, and ran to Roan Fel's side. Roan Fel waved them off, and they both began to engage Darth Nihl. The Imperial Knights were highly skilled in the lightsaber arts. Their attacks were powerful, swift and accurate. Darth Nihl, a Sith Lord, was highly skilled as well. Even with three opponents engaging him, he expertly fended them all off. Darth Nihl used his sabre-staff exceptionally efficiently, using both the crimson blade, as well as the yorik coral shaft to block and attack. Darth Nihl, using long sweeping attacks, powerful lunging stabs, and strong overhead smashes, overwhelmed Tycho and the two Imperial Knights. Darth Nihl's attacks were so fast, and so strong, that each strike knocked Tycho off-balance for a moment. Even the Imperial Knights struggled to get inside Darth Nihl's defences.

"You can't possibly believe you will make it out of here alive!" Master Draco shouted.

Darth Nihl finished attacking Tycho, smacking him off to the side with a powerful arch-like swing, "You may kill me here, today, Master Draco, but your Order will perish with me. I swear it."

"Big talk, Lord Nihl." Knight Krieg countered.

Darth Nihl lunged towards the two Imperial Knights. They expertly parried and blocked the attacks, but Darth Nihl was relentless. Even though they've been fighting for some time now, Darth Nihl showed no sign of exhaustion. Tycho picked himself up, and leaped into the air, towards Darth Nihl. Darth Nihl grabbed Tycho from out of the air, and slammed him back down into the permacrete floor, cracking it upon impact. Tycho grunted in pain as he slid on the cold floor.

Roan Fel, and the two Imperial Knights, engaged Darth Nihl. Fuelled by anger, Darth Nihl unleashed a powerful Force Wave attack that sent the two Imperial Knights flying backwards. The two Imperial Knights hit the cold permacrete floor hard, sliding and smacking into the durasteel bars. Only Roan Fel stood his ground against the powerful Force attack.

"Impressive." Darth Nihl replied, "That's not all a Sith can do."

With surprising power, Darth Nihl unleashed a surge of electrical energy towards Roan Fel; Force Surge. Roan Fel immediately blocked the incoming lightning bolts with his silver-bladed lightsaber. Roan Fel grunted as he fought against the powerful current surging through the energy blade. The lightning bolts flashed in front of Tycho; he was surprised at the raw power Darth Nihl was able to wield.

"Imperial Knights, ha! How pathetic!" Darth Nihl taunted.

Roan Fel fought against the torrent of electrical energy surging through the blade of his lightsaber. Suddenly, shocks of electrical current surged through Roan Fel's body, causing much pain and surprise. Roan Fel dropped to one knee, forcing his silver-bladed lightsaber in front of him to block in incoming blue electrical bolts.

Darth Nihl laughed, "It's over, pretender!"

Suddenly, Tycho picked himself up and charged at Darth Nihl. Darth Nihl anticipated his attack, and turned his attention to Tycho. The electrical energy was now directed towards Tycho. Tycho had no time to counter or block the incoming attack.

The lightning bolts shocked Tycho where he stood; the electrical current flowing through his body caused his muscles to twitch and spasm out of control. An incredible sense of pain filled Tycho's body. Tycho fell to the cold permacrete floor; his body threatening to break itself apart from powerful convulsions. Soon, Tycho started to black out completely, and lose consciousness. Roan Fel came at Darth Nihl with his lightsaber raised above his head. Roan Fel screamed in anger against Darth Nihl, prepared to strike him down. In a surprisingly swift dodge, Darth Nihl blocked Roan Fel's attack, and struck back. The crimson blade of Darth Nihl pierced through Roan Fel's stomach, dropping him to the floor immediately.

Master Draco, recovering from the various impacts he sustained, saw Roan Fel fall, "No!" The scream was loud and long.

Master Draco immediately picked himself up, along with Knight Krieg, and charged at Darth Nihl. Darth Nihl smiled at the two Imperial Knights, and then leapt into the air. Darth Nihl landed on the second floor girders, and deactivated his sabre-cane.

"I told you your Order would die here today." Darth Nihl taunted.

Darth Nihl ran across the girder, and into shadows. Master Draco ran to Roan Fel's side, and clutched him in his arms.

"Master!" Master Draco shouted.

Roan Fel, still alive but nevertheless dying, grabbed Master Draco by the arm. He looked up at him; blood trickled down the corner of Roan Fel's mouth.

"The Empire still lives, as long as Sia lives, Draco." Roan Fel shakily stated, "It is up to you to protect her, now."

"Yes, Master." Master Draco assured.

Meanwhile, Knight Krieg ran to Tycho's side; Tycho had passed out from the relentless lightning attack from Darth Nihl. His body billowed with light grey smoke, and his muscles were convulsing and twitching with rapid succession. Master Draco felt Roan Fel die through the Force. Tears welled up in Master Draco's eyes, as well as Knight Krieg's.

"Antares... we have to go." Knight Krieg whispered.

Master Draco nodded his head, then picked up Roan Fel's body from off the cold permacrete floor. Knight Krieg hefted Tycho off the floor as well, and they both started walking towards the entrance. The blast doors suddenly lifted, and a dozen stormtroopers from the 501st Legion appeared inside the detention hall. They immediately secured the area, and led the two Imperial Knights out of the complex.

One Standard Week Later: Onboard the *Resistance*:

The *Resistance* was a *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer that defected to the Empire-in-exile during the early days of The Second Imperial Civil War. It was renamed the *Resistance*, and acted as Marasiah Fel's flagship since then. The *Resistance* has been travelling the vast emptiness of space within the Hapes Consortium since the ambush on Orelon. Now, a week after the ambush, the *Resistance* entered the inner space of the Hapes Consortium primary world, Hapes.

Tycho has been in a bacta tank the entire time, recovering from the vicious electrocution he experienced on Orelon. He sustained first and second degree burns on his chest, as well as some broken bones, internal trauma, and a battery of scars, bruises, and cuts. Tycho awoke within the bacta tank; the thick, viscous fluid obscured his vision. Tycho felt tired, and exhausted, even though he'd been unconscious for a week. His joints ached, and his muscles were still sore. Soon, the doctors aboard the *Resistance* took him out of the bacta tank, and let him clean himself off. He could still taste and smell the sickly-sweet smell of bacta in the back of his throat, even though he was sure he got all of it out of his lungs. Tycho donned a white and blue medical apron, and walked out of the medical centre.

Outside, Ganner Krieg, one of the Imperial Knight's that had been present during the assault on Orelon, was waiting outside. He was still wearing his Imperial Knight crimson armour, and his lightsaber was holstered on his utility belt.

"You recovered fast." Knight Krieg replied.

Tycho turned to look at Ganner, "Not my first time."

Ganner Krieg nodded his head, "I think you'd want to hear this."

Ganner Krieg led Tycho through the grey and white corridors of the *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyer, until they were in one of the conference rooms near the bridge. Inside, Marasiah Fel was crying her eyes out, with Antares Draco holding her in his arms. Marasiah Fel was still reeling over the loss of her father, and from the loss of the true heir to the Imperial throne. Also in the room was someone Tycho had never seen

before. She was a tall, elegant looking woman, with long, flowing, curly light reddish blonde hair and beautiful bright green eyes. She wore very elegant, and expensive, robes and garments that glistened and glittered in the light.

"I am sorry for your loss, Princess Fel." The unknown woman sincerely replied.

Marasiah Fel, sitting down on one of the chairs around the oval-shaped table, tried to compose herself. Antares Draco was still holding her in his arms.

"With Roan lost to us, the galaxy is in much worse shape than before." The unknown woman continued.

The woman then turned around, and looked at Ganner Krieg and Tycho, who were standing by the entrance to the conference room. She paused, and then bowed her head slightly. Ganner Krieg bowed his head; Tycho followed.

"Let me introduce myself, I am the Queen Mother of Hapes, Alys Nalah Djo." She replied, "And you must be Tycho, yes?"

"That is correct, Queen Mother." Tycho replied.

Ganner Krieg left Tycho's side, and walked towards Antares Draco; Tycho remained stationary. Marasiah Fel finally composed herself, and wiped the tears from her eyes. Her face was still red from crying, and her hands were shaking from the emotional trauma.

"Queen Mother, the Sith have crossed your borders, and entered Hapan space without permission." Marasiah Fel informed, "They have violated the neutrality agreement. You must act."

The Queen Mother was the sole ruler of the Hapes Consortium. Her line has been quite a distinguished one. Her great ancestor was Allana Djo, daughter of Tenel Ka Djo, and Jacen Solo, both of whom were powerful Jedi's who became heroes during the time of the Yuuzhan Vong invasion; Jacen Solo, however, fell into darkness during the Second Corellian Insurrection, and became the Sith Lord known as Darth Caedus. Queen Mother Alys Nalah Djo, although exceptionally powerful in the Force, did not train to become one. Anti-Jedi sentiment runs strong in Hapes, and in order to keep the order, she decided to forsake her natural gift.

"I'm sorry to say, Princess, but the Sith have claimed to have been pursuing Roan Fel, an enemy of the state, into Hapan territory." The Queen Mother explained, "By the

neutrality agreement, the Sith had the right to enter Hapan territory in order to pursue and capture a known fugitive."

Marasiah Fel sagged in her chair; rage started to well up inside of her. Antares Draco held her tighter.

"How can you be defending the Sith after what they've done to this galaxy?" Antares Draco asked.

"It is not my wish, Master Draco, but the Hapes Consortium remains neutral in this conflict." The Queen Mother answered.

Antares Draco shook his head in complete disbelief, and anger. Ganner Krieg placed his hand on his shoulder, trying to calm him down.

"The Hapans have been involved in almost every major conflict within the galaxy since the Yuuzhan Vong invasion, and has come out of it worse off than in the beginning." The Queen Mother explained, "I will protect my people from your war for as long as I can."

Marasiah Fel looked back up at the Queen Mother, tears started to well up in the corner of her eyes, "And what happens when the Sith have overrun the rest of the galaxy?" She started, "When there is no one else left to conquer, do you think they'll leave Hapes alone?"

The Queen Mother listened to her reasoning.

"The Sith will invade Hapan territory, just as they did with other systems." Marasiah continued, "They'll pillage, and murder their way through the Consortium, until there is nothing left of your worlds. Your people will die if you choose to do nothing."

The last comment struck close to the Queen Mother; Tycho stood back and let the diplomats handle the politics behind all of this.

"I'm sorry for your loss, Princess. Truly I am." The Queen Mother started, "But I cannot bring my people into this conflict. This is not our war, not yet. Hapes remains neutral."

Marasiah Fel, Antares Draco and Ganner Krieg all sulked a little. They were hoping the Hapes Consortium would ally with the resistance against the Sith. That was Roan Fel's original mission, and the reason he was within Hapan space. When

intelligence leaked Roan Fel's intentions to the Sith, they had to act fast. They set up an ambush for the Sith, hoping to eliminate the threat, and use the Sith presence within Hapan space to convince them that they needed to ally with Roan Fel and the rest of the resistance. The plan backfired, and Roan Fel ended up dead, and the resistance crippled.

The Queen Mother started walking around the conference room, "I risk much simply having an Imperial Star Destroyer within Hapan space, but you may take your time, Princess." She stated, "I regret the loss of Roan Fel, I truly do. And on a personal note, I do not hold you or the Empire responsible for the death of Elliah. I am truly sorry for what had come from that, but know that it was not my wish."

Marasiah Fel was in almost too much distress to listen to any more, but the sudden mention of her mother made it all the more painful.

The Queen Mother started to walk out of the conference room, "I wish you the best of luck."

The Queen Mother passed Tycho as she left the conference room. She exited with an elegance worthy of her status and royalty. The robes she was wearing made her look as if she was floating across the floor, rather than walking over it. Tycho looked back at the three, all of whom were both sad and depressed with the recent events.

Awkwardly, Tycho said, "So, what do we do now?"

Suddenly, and abruptly, Marasiah stood up from her chair, and stormed out of the conference room. She started crying again, and her body and mind couldn't deal with all the emotions she was feeling inside. Tycho merely stood out of the way, letting her pass to leave the conference room. Antares Draco and Ganner Krieg remained inside the conference room; both, although sad, were more angry than anything else. Not at Tycho, but at the Sith, and the fraudulent Empire.

Tycho swallowed, "What do we do?"

Antares Draco stood up, and slammed his fists into the wooden oval-shaped table beside him.

"Retaliation." Antares Draco stated in a stern voice.

Ganner Krieg immediately turned to look Antares Draco face-to-face, "Antares, we must not act hastily."

"If we do not act now, we may never get another opportunity!" Antares Draco angrily replied.

"Antares... this isn't right." Ganner Krieg warned, "Retaliation isn't the way of the light."

Antares Draco slammed his fists into the wooden oval-shaped table once again, "Right... is killing our enemies, and those who betrayed the Empire!" Antares Draco screamed, "We must avenge our Emperor!"

Antares Draco and Ganner Krieg stared eye-to-eye at each other for a few moments; Ganner Krieg was calm, while Antares Draco was filled with rage and anger.

After a few moments, Tycho replied, "We must strike, and soon."

Antares Draco nodded his head in agreement, while Ganner Krieg shook his. Tycho was accustomed to the dark-side of the Force, so the suggestion of retaliation was not a big leap for him. The Imperial Knights, however, followed the light-side of the Force; they were viewed as inferior Force-practitioners by the Sith, and 'grey' by the Jedi. Although they didn't strictly, and blindly, follow the light-side of the Force, they rarely, if ever, fell into temptation and unbridled anger.

"What are you thinking?" Tycho asked.

Antares Draco thought about it for a moment, "The Moff's." He finally said, "Those backstabbing bastards... we need to take them out."

Ganner Krieg sighed, "The Council of High Moff's is an important committee within the government." Ganner Krieg reluctantly added, "If we take them out, a large portion of the Sith-Imperial leadership will be removed, hindering their abilities to counter-strike and attack."

Tycho nodded his head in agreement. The Council of High Moff's authorized various military operations, as well as diplomatic and judicial decisions. They were the ones that made laws, regulations and other governing decisions, not the Sith. The Council of High Moff's were in fact in control of the Imperial Service, and the Imperial Intelligence. Their powers have diminished slightly after Mistress Amelia was excepted into the Council, and shared some of their responsibilities, mostly military, but they were still the main governing body in the Empire.

"The High Moff's are located on Coruscant." Tycho pointed out, "How do we get in?"

"We'll figure it out." Antares Draco replied.

"What about Marasiah?" Tycho asked, "She'd want in."

Antares Draco and Ganner Krieg looked at each other, "She can't know." Antares Draco answered, "She must be protected; she is now the legitimate heir to the Imperial throne, we can't risk losing her too."

"Agreed." Ganner Krieg added.

Tycho knew that there was more to that statement than just protecting Marasiah cause she was the heir to the Empire. He noticed the way they look at each other, the way they lit-up when they're around each other. Antares Draco and Marasiah Fel were lovers.

Tycho thought about it for a while, "Okay." Tycho finally said, "But once we set out to do this, there is no going back, no holding out."

"What's your point?" Antares Draco angrily replied.

"You Imperial Knights have served the light-side of the Force your whole lives." Tycho pointed out, "This is a very dark road you're going to walk down. I need to know that you can handle it."

Antares Draco thought about it, actually considering the question, "Yes."

"Good." Tycho replied, "That anger you feel... use it."

Two Standard Days Later: Galactic City, Coruscant:

They arrived on Coruscant earlier during the day. Several stormtroopers with the 501st Legion working with the Imperial Knights had been brought along to assassinate the six High Moffs that made up the council. After going over the routines and schedules of the six High Moffs, they determined that if they broke up into four teams, they would be able to strike against them within one single night, and get off-world. The plan was ambitious, but it had to be done this way; the only way it would work was if all the Moffs were killed on the same night. Therefore, they had no way of preparing, and were completely taken by surprise.

The night sky on Coruscant was eerily purplish-black, and littered with stars; the planetary rings arched across the sky, and shown a glittery whitish-blue. The lights of

from the towering buildings gave Coruscant a surreal glow at night. That night, Grand Moff Morlish Veed, Grand Admiral of the Imperial Forces and High Moff, and Moff Nyna Calixte, Director of Imperial Intelligence, return to Nyna's apartment loft after a long day. Years ago, the Sith had approached Nyna Calixte to help the Empire start a war against the Galactic Federation of Free Alliance; she manipulated and persuaded the other Moffs into accepting their offer. Many view Nyna Calixte as the sole reason the Sith had come into power the way they did.

Together, they entered the apartment; the room was dark, but the large windows across the apartment lets in some light. The apartment was spacious, and modern. There was very little furniture, and the tiled floor and permacrete floor was cold.

"What a day." Grand Moff Morlish Veed groaned.

Grand Moff Morlish Veed was a tall, well built man, who had thoughts of grandeur on his mind almost all the time. He had strong features on his face; a strong chin, and piercing blue eyes. He wore his white hair short, and combed back.

Nyna Calixte proceeded into the apartment, an into the washroom. She turned on the faucet and started to wash her face. The water was warm and refreshing.

"What are we going to be about Mistress Amelia?" Grand Moff Morlish Veed angrily replied, "She's ruining everything we've built."

Nyna Calixte towelled off her face, "I know."

Moff Nyna Calixte was an older woman, and someone who was also very ambitious. Although aged, she still had striking facial features. Her lips were still full, and her blue eyes conveyed strength and determination in typical Imperial style. She still had a full, lush head of black hair, indicating heal and vitality to her male counterparts.

Grand Moff Morlish Veed poured himself a drink, then sat down on the couch, staring out the window at the Coruscanti skyline, "Do you think she'd try anything?"

"Like what?" Nyna Calixte asked.

"Take power herself." Grand Moff Morlish Veed suggested.

Nyna stared at herself in the mirror, "No way." Nyna Calixte walked out of the washroom, into the bedroom, and switched into an elegant, yet comfortable, purple silk robe, "The Sith need the Moffs right now."

"And when the Sith don't need us anymore?" Grand Moff Morlish Veed asked, "What then?"

Nyna Calixte thought about the statement for a moment. The Council of High Moffs was a vital component in the Imperial government, if not the most important component, but that wouldn't stop someone like Lady Amelia from trying to seize power herself. The Sith were ambitious.

"Then we will have to act." Nyna Calixte finally answered.

"How?" Grand Moff Morlish Veed asked, then took a sip of his drink, "Amelia has rooted herself deep within the Imperial military. It would take a rancor to pry her out."

Nyna Calixte stared at herself in the full-length mirror for a moment, "Then that's exactly what we use." She looked at herself with conviction, "We use any means necessary."

Morlish Veed took another sip of his drink and stared out at the Coruscanti skyline with a blank expression, "Such talk is considered high treason."

"No matter." Nyna Calixte started combing her hair, "Amelia couldn't possibly control the Empire without us."

Grand Moff Morlish Veed chuckled at the thought, "Nevertheless, she's getting too ambitious."

Nyna Calixte looked up, towards the window, "So were you, at one time."

Grand Moff Morlish Veed had once been hoping to be declared Emperor, before Darth Krayt annexed the throne for himself.

Grand Moff Morlish Veed polished off his drink, "True, but that doesn't mean I have to like it." He let out a sigh of exhaustion, "She might need to be taken out."

Nyna Calixte finally sat down on the bed, exhausted from the days tribulations. She sighed to herself, "Enough. I've had enough of work to bring it home."

Grand Moff Morlish Veed returned the bottle of Corellian whiskey he had been drinking back into the liquor cabinet, "Alright."

He walked into the bedroom, and stared at Nyna Calixte. He smiled.

"Don't even get any ideas, I'm far too tired." Nyna Calixte replied.

"Why would you ever—" Grand Moff Morlish Veed said before being cut off.

An explosions rocked the apartment. Transparisteel and chunks of permacrete exploded into the apartment. Followed suddenly by another, then another. Before either could respond to the attack, a rocket broke through the transparisteel window in their bedroom, and exploded on the ceiling. The explosion was powerful enough to collapse the ceiling, bringing down a couple tonnes of permacrete on top of them. They both screamed in terror as the apartment came crashing down upon them.

Outside, an airspeeder soared by the apartment. The stormtroopers of the 501st, dressed as civilians and armed with rocket launchers, flew off after the attack. In total four rockets were fired into the apartment. The explosions caused the apartment to collapse, sending large clouds of dust into the air. Fires broke out, adding to the confusion. Upon completion, the stormtroopers sped away as fast as they could. The confusion of the scene made it impossible for anyone to recognize or remember them specifically.

Elsewhere, Moff Fehlaaur, a Chiss and only alien Moff, was the Head of the Imperial Diplomatic Corps. The Chiss were an isolationist species, keeping to themselves in the Unknown Regions. Like other Chiss, Moff Fehlaaur had deep blue skin, and glowing ruby red eyes. Moff Fehlaaur kept his bluish-black hair short, and curly. He was headed towards the Galaxies Opera House, located in the upper levels of the Uscru District, in his private limousine airspeeder. The black, closed top limousine was exceptionally luxurious, and well protected. Moff Fehlaaur eagerly awaited the show tonight. Moff Fehlaaur looked out of the tinted transparisteel windows, and saw a rather large vehicle pass him by. The vehicle looked like an armoured transport, like the ones banks use to transport large quantities of credits. He thought nothing of it. Suddenly, the large vehicle swerved in front of the limousine.

"What the hell?" The driver said.

Confused, Moff Fehlaaur looked out the front windshield. He saw the large vehicle in front of them, blocking their way. The driver honked the horn, trying to get the large vehicle in front of them to move.

"What's going on?" Moff Fehlaaur asked.

"This idiot cut me off!" The driver answered in a rage.

"Well, go around." Moff Fehlaaur replied, "We're going to be late."

The driver immediately tried to bank left or right, but was trapped between the rows of airspeeders. Suddenly, the double doors on the back of the large vehicle opened, and two men armed with rocket launchers came into view. Moff Fehlaaur saw the men, and started to panic.

"Get us out of here!" Moff Fehlaaur yelled to the driver.

"I can't!" The driver screamed in terror.

Suddenly, one of the men launched a rocket; the rocket streaked through the air, travelled the very short distance between the vehicles, and struck the front grill of the limousine. The transparisteel windshield shattered from the explosion and shrapnel. Shards of transparisteel struck the driver in the face; the driver's face had been pierced by high-velocity transparisteel shrapnel. His wounds bled profusely, blinding the driver. The driver screamed in terror and pain; the limousine began banking wildly, left and right, trying to get away.

"Get us out now!" Moff Fehlaaur screamed.

"I can't see!" The driver screamed.

Moff Fehlaaur grabbed the wheel and steadied the airspeeder limousine. He looked up just in time to see the other man take aim with his rocket launcher. He screamed in terror at the sight. Another rocket struck the limousine; the rocket punched through the shattered transparisteel windshield, and exploded within the limousine. The entire back portion of the limousine exploded into a gigantic fireball. The limousine pitched downward, and spiralled out of control. Just as suddenly as the large vehicle appeared, it sped away.

Moff Konrad Rus, Head of the Imperial Mission, was quietly having dinner, alone, at the Naboo Queen Restaurant. The Naboo Queen Restaurant, located on 500 Republica, was once the residence of former Naboo Queen Padmé Amidala. Since then, the place had been turned into a luxurious five-star restaurant, where only the rich and famous may dine. At this time of night, many beings were having a late dinner; the restaurant was packed with customers.

Moff Konrad Rus had just placed his order, and was quietly drinking his soup while he waited for his meal. Moff Konrad Rus was an elderly man, with thin white hair, and an unassuming face. Although he looked fragile, he was, in reality, a hard political negotiator. Suddenly, he clutched his throat, as if he were choking. He toppled over from his chair, clutching his throat and went into convulsions. His bodyguards immediately rushed over to his side. His bodyguards, two large, muscular males, tried to help.

"Poison." One of the bodyguards replied, "Get help!"

The other bodyguard immediately rushed out of the restaurant in order to call emergency medical teams. Moff Konrad Rus' face turned bright red, and he foamed at the mouth. Slowly, his face and lips turned purple; he convulsed and thrashed about on the floor of the restaurant. Suddenly, his blue eyes rolled into the back of his head and he stopped moving completely.

Suddenly, two men wearing waiters uniformed stumbled out of the restaurant's kitchen; they ran for the exit. The bodyguard at Moff Konrad Rus' side immediately jumped to his feet, and pursued. The bodyguard pushed through the various customers that had circled the Moff's body, and ran after the two men. The bodyguard took out his blaster pistol, and fired two shots. The first blaster bolt went wide, striking the wall in front of the two fleeing men. The second blaster bolt struck one of the men square in the back, dropping him to the ground instantly; the blaster bolt seared through his back, and into his chest, killing him. The other fleeing man managed to get down to the stairs; he was frantically running down the stairs, almost losing his footing many times.

The bodyguard, in hot pursuit, entered the staircase, and began firing. The blaster bolts ricocheted off the walls, narrowly missing the fleeing man. After a couple of flights of stairs, and only a moments pursuit, the bodyguard managed to strike the fleeing man in the leg with a blaster bolt. The fleeing man dropped down a flight of stairs, tumbling onto his head and back as he rolled down the hard steps. The fleeing man came to rest at the foot of the staircase; immediately the bodyguard pounced on top of him.

"Who are you?" The bodyguard screamed.

Suddenly, the bodyguard released his grip on him, and began to stand up. Foam started accumulating at the side of the fleeing man's mouth. He began to convulse, then suddenly, his eyes rolled into the back of his head. The fleeing man remained still.

"Suicide teeth." The bodyguard replied, "Damn."

Tycho, Master Draco and Knight Krieg were within the New Imperial Palace. The New Imperial Palace was a massive pyramidal structure that was built within the Senate District. They had infiltrated the New Imperial Palace earlier that evening, but only now managed to get inside the structure. Silently, they dropped into an empty hallway near the base of the palace. The hallway was well lit, but they went unnoticed.

"Where are they?" Tycho asked.

"They'd be in their offices, near the top floor." Master Draco informed.

They moved through the halls silently, using the Force to minimize their presence to anyone who might be around. Stormtroopers typically patrolled these hallways, but at night, the patrol schedule became sparse. There were two remaining Moffs on the Council: one was Moff Rulf Yage, Head of the Imperial Navy and former-commander of the elite Imperial fighter squadron, Skull Squadron; the other was Moff Geist, Head of the Imperial Army. Both these men were conservative militarists, and Imperial hardliners, proponents to the old Imperial ideal under Emperor Palpatine and Lord Vader. They openly acknowledged their dislike for the 'Victory Without War' program, and were strong proponents for allying with the One Sith during the Sith-Imperial War.

It took almost an hour for them to move through the hallways undetected, but they finally reached the top floor. Tycho motioned for Master Draco and Knight Krieg to go right, while he went left. Creeping around the corner, Tycho saw the office of Moff Geist. The large, wood double doors leading into this office were closed. Silently, Tycho approached the office, and slowly turned the knob. Incredibly, the door was unlocked, and Moff Geist didn't hear him coming. Moff Geist was a black human male, with short brown hair. Even while seated, Tycho noticed he was a large, and muscular man.

Moff Geist was hard at work, stressing over the various pieces of flimsiplast he had in front of him. Moff Geist was focused on his work, and he didn't hear or notice Tycho creeping up behind him. Moff Geist was whispering something to himself, but Tycho couldn't hear what. Tycho slowly inched his way forward, trying not to make any audible sounds that might give him away. Suddenly, Moff Geist looked up, and turned around. Tycho immediately lunged forward, activating his lightsaber as he did. The *snap-hiss* surprised Moff Geist; his brown eyes widened. Forcibly, Tycho plunged

the crimson blade through the chair Moff Geist was sitting in, and into his chest. Moff Geist screamed in pain for a moment, then fell over. Blood ran down the corner of the Moff's mouth, and the cauterized chest wound lightly smoked. His dead body laid limp on the tiled floor.

I hope no one heard that, Tycho thought to himself.

Meanwhile, Master Draco and Knight Krieg snuck through the hallways, towards Moff Rulf Yage's office. The doors to his office were exactly the same as Moff Geist. Master Draco stood on the right side of the door, while Knight Krieg took the left. Their crimson armour clanked slightly as they moved. They nodded to one another, then forcibly smashed the door down. They activated their silver-bladed lightsabers as they stormed into the room. It was empty. They frantically looked around the office; no one. Something felt wrong.

"Back." Master Draco ordered.

Both Master Draco and Knight Krieg exited Moff Rulf Yage's office. They looked down one side of the hallway, then the other.

"Where do you think he is?" Knight Krieg asked.

"Right here!" Moff Rulf Yage shouted from down one side of the hallway.

Both Master Draco and Knight Krieg looked to their right, and saw Moff Rulf Yage walking down the hallway, towards them. Moff Rulf Yage was a tall, tough man, with strong facial features, and short blonde hair. He came barrelling down the hallway towards them.

"Just what the hell do you Imperial Knight think you were going to do?" Moff Rulf Yage rhetorically asked, "You finally find the guts to kill me?"

"It had crossed our minds." Master Draco replied.

Moff Rulf Yage stopped, suddenly, then replied, "Well then, here I am. Do it!" Master Draco and Knight Krieg hesitated for just a moment. Moff Rulf Yage smiled, "I thought so. Spineless."

Suddenly, Moff Rulf Yage pulled out a blaster pistol, and fired it at the two Imperial Knights. The red energy bolts streaked through the air, and struck the walls

behind them. Instinctually, they batted and deflected the bolts away from them. Purposefully, Master Draco deflected one of the blaster bolts back towards Moff Rulf Yage. The blaster bolt seared through his stomach, causing major internal bleeding. Moff Rulf Yage kneeled over, clutching his belly; he dropped his blaster pistol onto the tiled floor, and grunted. Master Draco, angry at what he was forced to do, was about to attack, but Knight Krieg prevented him.

"C'mon, we have to go!" Knight Krieg shouted; Master Draco remained still, staring at the slowly dying Moff. Knight Krieg yelled again, "Antares, we have to go!"

This time Master Draco snapped back to reality, and looked at Knight Krieg. He nodded his head, and they ran in the opposite direction. Suddenly, Tycho appeared in front of them. He was shocked and confused by what he heard moments ago, and from the sight of Moff Rulf Yage in the middle of the hallway.

"What the hell was that all about?" Tycho screamed.

"Never mind." Knight Krieg sternly replied.

Immediately, they turned and ran down the hall. Suddenly, behind them, stormtroopers flooded the hallway. Two ran to Moff Rulf Yage's side, while the others pursued the three intruders. A torrent of blaster rifle fire erupted behind them. Tycho turned to deflect the bolts back into the crowd of stormtroopers closing in. Several of the bolts struck back at the stormtroopers, searing through their plastoid armour, and dropping them to the hard, tiled floor.

Suddenly, Master Draco shouted, "More in front!"

A flood of stormtroopers approached from both in front and from behind. They were trapped between the two forces. The stormtroopers immediately surrounded them, and pointed their blaster rifles towards them. Tycho, Master Draco and Knight Krieg stood back-to-back-to-back, facing the stormtroopers with their lightsabers activated.

"What now Antares?" Knight Krieg asked.

Master Draco looked at the horde of stormtroopers that lay in front of him. He suddenly deactivated his lightsaber.

"Are you fracking mad?" Tycho screamed.

"Our mission was to take out the Moff's." Master Draco stated, "We succeeded. Nothing else matters now."

Soon, Knight Krieg deactivated his lightsaber. Both Imperial Knights looked at each other, excepting whatever fate may be coming their way. Then they both looked at Tycho. Rage filled his eyes, and his heart. Tycho stared at the Imperial stormtroopers for a few moments more. Reluctantly, he deactivated his lightsaber.

"You guys are the worst partners ever." Tycho angrily replied.

Suddenly, the stormtroopers shot a taser at the three intruders. Two metal wires shot out from the taser, and imbedded itself into the clothing of the intruders. The electric jolts surged through the wire that struck their clothes, incapacitating them. They collapsed to the ground, and after five seconds of electrical shock, it stopped. They were still in pain, however, and their muscles wouldn't stop twitching. The stormtroopers approached, turned them over, and lasercuffed their wrists.

Since their capture, they've been split up into different chambers. Throughout the day, and most of the night, they've been interrogated, and tortured. The Empire, devoid of most of its morality and reasoning, had no trouble raising the bar when it came to new and creative ways to make a criminal talk.

Tycho was strapped to a durasteel medical gurney; he was half naked on the gurney, and his wrists and ankles were held down with lasercuffs. The room Tycho was in was pretty small, and the walls were made of ferrocrete bricks. There was only one light in the entire room, right above Tycho's head, and it was dim and inadequate.

Tycho was subjected to probably the worst of it; they started with simple physical beatings, trying to force the information out of him. Then it escalated to electroshock, and now drugs. What the Imperial torture droids and interrogators failed to realize was that Tycho was using the Force to mitigate the physical harm he was experiencing. Tycho had no real sense of time, but he was fairly confident a day had passed. About an hour ago, the Imperial interrogators injected Tycho with a potent hallucinogen called ixetal cilona, the main constituent in death sticks. Tycho was left alone in his chambers; he was seeing terrifying visions. The walls seemed to come alive, and attack him. Everything he saw was wavy, and the colours were all skewed, mostly to greens and purples. The sounds that entered his chambers were magnified and distorted by the drugs.

Tycho groaned in agony. The dim light above him was shaking and waving like crazy, giving off a rainbow of different colours.

Tycho's body couldn't take much more punishment; he knew that, and so did the Imperial interrogators. There were black bags underneath his eyes, and they were red from exhaustion and filled with tears; his face and gut were sore and bruised from the beatings. All of his muscles were tender and bruised, and twitched and spasm because of the electroshock torture. His whole body was covered with small cuts, some from previous episodes, some from the interrogators. His joints ached and creaked when he tried to move; at worst, they popped. His wrists and ankles hurt the worst, mostly because he had been fighting against the lasercuffs so much that they ended up cutting into his flesh. He wasn't sure, but he also thought one of his ribs was broken, because it was exceedingly painful to breathe.

Suddenly, a thud smacked against the thick durasteel door that led into the room. The sound of something hitting the cold durasteel door resonated within the small room. Tycho looked over, eagerly awaiting whatever it was. The door slowly creaked open, then surprisingly, Marasiah Fel walked through the door. She was wearing the white plastoid armour of a stormtrooper, and carrying a deactivated lightsaber. She quickly looked around the room, then back at Tycho.

"I must really be hallucinating." Tycho replied.

She smiled, and walked over, "Not a hallucination, funny man."

Marasiah walked over, and started to undo Tycho's lasercuffs.

"Well, at least you smell nice." Tycho said.

Marasiah looked over, and gave him a smirk, "Wish I could say the same about you."

Tycho laughed a little. Marasiah finally deactivated the lasercuffs, freeing Tycho. She then took a needle filled with a green solution out of her pocket, and injected Tycho with it. Tycho looked at her; his eyes were clearly confused.

"This is a rapid detox solution." Marasiah Fel informed, "It should clear those drugs out of your system in no time."

Tycho nodded his head. Almost immediately, his head began to clear. The room seemed less wavy, and the psychedelic colour trip started to dissipate. She handed him his black durasteel lightsaber.

"Think you can handle it?" She asked.

"More than you can possibly imagine." He replied, taking his lightsaber.

Marasiah Fel placed a set of stormtrooper armour next to him, minus the helmet, and said, "Put this on."

He did what he was told. The plastoid armour was uncomfortable, but considering what he just went through, this was a walk in the park. Tycho stood up from the durasteel gurney, fitted with full stormtrooper armour, and waked towards the door. His first couple of steps were unstable, and unsure; quickly, as the rapid detox solution started to clear his system, he began to stabilize. He followed Marasiah Fel out of the room, then he stopped.

"How did you know we were here?" Tycho asked.

She looked back at him, "You really think you guys could steal a shuttle and a couple dozen stormtroopers from my ship, and I wouldn't know?"

Tycho nodded in agreement; it was naive to think that they could secretly go on a mission, and she wouldn't find out eventually. He looked down the dark and shadowy hallway; two figures started walking towards him. It was Antares Draco and Ganner Krieg, both wearing their crimson armour and holding lightsabers. Their faces were battered and bruise, but probably not as much as his own. He could still feel a throbbing sensation in his head every time he moved. They gave him a quick nod of approval, then turned to Marasiah.

"Hallway's clear." Antares Draco replied.

Tycho looked around, and saw more stormtroopers. He assumed they were with Marasiah, considering they hadn't fired their blaster rifles yet. The stormtroopers were in fact part of the 1st stormtrooper division; Tycho noticed the big red one insignia on their shoulders. Tycho turned back to the conversation.

"Okay, we better get our move on." Marasiah Fel suggested, "We've got a shuttle waiting on the hangar level."

"How far?" Antares Draco asked.

"Up one level." Marasiah Fel informed, she turned to Tycho, "We have to silent and quick." She then turned back to Antares Draco and Ganner Krieg, "But if anyone detects us, kill first, worry about the consequences later."

They all nodded their heads in agreement.

"Okay, let's go." Marasiah Fel ordered.

All four of them, plus a handful of stormtroopers, ran down the dark and shadowy hallway. The hallway was lined with thick durasteel doors on either side, presumably leading into a room just like Tycho's. They reached the stairs without incident. They climbed the stairs to get to the next level; they were cautious, and careful. They reached the next level without incident; they went through the door, and started to walk down the well lit hallway. The hallway was like every other Imperial hallway; white and grey plastoid lining everywhere, lacking architectural imagination wherever you look.

Typical Imperial thinking; functionality over aesthetic beauty, Tycho thought.

They continued to walk down the hallway, trying to be as silent as possible. The plastoid armour that Tycho was wearing was clanking, making it hard to move silently. They stopped at a doorway.

"Almost there." Marasiah Fel informed.

Suddenly, a door opened behind them, and a stormtrooper walked out. He looked at the group, then made a surprised gesture.

"Hey, you there—" The stormtrooper managed to say before Tycho cut him in half.

The noise made by the lightsaber echoed through the hallway. Tycho looked back at Marasiah, and the Imperial Knights.

"Damn it." Marasiah Fel whispered.

Tycho shrugged his shoulders. Suddenly, more stormtroopers poured into the hallway behind them. They immediately started to fire their blaster rifles. Marasiah Fel and the Imperial Knights immediately activated their silver-bladed lightsabers. They deflected the blaster bolts away from them, and back at the charging stormtroopers. The handful of stormtroopers accompanying Marasiah Fel were also firing their blaster rifles, trying to push the other stormtroopers back.

"Fall back!" Marasiah Fel ordered.

They immediately ran through the door, and down the hallway, moving as fast as they could towards the hangar. Several of Marasiah Fel's stormtroopers were shot by the Imperial stormtroopers, killing them instantly. Tycho was the last one to leave; he continued to deflect blaster bolts for as long as he could. Finally, the torrent of blaster bolts became too great, and Tycho retreated along with the others. The others were already at the entrance to the hangar; more and more stormtroopers started to pour into the hallways. Suddenly, the lights in the hallway turned off, and were replaced by flashing red and yellow lights. Tycho finally met up with the others.

"Where have you been?" Marasiah Fel asked.

"Just doing my job." Tycho replied, "It the shuttle here?"

"Not yet." Marasiah Fel answered, "It will be shortly."

Suddenly, a blaster bolt streaked by Tycho and hit the wall behind him, "Not short enough."

Tycho immediately batted the next two blaster bolts away with his crimson energy blade. The three Imperial Knights did the same; soon, the hallway was filled with stormtroopers. More of Marasiah's stormtroopers fell to the barrage of blaster bolts.

"Get in!" Antares Draco ordered.

They retreated into the hangar, and locked the door behind them shut. The hangar was surprisingly empty, only a few *Predator*-class starfighters were inside, clamped onto their launch racks. Large crates of supplies and other gear and weapons filled the sides of the hangar. A large door stood at the end of the hangar; other than that, there was simply a large open space in the middle. They ran to the middle of the hangar, and awaited the stormtroopers.

"Last stand." Ganner Krieg replied.

"We're not dead yet." Tycho replied.

Suddenly, a shower of sparks started to emanate from the door they just ran through; the stormtroopers were cutting through the door. Then, two loud clanking noises could be heard behind them. They turned around, and saw the large door start to descent.

"I really hope that's who I think it is." Tycho replied.

"Me too." Marasiah Fel added.

The large door lowered to the ground with a deep thud. Suddenly, a *Sigma*-class long-ranged shuttle swooped into the hangar. The shuttle spun around, and lowered the boarding ramp simultaneously. The shuttle never actually landed, but just hovered a metre off the ground. Just then, the stormtroopers outside the hangar broke through, and started charging into the hangar, at them.

Tycho looked at Antares Draco, "Go! I'll hold them off!"

Antares Draco grabbed Tycho by the shoulders, "You trying to be a hero?" He shouted.

"You need time!" Tycho replied, "Protect Marasiah, that's all that matters!"

Antares Draco nodded his head. He turned around, and saw that Ganner Krieg and Marasiah Fel were already onboard the shuttle. He leapt into the air, and landed on the boarding ramp. Tycho heard Antares Draco order the pilot to leave, with Marasiah Fel objecting. The shuttle pilot listened to Antares Draco, and started to exit the hangar. The shuttle took off, and Marasiah was leaning out of the ramp, Antares Draco holding her back.

She shouted, "Taivas!"

Tycho could barely hear her over the sound of the repulsorlifts and the roar of the engines. The shuttle left the hangar, and took off for orbit. Tycho nodded with acceptance, then looked back at the stormtroopers who were filling up the hangar.

Well, this was a good idea, Tycho thought.

Tycho immediately started to walk backwards, giving him as much space between him and the stormtroopers as possible. Before he could take two steps, the stormtroopers started to fire a torrent of blaster bolts at him. Tycho deflected the first few, then leapt into the air, towards the stormtroopers. He landed in front of them, rolled on the ground, and started slashing wildly. Each swing of his lightsaber took out several stormtroopers at once; they were so densely packed, it was hard not to miss. Using the Force to make him aware of his surroundings, Tycho dodged blaster bolts, while slashing and hacking at stormtroopers left and right, front and back. The stormtroopers screamed in terror before being cut down by Tycho's crimson blade. Limbs and heads were cut off; other times, Tycho would plunge his lightsaber blade into the chest of the stormtroopers. Tycho was completely consumed by the Force; his

awareness was magnified beyond anything he had ever experienced. Although he was fast, and strong, surprisingly, his muscles were not tired. His breathing intensified, but no other signs of physical exhaustion were present. Suddenly, the stormtroopers started to retreat, and back away from Tycho.

"Oh c'mon!" Tycho taunted, a little out of breath, "We were just starting to have some fun!"

The stormtroopers moved to either side of the hangar, making a corridor between the two groups of stormtroopers. Walking forward was a gigantic, over four metres tall, muscular Mantellian Savrip. This being was a gigantic hulking mass of flesh and muscle; his skin was heavily tattooed red, with black geometric patterns. His eyes were red and sulphur-yellow; his teeth were filled into sharp points, making him look even more menacing. The three toes on his two feet were more like talons, and the four fingers on both hands might as well be daggers. He was wearing an unusual suit of armour as well; the armour he was wearing was made of fist-size, oval, crab-like creatures called orbalisks. The orbalisks, from what Tycho could remember, were parasites that fed on the dark-side of the Force, giving its wearer incredible powers. The orbalisks covered his entire chest, arms, and legs; they were even present on the palm of his hands.

The stormtroopers yelled and cheered, "Indomita!"

Suddenly, Darth Indomita stopped, and grunted, "I'm going to eat your heart out." He said in a deep and menacing voice.

"Well, that's pleasant." Tycho replied.

Tycho backed away from the gigantic Sith Lord. Darth Indomita took out a massive hilt, and activated the blade. The crimson blade was incredibly long, about two metres in length. The weapon was a lightclub, a specialized weapons used only by the largest of creatures. It seemed to fit with the Mantellian Sivrip well. Darth Indomita slowly walked towards Tycho; Tycho backed up as much as he could. With a fury, Darth Indomita smashed his lightclub against Tycho's lightsaber with a powerful overhead strike; a bright explosion of light emanated from the impact, as well as sparks. The sudden impact was jarring; the violence of the shock resonated within the long bones of Tycho's arms. Just as fast, Darth Indomita forcibly kicked Tycho in the chest. Tycho heard a loud crack; the kick probably broke some ribs, and sent Tycho flying through the air.

The stormtroopers cheered at the spectacle. Tycho hit the permacrete ground with a crack. He slid on the ground for a few moments before stopping. Slowly, Tycho picked himself up, and stared at Darth Indomita. Darth Indomita stared right back at Tycho, and growled, revealing his frightening pointed teeth.

"Your life ends here." Darth Indomita growled.

In a fury, Tycho charged with his lightsaber at his side. Tycho lunged forward, determined to thrust the tip of his crimson blade into the heart of Darth Indomita. Surprisingly, Darth Indomita dodged the first attempt, then grabbed Tycho's crimson blade with his hands. Tycho's eyes widened in surprise and disbelief. Darth Indomita held onto Tycho's blade with a firm grasp; Tycho tried to pull away, but failed. With a powerful smash, Darth Indomita smacked the lightsaber out of Tycho's hands. Tycho, jarred off-balance by the smash, started to retreat backwards. Tycho ducked under a horizontal swipe that would have decapitated him. Using the Force, Tycho retrieved his lightsaber; as the lightsaber flew through the air, the crimson blade graced the side of the massive Mantellian Sivrip. A short burst of sparks rain down from his armour; he was completely unharmed by the lightsaber.

Orbalisks resist lightsabers, Tycho remembered.

In a fury, Darth Indomita lashed out at Tycho, swinging his crimson bladed lightclub wildly. Tycho expertly dodged, ducked and blocked the furious attacks. Darth Indomita's attacks were not as fast as they were strong, making dodging easy, but blocking particularly tough. The Sith Lord was more of a brawler, using vicious and brutal swipes and attacks, rather than spins and twirls. In a rage filled fury, Darth Indomita smashed Tycho with an overhead strike, followed by another, and another; the explosions of light were blinding, and sparks showered from the impacts.

Tycho was smacked off-balance, making him step backwards. The powerful strikes forced Tycho onto his knees; each time his lightsaber got hit, he felt the jar of the impact in his bones and muscles. Tycho, knowing he can't withstand this kind of punishment for much longer, rolled onto his back. Darth Indomita's final overhead smash missed Tycho by mere centimetres, cracking and melting the permacrete floor. Finishing his roll, Tycho emerged on his feet, only to have to block another powerful overhead strike. The surprise of the overhead strike caught Tycho off-guard. Darth Indomita followed up with another powerful overhead strike, possibly even more powerful than the last; using the momentum of the strike against the Sith Lord, Tycho spun away from it, and slashed at the Sith Lord's right calve. The crimson blade struck

the orbalisks, causing the shells to spark. Darth Indomita grunted in surprise, and backed away from Tycho. Using the momentum he gained, Tycho lunged forward to attack Darth Indomita. Tycho charged at the Sith Lord, thrusting the tip of his lightsaber blade at Darth Indomita's chest. With incredible reflexes, Darth Indomita grabbed the blade, just as it made contact, and twisted. A short burst of sparks showered from where the crimson blade made contact, and more from where Darth Indomita was holding onto the blade. The hilt of the lightsaber twisted Tycho's arm into an awkward position.

I'm fracked, Tycho thought.

Darth Indomita used a powerful Force Wave attack that sent Tycho flying backwards. Tycho hit the permacrete floor forcefully, knocking his lightsaber out of his hands. Tycho landed and slid for a couple of metres; his lightsaber landed several metres away. Tycho looked back at Darth Indomita, who was slowly approaching Tycho with his lightsaber in his hands. Tycho immediately started to crawl towards the lightsaber as fast as he could. Darth Indomita was almost taunting Tycho with the slow speed he was approaching with. Finally, Tycho used the Force to retrieve the lightsaber; the lightsaber flew into Tycho's hands. Just then, Darth Indomita was already on top of him, ready to strike. Tycho quickly activated his lightsaber, just in time to block yet another overhead smash. The momentum from the impact knocked Tycho's crimson blade back towards him, slicing through the plastoid armour, and nicking his left shoulder. Tycho screamed from the sudden surge of pain.

It's been a good run, Tycho thought.

Darth Indomita grabbed Tycho's head with his massive hands, and started smashing Tycho's skull into the permacrete floor. The impacts were forceful, and jarring. Tycho felt as if he was going to pass out from the impacts; he was seeing stars, and was slightly disorientated. For a moment, Darth Indomita stopped and growled at Tycho; the Sith Lord drooled and growled at Tycho. Tycho, recovering from the few moments of relative peace, rose his hand towards the Sith Lord. He sent out a short electrical shock that caused the Sith Lord to take a step backward, away from Tycho. The electrical shock left a burn scar on the Sith Lord's right cheek; he clutched the scar with one of his massive hands, and growled. Unleashing the rage pent up inside Tycho, he let loose a massive barrage of electrical energy, Force Storm. The torrent of electrical energy shot out of Tycho's fingers, and struck the Sith Lord. The blue lightning bolts flashed through the air, every one of the bolts struck the massive Mantellian Sivrip. The Sith Lord's orbalisk armour could resist the electrical energy for a while, but soon

started to die and burst. The Sith Lord screamed in pain as poison from the orbalisks were released into his body. More and more orbalisks started to die from the high voltage, high ampere lightning bolts; the Sith Lord's bloodstream coursed with toxins released by the orbalisks, causing muscle contractions, convulsions, and foaming at the mouth. Tycho kept up the attack, sending more and more lightning bolts into the Sith Lord's chest. The convulsions were so strong, that soon, the spinal column snapped in half by the violent muscle contractions, killing the hulking Sith Lord.

The stormtroopers watched in disbelief and fear as the Sith Lord was killed. Tycho finally stopped the electrical attack, and looked over at the stormtroopers. Almost immediately, upon seeing the dead body of Darth Indomita twitching on the permacrete floor, ran away. Tycho's eyes were red and sulphur-yellow, no doubt from the Force Storm attack. Tycho immediately ran towards the large doors, which remained open, and dropped off the ledge.

The underground it is, Tycho thought.

Five Standard Days Later: Taivas:

After his escape from the New Imperial Palace, Tycho fled to the underworld of Coruscant. The underworld of Coruscant was a dangerous place, filled with criminals and gangsters. Only a few decades ago, the Yuuzhan Vong ferals, beings infected by Yuuzhan Vong biots and yorik coral, plagued the underworld; one of the many chilling reminders of that horrible invasion only a hundred years ago. Only recently had they been cleaned up and security restored. Running from the Empire, Tycho fled off-world, travelling as a refugee. He travelled across the galaxy, using public transportation, until he finally managed to rent a spacecraft. He headed for Taivas, a world in the Zhar system in the Outer Rim, and only just arrived.

He approached the planet with caution. As he descended through the atmosphere. Officially, Taivas was supposed to only have a very thin atmosphere, but what Tycho was descending through was much thicker. The magnetic field screwed with Tycho's sensors. Several rifts and depressions gouged out the surface of the planet. On instinct, Tycho decided to descend through one of the massive rift valleys. The valley was incredibly large, and deep; Tycho couldn't see much of anything in front of him. A dense fog started to roll over the transparisteel windshield. Tycho was about give up, when suddenly, it appeared in front of him. Out of the fog was a huge megastructure, the likes of which Tycho had never seen before.

The Hidden Temple, Tycho thought.

The Jedi Hidden Temple was only a rumour; Tycho never thought it would actually exist. The massive temple, made of dark grey stone, consisted of one large pyramid structure in the center, lined and etched with statues and engravings, surrounded by four oval-like spires. The temple was surrounded by a moat of water; flora and fauna, the likes of which Tycho had never seen, flourished here. Tycho slowly approached the temple, circling the massive structure. Slowly, he landed his spacecraft on the landing pad, and descended down the boarding ramp. Tycho was still wearing the white plastoid armour of a stormtrooper, but he added a black Sith robe overtop. He was immediately greeted by two Jedi.

"Greetings, Sith." A blue-skinned Rutian Twi'lek Jedi said while activating his blue-bladed lightsaber.

The other Jedi, a beige-skinned Zabrak, activated his green-bladed lightsaber. The Zabrak had long black hair, and was missing his right arm. Tycho resisted the urge to activate his lightsaber, and merely stood still.

"My name is Tycho Xar, I am with her Majesty Marasiah Fel." Tycho replied.

The Rutian Twi'lek slowly lowered his lightsaber; the Zabrak did the same, "She told us that she was bring someone else with her." The Zabrak replied, "We didn't think it would be a Sith."

"Former Sith." Tycho corrected.

"We are sorry for our misunderstanding" The Rutian Twi'lek replied, "My name is Shado Vao."

"And I am Wolf Sazen." The Zabrak added, "We are but the few Jedi Knights here."

Tycho paused, "Yeah, I've heard rumours of the Hidden Temple, but I never thought it actually existed."

"The Masters thought it better that we had a safe haven to which we could retreat too in case history repeated itself. Preferably, a haven that was unknown to anyone, even most of the Jedi." Shado Vao explained, "As you can see, a wise choice indeed."

Tycho looked around at the massive structure in front of him, "This is all fascinating and all, but where is Marasiah? She should have been here."

Shado Vao and Wolf Sazen looked at each other, then back at Tycho. Finally, after an awkward pause, Shado Vao finally said, "She never arrived."

Tycho was taken aback, "What?"

"She never arrived." Shado Vao repeated, "Perhaps she had to take a detour."

Anger filled Tycho's heart, "No, she didn't take a detour." He stated, "She's dead, isn't she?"

Both Jedi didn't say anything. Tycho balled his hands into fists, ready to strike out at anything. He resisted to urge to rage out.

Finally, Wolf Sazen replied, "There is no word of her demise." He started, "If the Empire had killed her, they would have announced it all over the HoloNet."

Tycho's eyes filled with tears. He stared at the stone ground, "Dead or captured, they'll eventually get her." He whispered.

After a moment, Shado Vao said, "This is a hard time for you, we know, but the Jedi High Council would like to have a word with you."

Tycho slowly nodded his head. The two Jedi led him into the temple; it was almost completely empty. The sounds of footfalls echoed within the temple walls. They walked through the dark and shadowy halls, until they entered the Jedi High Council Chambers. Inside sat three beings; they were all staring at Tycho. Shado Vao and Wolf Sazen remained behind Tycho.

"Welcome, Knight Xar, to the Jedi Hidden Temple." A female Neti replied, "I am Master T'ra Saa. This is Master Tili Qua," pointing to a female Chadra-Fan, "And this is Master K'Kruhk." Finally pointing to a male Whiphid, "We are the last of the Jedi High Council."

Tycho stared at the three for a moment, "I know who you all are."

"Yes of course, you were once a Jedi, were you not, Knight Xar?" Master T'ra Saa asked.

Tycho nodded his head, "That's right."

"And you've returned?" She asked.

Tycho shook his head, "No. I was brought here by her Majesty Marasiah Fel."

"She has not returned from Coruscant, has she?" Master K'Kruhk asked.

"No."

"We trust in the Force to returned her to us." Master T'ra Saa replied.

"Trust in the Force? You're still going about with that garbage!" Tycho screamed, "The Force has brought us nothing but pain!"

"It was the Force that allowed our brethren, the Imperial Knights, to ally with the Jedi!" Master T'ra Saa countered, "It was the Force that has revealed the Sith to be our true enemy."

"Are you not a Sith, Knight Xar?" Master Tili Qua asked.

"Formerly." Tycho answered sternly.

"The Force guides us down mysterious and unpredictable paths." Master T'ra Saa added, "We must trust in it to guide us to peace."

"Forget the Force!" Tycho shouted, "You want peace? Kill Amelia!"

The three Jedi Masters hesitated, finally it was Master K'Kruhk who spoke, "Assassination is not the way of the Jedi."

"The Jedi respect life, Knight Xar. You know this." Master T'ra Saa added, "The Force connects everything in the cycle of death and renewal. We cannot openly search out and kill anyone, not even a Dark Lord as Amelia."

"You forget, Knight Xar, that assassination doesn't necessarily work in our favour." Master Tili Qua added, "Observe the events on Had Abbadon." Tycho listened intently, "Darth Krayt was lured to and killed on a mission to Had Abbadon. What ended up happening?" She paused for a second, "It allowed for a new, and even more terrible tyrant to take his place."

"Amelia..." Tycho whispered.

"Yes." Master Tili Qua replied, "If Darth Krayt had not been killed, Mistress Amelia would not have come to power the way she did."

"Assassination only allows for more terror, and more tyranny to spread across the Empire, and the galaxy." Master T'ra Saa added.

"Look at what has happened already!" Master Tili Qua replied, "You were the ones who assassinated the High Moffs, were you not?" Tycho didn't say anything, "Now, the Sith stand to fill the vacuum you created!" She continued.

Tycho shook his head, "No. You're wrong. You are all wrong! We did what was necessary!"

"Listen to our words, I beg of you." Master T'ra Saa said in a soothing voice, trying to calm him down.

"This alliance against the Sith is falling apart!" Tycho informed, "The Jedi are complacent and advise to do nothing! The Empire has now lost its legitimacy to the throne! And the Galactic Alliance fleet was almost completely destroyed over Empress Teta!" Tycho listed, "There aren't enough Jedi to fill a freighter, and the Imperial Knights have been almost completely wiped out! The Sith will win this war if you let it!"

"Killing Amelia is not the way." Master T'ra Saa advised.

"No!" Tycho screamed, "If you do nothing, nothing will ever change! Something, anything, must be done!"

"By killing Amelia, you may destroy the Sith..." Master Tili Qua started, "... but the possibility of the Sith splintering off into several different factions also exists. Then we will have many enemies to combat, not just one."

"Or, perhaps another, even more powerful, Sith Lord will take her place." Master K'Kruhk added.

"The Jedi Council has been here before, Knight Xar." Master T'ra Saa informed, "We have determined that a natural course is best for the galaxy."

Tycho was infuriated, "A natural course!" Tycho screamed in defiance, "A natural course! How many worlds must fall, how many billions of beings must be killed before the Jedi act?"

"The Jedi Council has learned from its past, Knight Xar." Master T'ra Saa continued, "Long ago, during The Clone Wars, the Jedi were enlisted as Generals; Master K'Kruhk and I know that better than anyone else here. Recall the mistakes of the past; The Clone Wars almost destroyed the Order, and plunged the galaxy into a darkness that wasn't lifted for over two decades." Master T'ra Saa explained, "We, as the Jedi High Council, see similarities between this war and The Clone Wars. We cannot condone an act of murder."

"Different time, different war." Tycho stated.

"Same results." Master T'ra Saa sternly replied.

"No, not this time." Tycho finally, and grudgingly said.

The Jedi High Council was at a loss with Tycho.

"Wasn't it a famous Jedi Master of the Old Republic that once said '*The Jedi do not fight for peace. The Jedi fight for civilization, because only civilization creates peace. The Jedi fight for justice because justice is the fundamental bedrock of civilization: an unjust civilization is built upon sand. It does not long survive a storm*'." Tycho quoted, "The Jedi have to fight against the Sith, and their injustices."

"We know of Master Windu's words; Master K'Kruhk and I knew him well." Master T'ra Saa replied, "But we still cannot permit an act of assassination."

"You Jedi... you're all fools, blind to your ignorance, following a false dogma." Tycho replied in an angry voice.

Tycho turned around, and started to storm out of the Jedi High Council Chambers. Suddenly, Shado Vao and Wolf Sazen activated their lightsabers, preventing Tycho from leaving. In a rage, Tycho activated his crimson blade, and dropped into a fighting stance.

"Stop!" Master K'Kruhk ordered, "There is to be no fighting here!"

"Then let me go, or I swear, you all will perish here today." Tycho angrily replied.

"We understand you are upset from the loss of Marasiah Fel, but this is not the way to free the galaxy from the grasp of the Sith." Master T'ra Saa replied.

"I don't care." Tycho replied, "I'm going after Amelia, whether you approve or not. If I have to go through you... so be it."

The two Jedi Knights held their ground; Tycho held his. Master T'ra Saa nodded her head, and the two Jedi Knights deactivated their lightsabers. Tensions within Tycho ran high. Tycho finally deactivated his crimson blade, and walked out of the Jedi High Council Chambers.

Master K'Kruhk looked back towards Master T'ra Saa, "I have a feeling that this will lead the galaxy down a very dark path, one that we may never be free from."

"We can only hope that it won't." Master T'ra Saa replied.

Fate

Four Standard Days Later: Kuat Drive Yards, Kuat:

After Tycho left Taivas, he travelled across the galaxy towards Dantooine. There, he convinced a small contingent of stormtroopers and commandos to follow him to Kuat, where they were going to assassinate Mistress Amelia. Seemingly, the Sith-Imperial complex was under turmoil due to the recent assassination of all six Moffs on the council. Hearing that news made Tycho feel better about himself.

Tycho's plan was simple enough. Mistress Amelia has been secretly building a new flagship, the *Dread Lord*, at Kuat Drive Yards for the past month or so; this was the starship that Tycho was sent to Ryloth to acquire the plans for. After The Battle of Empress Teta, her current flagship, the *Imperatrix*, has gone under major repairs, having been nearly destroyed during that battle. Intelligence reports the *Imperatrix* has remained at or near Kuat since then, and has not moved away from Kuat in the past two weeks. Tycho inferred that Mistress Amelia has sped up production of her new flagship, the *Dread Lord*, in order to replace her current one, and was personally seeing the manufacture herself. Tycho planned to infiltrate the *Imperatrix* using old Imperial codes, that presumably work, and quickly and quietly plant explosives on the bridge, then getting out before it explodes. Intelligence reported that recently, the *Imperatrix* has been only lightly guarded, run by a skeleton crew.

Tycho, and over two dozen commandoes and stormtroopers, just dropped out of hyperspace within the Kuat system, and was currently bearing down on the *Imperatrix*. Kuat was a lush and vibrant world, full of green vegetation and blue oceans. A massive orbital ring surrounded the planets equatorial region; these were the drive yards, where construction of spacecraft were built. The massive *Imperious*-class Advanced Star Destroyer was still pitted with craters from heavy turbolaser fire. In the background, Tycho could see the massive framework of the *Dread Lord* already being built; the massive vessel looked to be about nine kilometres long. Construction was already underway on making and fitting the outer hull, and other essential parts of the Star Dreadnaught. Several other construction projects were underway, although on a much smaller scale. *Pellaeon*-class Star Destroyers orbited Kuat, protecting the construction yards. The Imperial pilot pitched the *Nune*-class Imperial shuttle downward, descending towards the ventral hangar.

"Imperial shuttle, relay authorization codes immediately, or we will fire upon you." The *Imperatrix* air-traffic controller replied.

"Transmitting codes now." The Imperial pilot replied.

They waited for a moment, "Now we find out if that code was worth the price we paid." Tycho replied.

After a few tense moments, "*Imperial shuttle, authorization has been cleared. Proceed to docking bay twenty.*"

"Confirmed. Proceeding to docking bay twenty." The Imperial pilot replied.

"Good." Tycho replied. Tycho walked towards the holding cell, "Gear up, we're in."

After waiting with the stormtroopers for a minute or two, the Imperial pilot gave them the thumbs-up that they've landed safely. The plastoid armour of the stormtroopers rattled together then they made contact; Tycho was still wearing stormtrooper armour, plus the black Sith robe overtop. He actually like the way it looked. The rear boarding ramp descended, and the stormtroopers were the first to walk down. They were greeted only by a single Imperial officer, a human male wearing the typical grey uniform of Imperial service.

"Welcome aboard the *Imperatrix*." The Imperial officer greeted.

Suddenly, the stormtroopers grabbed the Imperial officer, and broke his neck. The snapping sound that it made was audible even to Tycho, who was still in the shuttle's holding room. After the last stormtrooper descended, Tycho did as well. He looked around the empty hangar; he noticed only a handful of *Predator*-class starfighters, a few crates of supplies, and not a whole lot else. No other personnel was present within the hangar.

"Okay, let's move." Tycho ordered.

The stormtroopers ran across the hangar, Tycho leading the way. He took out his lightsaber, and activated the crimson blade. The *snap-hiss* the blade made echoed within the hangar. They got to the main entrance door that led into the rest of the starship. Tycho stood off to the side, and looked back to the stormtroopers.

"Move silently and swift." Tycho ordered, "Head straight for the bridge. There should only be a skeleton crew. Once there, take control, plant the charges, and get out. Got it?"

"Where will you be?" A stormtrooper asked.

Tycho closed his eyes for a moment; he sensed Amelia onboard, but not towards the bridge, "I've got something else to take care of." Tycho finally replied, "Don't fail me."

Tycho opened the door; it slid off to the side with a hiss. The stormtroopers immediately entered the corridor, and secured it; the hallway was empty. Without being ordered, the stormtroopers turned and ran right, headed for the bridge. Tycho watched the stormtroopers head down the long, poorly-lit corridor. Tycho finally stepped into the corridor, and headed left. Tycho stretched out with the Force, finding a powerful presence straight ahead. Tycho followed the presence; the powerful presence could only be coming from Amelia. For several minutes Tycho ran through the maze of corridors within the starship, until he finally came across a large room, a cargo loading dock. The room was dark, and nearly completely empty. The walls were made of durasteel panels, while the floor was made of grated durasteel. The room felt cold, but Tycho walked in anyways. Suddenly, the door behind him slammed shut, and the lights above turned on. Tycho immediately dropped into a fighting stance, only to see Darth Nihl standing at the other end of the room.

"You made it just in time." Darth Nihl taunted.

"How unfortunate, I was actually looking for your Mistress." Tycho replied.

"Oh, well, she's around." Darth Nihl answered.

Darth Nihl started to walk towards Tycho, slowly. He activated his yorik coral sabre-cane; the *snap-hiss* echoing within the large, empty room. Darth Nihl spun his sabre-cane in front of him.

"You know, I thought you died on Orelon." Darth Nihl replied, "Guess I'd have to make sure this time."

"You'll find that I'm full of surprises." Tycho countered.

Tycho immediately launched himself into the air, landing just in front of Darth Nihl. The Nagai Sith Lord immediately lashed out at Tycho, swinging his sabre-cane wildly. Tycho expertly dropped into a defensive stance, blocking and parrying the lightning fast strikes to the body. Using a knighthood level Soresu, a defensive lightsaber fighting form, Tycho was able to block and parry Darth Nihl's powerful attacks. Darth Nihl, on the other hand, was a vicious and ferocious warrior, using a mastery level Djem So, an aggressive lightsaber form.

Darth Nihl twirled his sabre-cane, and leapt into the air. He came down on Tycho, striking him with an overhead attack. The force of the impact sent Tycho stumbling backwards. Darth Nihl landed gracefully, and started a series of fast lightsaber strikes, and powerful jabs and lunges. Tycho expertly blocked and dodged the incoming attacks. Darth Nihl then leapt into the air again; while in the air, he thrust his sabre-cane towards Tycho's chest. Tycho side-stepped the attack, and blocked the crimson blade with his own. When Darth Nihl landed, Tycho went on the offensive. Tycho lashed out with a series of spinning attacks, fancy twirls, and powerful strikes. The movements were so fast, they were a mere blur to both combatants. Tycho, gaining some momentum, forced Darth Nihl backwards; each strike Tycho would make was parried and blocked by either the crimson blade or the shaft of the sabre-cane. Suddenly, Darth Nihl kicked Tycho in the gut; Tycho stumbled backwards, losing the momentum of the battle. Darth Nihl immediately raged out against Tycho with a series of powerful, Force-augmented, overhead strikes. Tycho blocked each strike with a high horizontal parry, but the force of the impacts brought him down to his knees. An Explosion of light and a shower of sparks followed each strike. After a few overhead strikes, Tycho rolled out of the way of the last one; the crimson blade struck the durasteel grate, causing it to spark and melt.

Darth Nihl growled in anger, "Your only preventing the inevitable!"

"We shall see." Tycho taunted.

Tycho charged again, using fancy lightsaber swirls and footwork to dodge and attack Darth Nihl. The Sith Lord reciprocated, twirling his lightsaber in unusual ways before striking. Darth Nihl attacked with both the crimson blade or use the shaft itself as a weapon; he used each with perfect coordination, attacking with perfect precision. Darth Nihl lunged forward, and stabbed the crimson blade towards Tycho. Moving off to the side, Tycho smacked the crimson blade away. After a series of jabs from Darth Nihl, he screamed in anger. In a rage, Darth Nihl swung his sabre-cane horizontally, determined to cut Tycho in half. Tycho dodged the attack, allowing the crimson blade to pass harmlessly by. Seizing the opportunity, Tycho lunged toward and struck Darth Nihl on the right shoulder with his lightsaber. The lightsaber made contact with a burst of sparks, causing Darth Nihl to grunt in pain, and fall to one knee. In response, Darth Nihl immediately kicked Tycho away, preventing another strike.

"First blood." Tycho taunted.

"And the last from you, traitor." Darth Nihl countered.

Darth Nihl quickly got back onto his feet, swirled his sabre-cane, and attacked Tycho. The lightning fast attacks seemed to be coming from all direction. Darth Nihl would perfectly mix up horizontal swipes, overhead smashes, and forward lunges together into fluid, unpredictable combinations that Tycho could barely block. The wound on Darth Nihl's shoulder didn't seem to faze him at all; in fact, he seemed to feed off the pain. In a desperate move, Tycho caught the crimson blade with his own, and engaged in a sabre-lock. They both fought hard against each other's blades; a shower of sparks rained down from the two lightsabers, and onto the durasteel grating. Tycho managed to twist the blades until Darth Nihl's hit the grating, causing it to shatter and melt; he followed up with a swipe at Sith Lord's head. Darth Nihl moved out of the way of the crimson blade; the tip passed mere millimetres away from his nose.

Darth Nihl followed up with an attack of his own, a forward lunge at Tycho's chest. Tycho smacked the crimson blade down into the grating, but Darth Nihl used the momentum of the attack to spin around, and smash Tycho's lightsaber upwards and out of his hands. The lightsaber flew out of Tycho's hands, and into the air; defenceless, Tycho immediately moved backwards. Darth Nihl seized the opportunity, quickly moving forward with a flurry of swipes and jabs. Tycho desperately tried to dodge the attacks; the crimson blade came within centimetres of Tycho's body. Calling upon the Force, Tycho lashed out with a Force Wave attack. Darth Nihl turned away, and stood his ground; the Force Wave attack shook the durasteel grating, but Darth Nihl used the Force to plant himself firmly on the ground. Meanwhile, Tycho reached out with the Force, and recovered his lightsaber. The lightsaber flew into his hands, and Tycho managed to get the blade up before Darth Nihl could attack. The Sith Lord was already moving forward, prepared for an overhead smash. Tycho blocked it with a horizontal parry; the two crimson blades made contact with explosions of light and a crackle that was almost deafening. Sparks showered down onto Tycho's plastoid armour. Suddenly, Darth Nihl disengaged the sabre-lock, and used a Force-augmented overhead smash to attack Tycho. The sudden attack caused Tycho to stumble backwards and fall onto his back. Immediately, Darth Nihl jumped into the air, twirling his sabre-cane; Darth Nihl came down on Tycho and stabbed the ground beneath him. Tycho barely managed to get out of the crimson blade's way; the blade struck the ground that Tycho had occupied just moments before. Tycho kicked the Sith Lord's ribs, rolled out of the way, and lashed out. Tycho's lightsaber made contact with Darth Nihl's right shoulder again. Darth Nihl roared in pain as the crimson blade carved into his white and black tattooed flesh.

"That's two." Tycho taunted.

Darth Nihl roared in anger once again, and unleashed a torrent of lightning bolts at Tycho; a Force Surge. Tycho rose his lightsaber just in time to block the devastating lightning bolts. Tycho screamed in anger as the first lightning bolts struck his crimson blade. Tycho fought against the electrical shocks; sweat poured down his forehead. The electrical current started to surge through the energy blade, and into the hilt. Tycho continued to fight against the pain he was experiencing, but he knew he couldn't hold out much longer. With a sudden, Force-fuelled rage, Tycho lashed out; he directed the lightning bolts back towards Darth Nihl. Darth Nihl's red and sulphur-yellow eyes widened as the lightning bolts were sent back his way. Instantly, Darth Nihl twirled his sabre-cane, deflecting the lightning bolts from shocking him.

Darth Nihl charged with a flurry of attacks. Tycho was still partially dazed from the lightning attack, and was barely able to defend himself. Tycho was exhausted from the battle; his muscles were tired and sore, his joints were aching, and his breathing was laboured. His heart felt as if it were pounding out of his chest, and the beats felt erratic. However, he did manage to block and dodge the fury of Darth Nihl's attacks. In a rage, Darth Nihl unleashed another Force Wave attack. The powerful Force attack sent Tycho flying backwards, into a durasteel panel wall. The roof of the room shook and cracked; the floor buckled and bent awkwardly. The entire ceiling seemed like it could give way and collapse at any time. Tycho's body slammed into the durasteel panelled wall, causing it to dent under the force of the impact. Tycho fell back towards the durasteel grated floor; his back and head were in tremendous throbbing pain. Tycho slowly picked himself up; his joints creaked due to the movement, and his muscles were twitching uncontrollably. As Tycho looked up, he saw Darth Nihl preparing to jab at him; Tycho side-stepped the attack, allowing the crimson blade to pierce the durasteel panel. Darth Nihl was surprised by the dodge; Tycho immediately spun around behind Darth Nihl, and slashed a diagonal groove across the Sith Lord's back. Darth Nihl screamed in pain again, falling immediately to his knees. Although on his knees, Darth Nihl turned to face Tycho, who was preparing to attack with an overhead smash. Darth Nihl blocked the attack with a high horizontal block using the shaft of his sabre-cane. Tycho smashed again, and again, each time gaining more strength and more power. Anger and rage fuelled Tycho now; fear started to flood Darth Nihl's emotions. Tycho allowed himself to let go of his physical body, and fall directly into the dark-side of the Force; almost immediately, red lines appeared all around him.

Shatterpoint, Tycho thought.

The shatterpoint was a very rare, very powerful Force technique that allowed the wielder to see the weak points in all things, living or inanimate. The red lines correlated to weak areas; one red line ran along Darth Nihl's sabre-cane. With a roar, Tycho struck the red line on the sabre-cane. Surprisingly, the sabre-cane broke in half and splintered into a dozen pieces; the crimson blade continued downward into Darth Nihl's body. Tycho's crimson blade cleaved its way through Darth Nihl's shoulder, into his chest, and through to his gut. The wound immediately cauterized from the intense heat from the lightsaber. The two halves of Darth Nihl fell onto the durasteel grated floor with clank and a thud. The wound was black-orange, and was smoking; the smell of burnt flesh filled Tycho's nose. Tycho stared at the corpse of Darth Nihl for a couple more seconds; he felt a sudden sensation of satisfaction pour over him. Suddenly, Tycho heard clapping; Tycho turned around and looked at the far end of the room. Hidden in shadows, Amelia emerged, with a big smile on her face. She was wearing the full garments of a Sith Lord, black heavy robes and all. Tycho could see the black, jagged geometric tattoos on her left hand as she clapped.

"Impressive indeed." Lady Amelia replied, "I knew there was a future in you."

Tycho turned and walked towards her, "I've changed my future."

Amelia laughed, "Oh, no you didn't. You did exactly what I had foreseen."

Tycho pointed the tip of his lightsaber at her, "So, you foresaw me killing you."

Amelia took a moment, "Hardly. But you did end up aiding the Sith... in ways you could not even imagine."

"How?"

"It was you who murdered the Moff's, was it not?" Lady Amelia rhetorically asked, "By killing the Moff's, you did two things: one, you gave the Empire every reason to hunt down and kill the rebels; and two, you have given me complete control over the Imperial government, and its military." Lady Amelia laughed.

Tycho's eyes widened at the revelation. *The Jedi were right!*

"That's not true!" Tycho shouted, "That's impossible!"

Amelia laughed even harder, "You've done a great service to your people, Knight Xar. Embrace it!"

"The Sith are not my people!" Tycho screamed, "Not anymore!"

Amelia laughed again, "So arrogant." She paused, "They soon will be." Tycho stood his ground, awaiting a reply, "You harnessed the dark-side of the Force so well, even killing my Fist. Letting your emotions drive you, it gives you strength, and focus." She explained, "You will do quite nicely as one of us... again."

"I will die before I ever join you!" Tycho countered.

Amelia laughed once again, "You don't have a choice, my dear." Lady Amelia rebutted.

Tycho, in a rage, charged at Amelia; she activated her crimson-bladed lightsaber, and easily parried and blocked the lightning fast attacks. Tycho went into a rage, bashing and brawling, rather than striking. His attacks were wild, and fuelled by anger, by the dark-side of the Force. Tycho screamed as he attacked, letting out all his aggression and rage against Amelia. Sweat started to get into his eyes, his muscles quickly tired, but he continued to press the attack. Amelia, meanwhile, easily defended herself, smiling as Tycho went into rage. Tycho, although using a crude estimation of Djem So, almost forsaken all his lightsaber techniques while fighting Amelia. Tycho, roared in anger, then started a series of overhead smashes; Amelia parried the attacks with horizontal blocks. Explosions of light and showers of sparks emanated from the contact of the two crimson energy blades. Finally, Tycho came down on Amelia, engaging in a sabre-lock.

"Feels good to let go, doesn't it?" Lady Amelia taunted, "This is the Sith way."

Tycho fought hard against Amelia's blade, "I will never join you!"

Tycho stared at Amelia for a moment, while fighting against her. She had no red lines around her at all; no shatterpoints. She was a perfect being. The revelation surprised and disturbed Tycho.

"You don't have a choice!" Lady Amelia countered, "You are already one of us, you just haven't realized it yet!"

Tycho roared once again, and broke the sabre-lock, "Liar!"

Tycho broke the sabre-lock and smashed his lightsaber against Amelia's with a fury. Although Tycho was furious, his attacks were dwindling; his muscles couldn't keep up with his desire for revenge. Nevertheless, Tycho pressed the attack; Amelia, on the other hand, was simply letting him rage out against her. Amelia, almost calmly, blocked and parried all of his attacks. Each time Tycho struck at Amelia, the impact

would resonate in his bones. The pain he felt in his body became greater, but he fought against it, attacking Amelia anyways.

Suddenly, Amelia unleashed a Wave Front against Tycho. The massive Force-energy wave, coupled with a sonic blast rocked Tycho off his feet, sending him tumbling backwards and onto the durasteel grated ground. The impact of the wave felt like a sledgehammer hitting his chest, knocking the wind out of him. The white plastoid breastplate armour Tycho was wearing cracked and shattered upon impact. The sonic blast threatened to rupture Tycho's eardrum; blood flowed out of his ears, and he couldn't hear as well anymore. Amelia calmly walked forward, lightsaber in hand. She struck at Tycho with a single overhead smash; the force of the impact cracked against his lightsaber, sending him into the ground. Tycho's body smashed against the durasteel grating with incredible force. Tycho groaned in pain, and tears started to well up around his eyes.

"Resistance is futile." Lady Amelia taunted, "You will be one of us. I have foreseen it."

Tycho started to crawl away, trying to give himself as much time as possible before the next strike. After a while, Tycho finally managed to gather enough strength to stand up. Tycho rose with his lightsaber activated. Almost immediately, Amelia jumped into the air, and struck at him with a forward jab to the neck. Tycho barely managed to block the attack, although it sent him fall backwards again. Amelia landed with grace, smiling at the sight.

"It is over, Knight Xar. Face it." Lady Amelia taunted, "You have failed, and soon, the rest of the resistance will fall too."

Tycho, on the floor crawling, turned over to look at Amelia, "Oh, you haven't seen anything yet."

Amelia laughed, "The song of the brave."

"Soon, I will be dead, and you with me." Tycho said with a smile. Tycho had started coughing blood, and it was starting to run down the corner of his mouth. Tears welled up in the corner of his eyes.

Amelia took one step forward, towards Tycho, "Oh, I see." Lady Amelia replied; she took out a portable holotransmitter out of her pocket, and activated it. A blue cone projected into the air, with the image of a high ranking Imperial officer, "Colonel, do you have them?"

The blue cone of the Colonel shuttered from static, *"Yes, my Lady. The rebels have been captured and eliminated, and the charges they planted have been located and deactivated successfully."*

Tycho's eyes widened, and tears started to run down his cheeks, "That's a lie." Tycho was hoping.

"Oh?" Lady Amelia replied, "Colonel, show me."

The blue cone got wider, and showed the bridge of the *Imperatrix*. The holographic image showed several dead stormtroopers, and more held captive. Suddenly, the Imperial officers shot the stormtroopers with blaster pistols, killing them instantly. Their bodies dropped to the floor. They took their helmets off, revealing the faces of the men Tycho led here.

Amelia turned back to Tycho, "Your little insurrection is at an end." Amelia turned off the holotransmitter, and placed it back in her pocket.

Tycho's heart sank; emotions started to well up inside of him. The knowledge that his companions were dead only fuelled him. Tycho launched himself into the air, and attacked Amelia again. Tycho swung his lightsaber horizontally, trying to decapitate Amelia. Amelia ducked under the attack, then rose her lightsaber in anticipation for the oncoming onslaught from Tycho. Immediately, Tycho began smashing his crimson blade against hers. Flashes of light, sonic booms and showers of sparks emanated from the powerful attacks. Tycho was in a rage. Suddenly, Amelia rose in between smashes, and used the Force to levitate Tycho into the air; she simultaneously started to crush his bones and organs, Force Crush.

Tycho hovered about thirty centimetres off the ground; he could feel his bones starting to bend and creak under the tremendous strain exerted onto them. His joints started to separate from each other, and his organs started to get squeezed by an incredibly powerful external source. Tycho screamed in defiance and in immense pain; Amelia, meanwhile, laughed with joy. Then, with a surge of power, Amelia slammed Tycho into the durasteel grates; the floor dented upon impact. Tycho's body slammed into the floor, and broke some bones upon impact; Tycho screamed in pain from the sudden shock. Amelia followed the attack with another Wave Front; the Force attack sent Tycho sliding and rolling across the floor. Tycho finally came to a standstill, groaning and moaning in pain.

"This is the end for you, Knight Xar." Lady Amelia taunted.

Amelia unleashed a Power Surge; massive blue lightning bolts shot out of Amelia's fingers, streaked through the air, and struck Tycho. The lightning bolts surged through his body, causing immense pain. Sparks shot out all around him as lightning streaked across the durasteel grated floor. After a few moments, Amelia stopped her attack. Tycho groaned in pain once more.

"This is the price you pay for your lack of cooperation." Lady Amelia continued.

She shot another torrent of lightning bolts out from her fingers. The electric shocks coursed through his body again; his organs, already damaged from the previous Force attacks, were being fried from the inside. The electric jolts caused Tycho's muscles to spasm, and twitch uncontrollably; Tycho was powerless to move, or even prevent further attacks. He simply laid on the floor, because that was all he could do at this point. Another course of electricity was sent through his body; Tycho screamed again. The dark room flashed with blue light emanating from the massive torrent of lightning bolts.

"For your lack of vision." Lady Amelia continued.

Amelia sent yet another torrent of electrical energy towards Tycho. His arm and leg muscles started to seize; his back muscles were threatening to break his spine from the powerful convulsions. Tycho had barely the energy to scream anymore; the powerful Force attacks were draining his will, and his energy, away from him. His vision was starting to turn dark, and his body started to turn numb, despite being shocked by violent lightning bolts.

"And now, Knight Xar, you will be mine once more." Lady Amelia finished.

Amelia looked to the cracked ceiling; the durasteel beams, plastoid finish, permacrete floor and other materials were barely holding together. Amelia reached out with the Force, and grabbed it. With an incredible surge of Force powers, Amelia brought the ceiling down upon Tycho.

Tycho reached upward, and screamed, "No!"

The rubble crashed on top of Tycho, crushing him under tonnes of durasteel, permacrete, and plastoid chunks. The sheer weight of the material that crashed down upon him was surely enough to kill him. Almost immediately, Amelia used the Force to remove the rubble from off of Tycho's body. After a few moments, Amelia was able to find Tycho's body. Surprisingly, his body wasn't flattened or crushed beyond recognition; this was because Amelia was careful. She felt no life in him; his heart was

not beating. Amelia closed her eyes, and reached out with the Force; she touched Tycho's heart with the Force, caressing it, rubbing it, and finally, embodying it with life. After only a few moments, Tycho's heart started beating again; Amelia had brought Tycho back from the dead.

"See, you're not finished yet." Lady Amelia said, "I'm not letting you off that easy. You've got some work to do, don't you?"

Amelia smiled. Tycho wasn't moving, but his heart was beating, sending blood to the rest of his broken body. Tycho's body was almost completely broken; almost all of his bones were either completely shattered, or had major fractures within them. Some of his organs were completely crushed; others were punctured and quickly failing. Even his beating heart was barely operating. Slowly, Amelia walked over the rubble pile, and used the Force to pick Tycho up.

"You have much to do..." Lady Amelia said.

Epilogue:

Three days have passed since the assault on the *Imperatrix*. Tycho's body was brought down to the medical levels, where Amelia had been reconstructing him. They've been working non-stop for the entire time, working against biology, against the laws of nature. Amelia was present the entire time, ordering the doctors and the medical droids, telling them what to do.

Tycho suddenly woke up from a nightmarish dream, only to be welcomed to incredible pain. Every square centimetre of his flesh was alive with anguish; his skin crawled, tingled, and felt foreign to him. Suddenly, the waves of anguish and pain he initially felt seemed like a paradise as time ticked on. The pain seemed to worsen with time, growing, amplifying with every second. The pain was unbearable, and blinding; his mind, he could almost feel it, seemed distant and fuzzy to him. Tycho cried out, but in a robotic, mechanical voice. Tycho was utterly confused. The room he was in was dark, and filled with medical equipment. Bacta tanks were off to one side, and medical droids were busy working on various tasks. Tycho was strapped onto a durasteel medical gurney, bound by lasercuffs. Questioningly, he looked down at his "body". The sight shocked and scared him beyond his worst nightmares. It looked to him as if the bones in his arm had been replaced by dark-side imbued metal, while his lower half from the waist down, was completely replaced by cybernetic talons.

Suddenly, Amelia appeared in front of him, and smiled.

"I brought you back." Lady Amelia started, "And now you're mine to control."

Tycho screamed again, in the same mechanical voice.

"You're more machine now, than man." Lady Amelia informed, "But no matter. You are more powerful now than you could ever have dreamed."

Tycho finally stopped screaming, "Amelia?" He said in a mechanical voice.

"That's Empress Amelia, now, thanks to you." She informed, "Yes... with the Council of High Moff's out of the picture, I am the sole authority in the Imperial government." She laughed, "The other Moff's are so terrified, I have them eating out of the palm of my hands."

Tycho couldn't believe what he was hearing; he screamed at the top of his lungs, "What have you done?"

"I have given you the gift of life." Lady Amelia answered, "And the strength in pain."

Tycho shook his head violently, trying to fight against the lasercuffs holding him down; the lasercuffs dug into his soft, sore, and scarred flesh. Tycho once again screamed in pain, a pain, it seemed, that would never end. Amelia stretched out with her feelings, sensing Tycho's anguish.

"The pain..." Lady Amelia replied, "Yes, I know it hurts now, but trust me, you can use it to your benefit." She started, "You can bend it, manipulate it, corrupt it to your will." She looked directly into Tycho's mechanical eyes, "The pain gives you anger, and that anger fuels your emotions. Those emotions lead to the dark-side of the Force... and the dark-side will give you... power. Unimaginable power."

Amelia turned away, and looked back at Tycho, "The pain will give you focus, and determination, and will." She informed, "Use it, and all your vengeance's will be fulfilled." She continued, "I promise."

Suddenly, Amelia started to walk out of the room; Tycho stared at her as she left. Suddenly, she stopped, and turned around, "You are to be my new minion, my pawn. A tyrant against my enemies." Lady Amelia stated, "Thus, your new name shall be... *Darth Tyranid*."

Amelia smiled, then walked into the shadows of the room. He then heard her say, "Finish him."

The medical droids came into view, and started poking him with various needles, and other devices. Slowly, Tycho's mind became fuzzy, as if it weren't his anymore; he couldn't think clearly anymore. The sensation hurt Tycho even more as moments passed. Suddenly, all he could hear was a voice; a single voice. Amelia's voice; and she was laughing, laughing at him. Soon, Tycho couldn't think for himself anymore; his mind was clouded by pain, agony, and rage. He was consumed by the dark-side of the Force. With every passing moment, he was becoming less of Tycho, and more of the monster Amelia had created. He screamed in agony; the scream was long and loud, and shook the room.

"No!"

Extras



Canon Force Powers 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	<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)	

Phonetic Alphabet:

A	Atom
B	Bacta
C	Constellation
D	Delta
E	Echo
F	Foxtrot
G	Gamma
H	Halo
I	Icon
J	Juno
K	Kessel
L	Lucas
M	Meteor
N	Nebula
O	Optic
P	Prince
Q	Quasar
R	Rho
S	Sabacc
T	Tango
U	Uniform
V	Vortex
W	Whiskey
X	X-Ray
Y	Yavin
Z	Zeta

Starfighter Statistics:

	<i>Predator-class starfighter</i>	<i>TIE/D Mark II Defender</i>	<i>X-83 TwinTail starfighter</i>	<i>CF9 Crossfire starfighter</i>	<i>Viper-class starfighter</i>	<i>Blackbird-class stealth starfighter</i>
Climbing Rate:	High	High	Low	Moderate	Low	Low
Manoeuvrability:	High	High	Moderate	Low	Low	Low
Armament:	Light (+6 Atk) (two double medium laser cannons)	Heavy (four cannons; two ion cannons; two proton torpedoes)	Moderate (Enhanced heavy laser cannons; proton torpedoes)	Heavy (laser cannons; double light laser cannons; proton torpedoes)	Light (Three double- medium laser cannons)	Light (Three double- medium laser cannons)
Speed (in atm):	1500 km/hr	1680 km/hr	1200 km/hr	1200 km/hr	1500 km/hr	1500 km/hr
Shielding/Armour:	100 hp	175 hp (+regenerating shields)	170 hp	150 hp	150 hp	140 hp
Sensory Package:	Navicomputer	Navicomputer	Astromech Droid	Navicomputer	Navicomputer	Adv. Navicomputer
Hyperdrive:	Class 1.0	Class 1.0	Class 1.0	Class 1.0	Class 1.0	Class 0.5
Special Feats:	None	None	None	None	None	Stealth + Sensors
Make:	Sienar Fleet Systems	Sienar Fleet Systems	Incom Corporation	Incom Corporation	Tetan Fleet Systems	Tetan Fleet Systems

Bomber Statistics:

	<i>Neutralizer-class bomber</i>	<i>BB-2 Starfire fighter-bomber</i>	<i>Raptor-class bomber</i>
Climbing Rate:	Moderate	Low	Low
Manoeuvrability:	Low	Low	Moderate
Armament:	Moderate (double medium laser cannon; various bombs, torpedoes and missiles)	Heavy (laser cannons; light laser cannon; interceptor missiles; proton torpedo salvo; ion bomb)	Heavy (laser cannons; light laser cannon; interceptor missiles; proton torpedo salvo; ion bomb)
Speed:	1500 km/hr	1200 km/hr	1200 km/hr
Shielding/Armour:	120 hp	170 hp (+regenerating shields)	150 hp
Sensory Package:	Navicomputer	Navicomputer	Navicomputer
Hyperdrive:	Class 1.0	Class 1.0	Class 1.0
Special Feats:	None	None	None
Make:	Sienar Fleet Systems	SoroSuub Corporation	Tetan Fleet Systems

Imperial Capital Ships:

	<i>Ardent-class fast frigate</i>	<i>Pellaeon-class Star Destroyer</i>	<i>Imperious-class Advanced Star Destroyer</i>
Armament:	Moderate (50 hvy turbolaser; 30 turbolaser; 50 point- defence)	Heavy: (50 hvy turbolaser; 50 turbolaser; 40 ion; 50 torpedo)	Heavy: (50 hvy turbolaser; 50 turbolaser; 40 ion; 50 torpedo)
Armour:	1200 hp	2350 hp	2500 hp
Hyperdrive:	Class 1.0	Class 0.75	Class 0.75
Complements:	<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)
Personnel:	Crew 1400; Troops: 200	Crew: 8450; Troops: 2700	Crew: 6700; Troops: 3000
Make:	Kuat Drive Yards	Kuat Drive Yards	Kuat Drive Yards

Galactic Alliance Remnant Capital Ships:

	<i>Sabertooth-class Assault & Rescue Vessel</i>	<i>ShaShore-class frigate</i>	<i>Scythe-class battle cruiser</i>	<i>Tri-Scythe-class frigate</i>
Armament:	Light (30 turbo; 20 point-defence)	Moderate (60 turbo; 20 point-defence; 20 torpedo)	Heavy (30 hvy turbo; 60 turbo; 20 ion; 40 torpedo)	Moderate (100 turbo; 20 point-defence; 40 torpedo)
Armour:	780 hp	900 hp	1900 hp	920 hp
Hyperdrive:	Class 1.0	Class 1.0	Class 0.75	Class 1.0
Complements:	None	CF9 Crossfire starfighter (24); shuttle (2)	CF9 Crossfire starfighter (36); shuttle (4)	CF9 Crossfire starfighter (12); shuttle (2)
Personnel:	Crew: 800; Troops: 300	Crew: 1200; Troops: 250	Crew: 5200; Troops: 1500	Crew: 1400; Troops: 250
Make:	---	Mon Calamari Shipyards	Mon Calamari Shipyards	Mon Calamari Shipyards

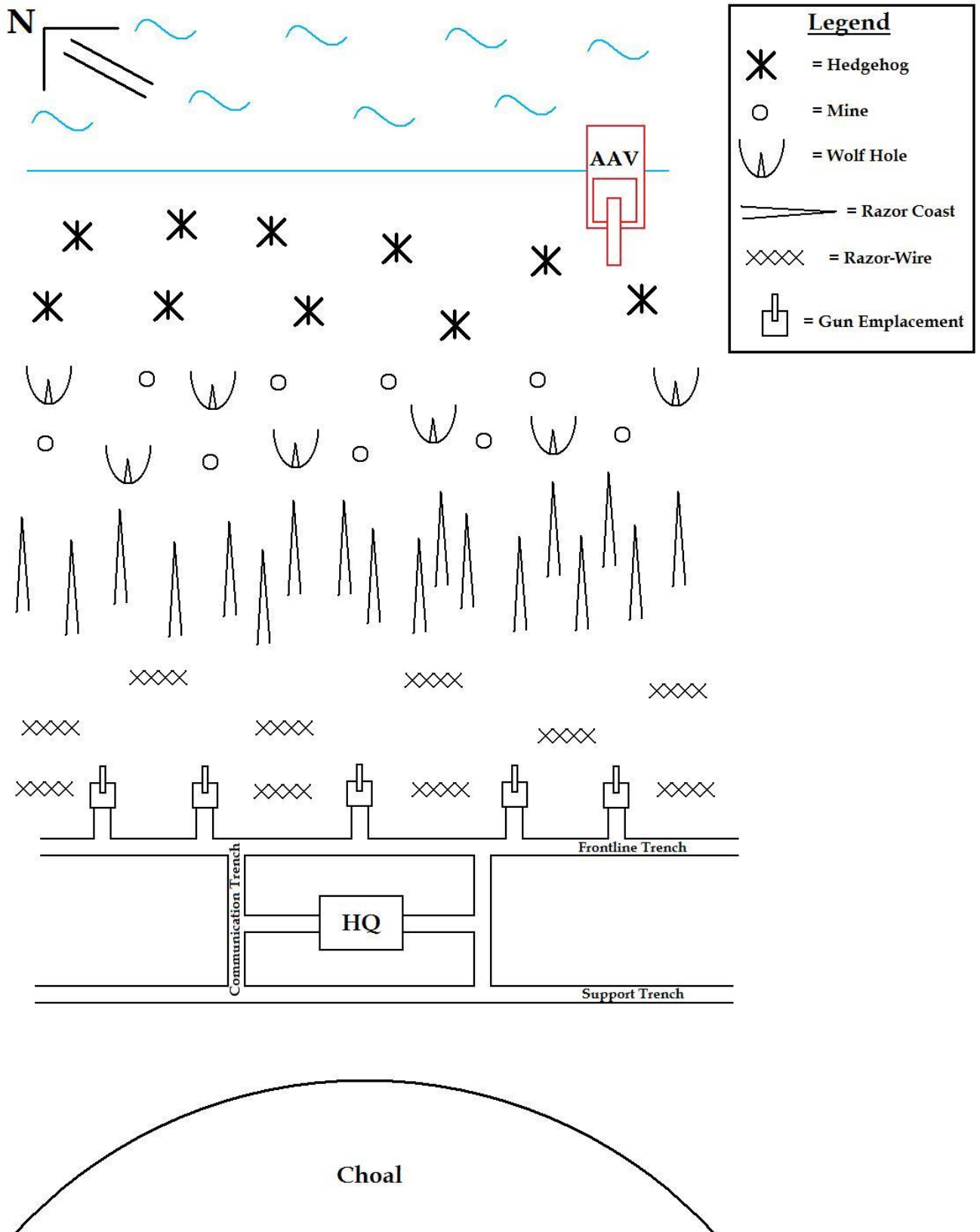
Tetan Navy Capital Ships:

	Valkyrie-class Battlestar	Ares-class fighter platform
Armament:	Heavy (60 long-ranged turbo; 60 hvy turbo; 60 turbo; 12 ion; 12 torpedo)	Light (5 hvy turbolaser)
Armour:	1900 hp	1000 hp
Hyperdrive:	Class 0.75	Class 0.5
Complements:	shuttle (6)	<i>Viper</i> -class starfighter (100); <i>Raptor</i> -class bomber (100); <i>Blackbird</i> -class stealth fighter (50); shuttle (10)
Personnel:	Crew: 5200; Troops: 1200	Crew: 1000 Pilots: 500
Make:	Tetan Fleet Systems	Tetan Fleet Systems

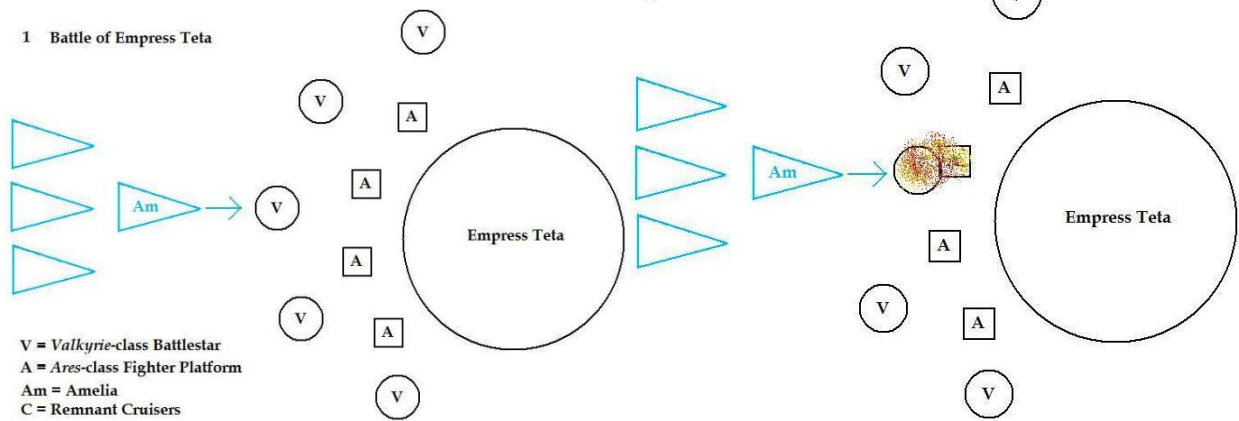
Imperial Vehicles:

	AT-AHT	AT-RCT	Century Mark V Tank	Kybucket Speeder Bike
Armament:	Heavy (Hvy laser cannons; hvy blaster cannons)	Light (double medium blaster cannons; suppression cannons or grenade launcher)	Medium (dual hvy turbolaser; light turbolaser; medium blaster cannons)	Light (weapon)
Armour:	350 hp	120 hp	200 hp (+regenerating shields)	50 hp
Speed:	80 km/hr	90 km/hr	60 km/hr	500 km/hr
Complements:	8 speeder bikes or 3 AT-RCTs	None	None	None
Personnel:	Crew: 5 Troops: 60	Crew: 2	Crew: 3	Crew: 1
Make:	Kuat Drive Yards	Kuat Drive Yards	Santhe/Sienar Technologies	Aratech Repulsor Company

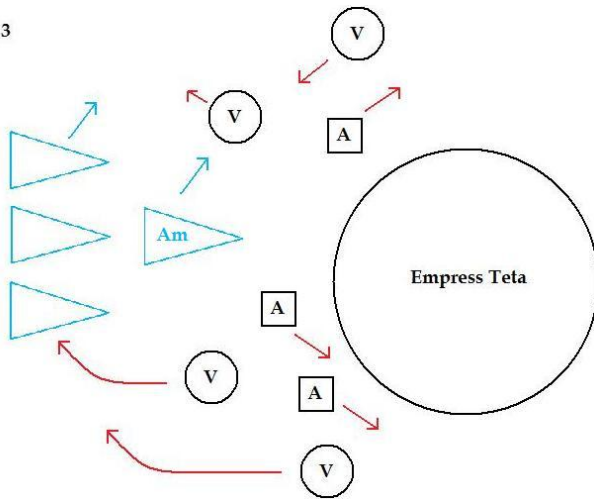
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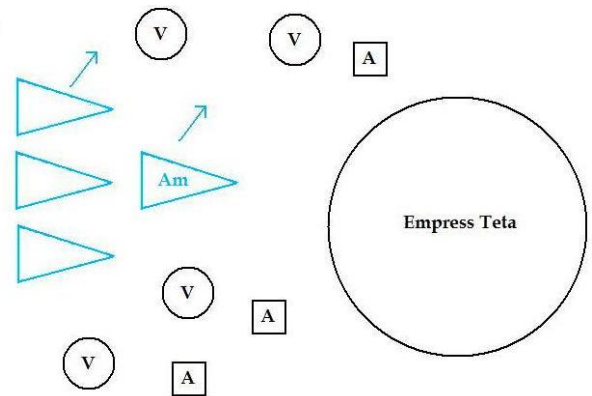
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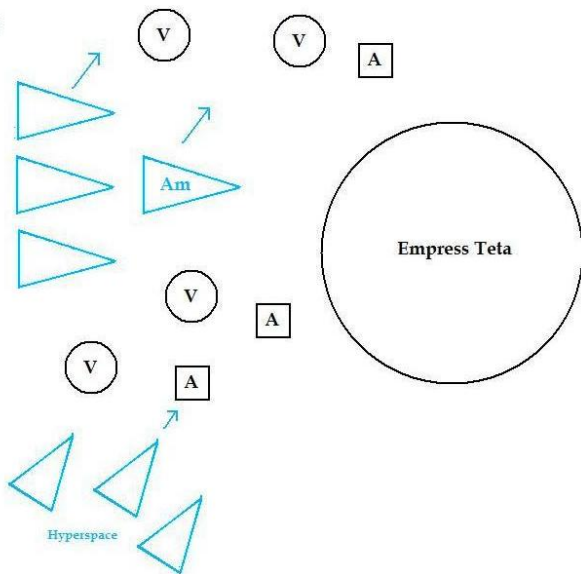
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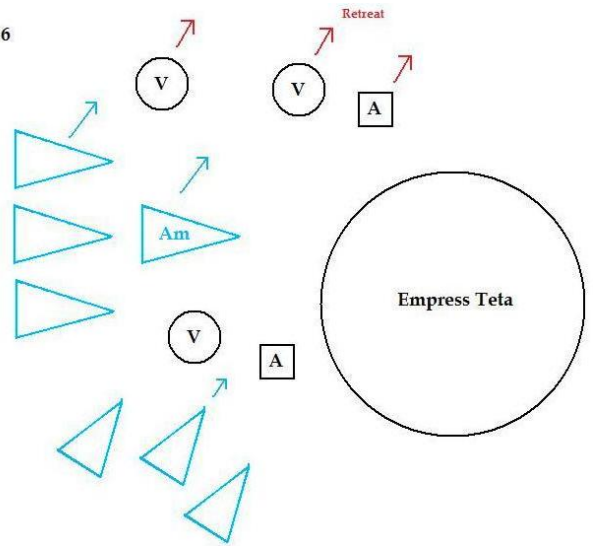
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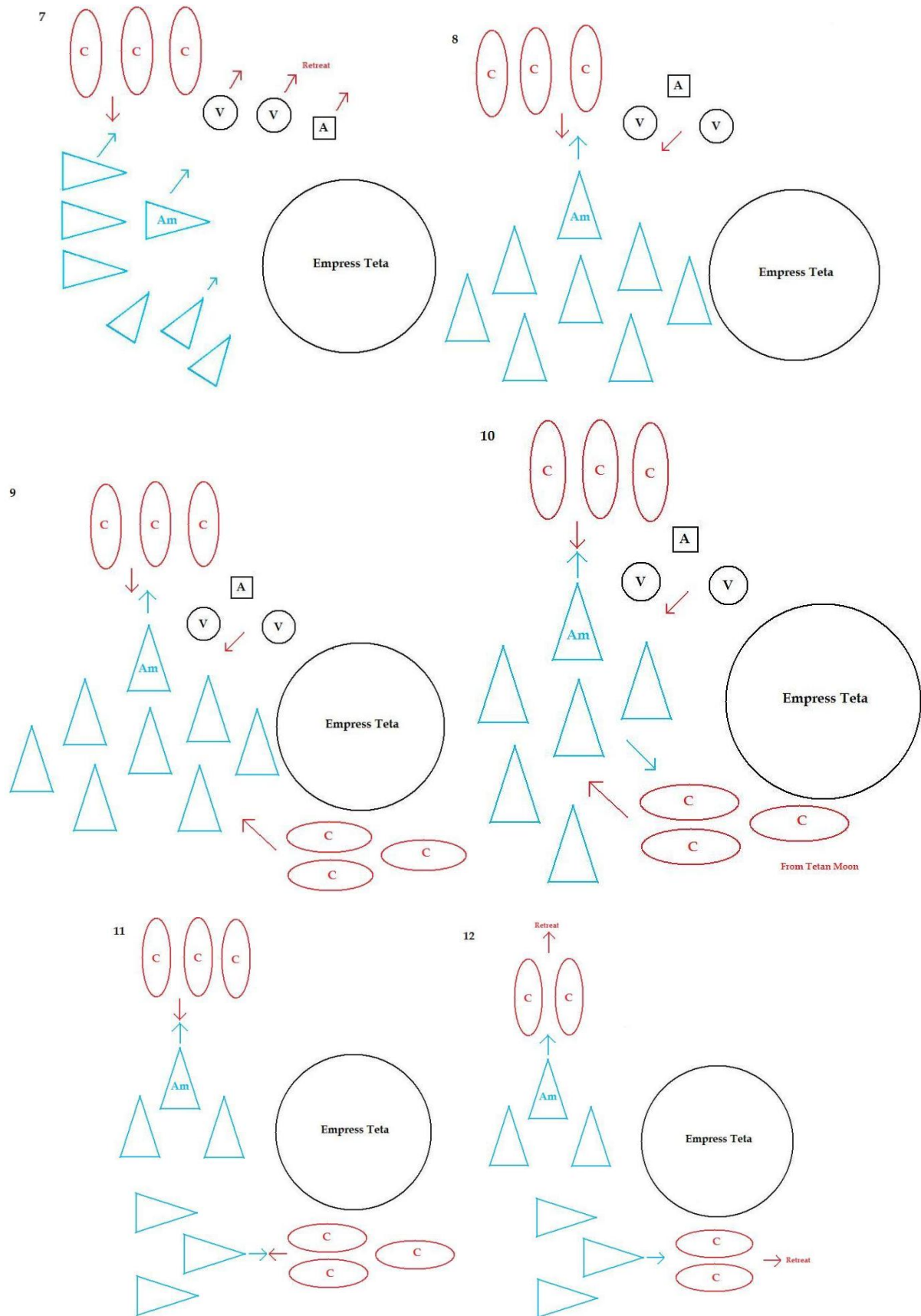


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Author's Notes:

The second novel in the Dark Age series was quite an important one for me. It really shows the downfall of the galaxy. I quite enjoyed writing this chapter in the series because it deals with slightly more philosophical point of view, rather than action and war (as the first one was); it deals with the difference between good and evil, but comes to question the grey area. When is it enough to say, good enough?

Tycho, in this story, sides with the Sith at the beginning of the story because, later revealed in the novel, he believes that all though the Sith may be going about it in a controversial, and non-ideal manner, a forced stability (i.e.: forced peace) is still stability. If there is no other way to gain stability in the galaxy, other than forcing beings to get along, than isn't forced peace good enough? Although many readers will probably question this notion, which is a good thing, I feel it is a valid argument. Another side of the problem is, when does the end justify the means? When does forcing beings into stability, either by extermination (as done by the Sith) or by restrictions and reduction of rights, justify the results? The line when the end does justify the means changes from person to person; some are more lenient, others are very strict. I leave it to the reader to come up with the answer on their own.

Another interesting situation where the question of, when does the end justify the means, comes into play is around the end of the novel. Recall the situation where Tycho, Antares Draco and Ganner Krieg set out to assassinate the Council of High Moffs; as well as when Tycho argues with the Jedi High Council about the assassination of Amelia at the end. Although murder is often viewed as a horrible, unthinkable, unforgivable act, is it ever justified? What is justice? Is justice contained within the law? Can it ever exist outside the law?

Although justice is never explicitly mentioned in the novel proper, it does have a powerful undercurrent within the scenes mentioned above. Tycho and the Imperial Knights, Master Draco and Knight Krieg, exact revenge against the corrupt and treacherous Council of High Moffs for backstabbing Emperor Roan Fel (at the end of the Sith-Imperial War), as well as their continued support of the Sith after the fact, which ultimately led to his death (in this novel). Although, usually, from the readers point of view, assassinating the Moffs doesn't seem like an unforgivable and morally corrupt thing to do; after all, they did side with the "evil" Sith, and backstab the "righteous" Emperor Roan Fel. From the readers point of view, Roan Fel is seen as the good guy, and when the good guy gets screwed, exacting revenge doesn't seem all that immoral. However, assassination is a type of murder. So I propose this question: why is it when

murder is conducted on the supposed "evil", its okay, but when it is conducted on the "good" or the "innocent", its immoral? This is not an easy question to answer, as it shouldn't be. But it is an interesting one.

How about at the end of the novel, when Tycho argues against the the Jedi High Council about the assassination of Amelia. Now this question (or situation) I find much more interesting. These are the points of view: the Jedi believe that a "natural course" must be taken. This means that the act of doing nothing is the best and proper course to take when dealing with Amelia. Tycho, on the other hand, believes action is required, sooner rather than later. Who is correct? The Jedi, or Tycho? These are their arguments. The Jedi, having gone through several purges and genocides in the past, have learned from their history (i.e.: they have much experience in this matter); they seem wise, and knowledgeable. They argue that the Sith, as powerful and "unified" as they are under Amelia, are prone to self-destruction. This is most likely true; the Sith are prone to self-destruction, turning their anger and desire for power inward. After all, look how many backstabblings, back-door deals, and civil wars the Sith have been involved with. So, a "natural course" would likely work. However, Tycho argues that by doing nothing, too much will be lost before the Sith turn inward on themselves. This is true as well; under Amelia, an all-powerful, goddess-like being (the Sith'ari after all) is likely to hold the Sith together as a cohesive, and effective fighting (and destroying) force for quite some time. This begs the question, which Tycho asks the Jedi High Council, how many worlds and how many beings have to die before action must be taken? This question has been asked of people in our world; take the Second World War for example. The genocide of the Jews in Europe was known by everyone (except it) but when was enough enough?

I leave you with these questions to ponder. Thank you.

Sean Funk

Sean P. Funk

STAR WARS

Accurst:



Written by: Sean P. Funk

Last Updated: July 22nd, 2009



Dramatis Personae

**Locke Oannes*: Jedi Knight

**Rubis Silaro*: Vigo of the Black Sun crime syndicate

**Selena Versio*: Jedi Knight

**Tycho Xar*: Jedi Padawan

**Wran*: Former member of the Black Sun

* Denotes original characters

Mos Eisley, Tatooine: 125 ABY:

Mos Eisley, the armpit of the galaxy, a haven for thugs, thieves, gangsters and anyone else into illegal activities. Recently, an intergalactic crime syndicate calling themselves The Black Sun has been raiding, looting, and hijacking freighters in the Tatoo system for the past standard month. The greater threat the Jedi Order, as well as the Galactic Alliance, determined that The Black Sun has been dealing and selling illegal Yuuzhan Vong bio-weapons. In response to growing concern, the Jedi Order dispatched two Jedi to handle the investigation; one was a highly experienced, and up-and-coming human female Jedi Knight named Selena Versio. She was nearly twenty-two standard years old, and already she has more experience in hostile negotiations than almost anyone in her age range. The other Jedi Padawan was a man named Tycho Xar; only nineteen, he has shown promise to be a great Jedi one day. Rumours around the Order put these two as lovers, although openly, they deny it.

It was the middle of the afternoon, and the temperature at Mos Eisley was scorching hot. Inside one of the cantinas, the Jedi's target has been inside, drinking, since morning. The music was loud, played by a three Bith; other types of aliens fill out the rest of the cantina, talking and laughing amongst themselves. Selena Versio entered the small cantina, and scanned the faces she came across. In a dark, back corner of the cantina, she spotted the being she has been looking for. She walked towards the being, a male, green-skinned Rodian, and sat down across from him.

"Hello Wran, " Selena Versio greeted in a sly voice, "Nice to see you're still awake."

The Rodian was drunk; the table he was sitting at had seven empty drinks on it, "Who are you?" He said with a slow, slurred voice. Without saying a word, she placed her lightsaber on the table. His eyes widen, "I see. And what does a Jedi want with me?"

"Where is the Black Sun located?" Selena Versio asked in a stern voice.

Suddenly, Wran jumped up from his seat, and turned the table over. Selena was knocked over off her seat, and fell onto the sandy ground. Wran immediately started running for the exit, when suddenly, Tycho appeared from the corner and hit him with his shoulder. Wran hit the floor hard, knocking the wind out of his lungs.

"You should have just answered the nice lady's questions." Tycho Xar replied.

The Rodian laid on the ground, in pain and tired; Wran had the wind knocked out of his lungs. Selena walked up to Tycho, "Nice work."

"I try." Tycho sarcastically replied.

The two Jedi grabbed the Rodian from off the ground, and dragged him outside. He dragged his feet, and struggled against the two Jedi. Forcibly, they slammed him into the tan-coloured wall.

"Now, I'm only going to ask you nicely once more, where is The Black Sun located?" Selena Versio asked.

The Rodian hesitated for a second; Tycho shook him, "Wran!"

"Okay, okay." Wran replied with his hands up, "I never like them anyways." He hesitated for a moment, "The Dune Sea."

"Where in the Dune Sea?" Tycho asked sternly.

"You have a datapad with a map?" Wran asked.

Tycho look out his datapad, displaying the map of Tatooine. The high-resolution digital map displayed the entire Dune Sea. Wran took it, and started scrolling through the digital map. He gave it back to Tycho, "Here."

The next afternoon, a terrible sandstorm blew over the Dune Sea. Visibility was almost zero; the strong winds kicked up sand into the air, and transported it kilometres away. The winds howled and screamed with terrifying force. The sand travelled so fast, it grinded stone like sandpaper. Selena Versio and Tycho Xar were attempting to cross a short section of the Dune Sea, heading for the secret base of the Black Sun. The wind was incredibly strong, making it hard for them to walk. Finally, they took a rest at the top of a large sand dune.

"Can you see them?" Tycho had to shout over the wind.

"No!" Selena replied, shouting over the howling from the wind, "But I can sense them!"

"Good enough!" Tycho replied, "Now what?"

"We go in!" Selena answered.

They kissed, and then started walking towards the secret base in two different directions. The secret base was only about five hundred metres in front of them, but they still couldn't see it. The two Jedi sensed two armed guards standing in front of the entrance. With lightning fast speed, the two Jedi disable the armed guards. Tycho used his lightsaber to slash the guard across the chest, while Selena used Force Wave to incapacitate hers. They quickly entered the secret base, and out of the wind. Their ears were ringing from the constant howling of the wind, and their faces were red from the abrasive sand being whipped around in the sandstorm. They shook the sand out of the robes, and continued forward. Selena looked around, and realized by they had such a hard time discovering the secret base.

"It's a cave." Selena realized.

"Yeah." Tycho replied.

Selena looked in front of her, "Well, only one way to go now."

Both Selena and Tycho proceeded deeper into the cave. The cave was dugout into the side of a sandstone cliff, and led deeper into the subsurface; the walls ran with drops of water and mould. The cave was dark and gloomy, and the air was dry; the walls of the cave were lined with artificial light bulbs that were very dim. Selena and Tycho walked deeper into the cave, walking slowly to avoid detection. Suddenly, they heard voices up ahead; the voices echoed in the narrow tunnels in the cave.

Finally, they reached the end of the tunnel, and came to a big gaping cavern. The cavern was a big open space, with several stalactites and stalagmites, plus several large crates. About ten or twelve Black Sun thugs were talking to each other in the middle of the cavern.

"Plan?" Tycho asked.

"How about you walk up to them, and introduce yourself." Selena replied.

Tycho laughed, "Right. That's not flawed at all."

"I'm serious." Selena replied, "You make a distraction, while I move around them, boxing them in."

Tycho thought about it for a moment, "You sure?"

"Yes." Selena answered in a stern voice, "Go."

Tycho walked around the corner, and approached the Black Sun thugs. He casually approached them, then activated his blue-bladed lightsaber. The *snap-hiss* startled the Black Sun thugs, who immediately turned to his direction, and rose their blaster pistols.

"Hello there." Tycho replied in a cocky voice.

Suddenly, one of the Black Sun thugs stepped out from the crowd. He was a Neimoidian, with greenish-grey skin and red horizontally slit eyes, and was wearing durasteel armour. The Neimoidian took out a blaster pistol from off his belt, and pointed it at Tycho.

"You're either a very brave, or very dumb Jedi to come here alone." The Neimoidian replied.

"Oh yeah, and who might you be?" Tycho asked.

The Neimoidian, as well as the others, laughed, "My name is Rubis Silaro, Vigo of this sector."

Tycho was mildly impressed, "Well, Rubis Silaro, I'm putting you under arrest." Tycho replied.

They laughed once again, "One Jedi against all of us. I think not."

From the other side of the cavern, "Make that two."

Another *snap-hiss* echoed in the cavern, followed by an eerie glow. They turned around and saw Jedi Selena standing behind them with a violet-bladed lightsaber in her hands. The violet energy blade illuminated the cave walls around her. She gave them a smile, "Drop your blasters."

Rubis Silaro hesitated, then nodded his head; the others in the room dropped their blasters. There was one man, in the center of the crowd, who didn't seem to do anything. He was cloaked in shadows, and appeared to be wearing a robe.

"You, in the middle, step out into the light so we can get a look at you." Selena ordered.

"You don't want that." The man said in a deep voice.

"Oh, yes we do." Selena replied.

The man took two steps towards Selena, then took off the hood on his robe. The face of the man was very familiar; he was a Jedi Knight.

"My name is Locke Oannes, and I am a—" Locke Oannes started.

"—Jedi Knight." Selena finished.

Tycho was confused, "A Jedi? Here?" Tycho asked.

Locke Oannes turned to look at Tycho, "Yes."

"Why are *you* helping The Black Sun?" Selena asked.

"Illegal activities are always going to happen, whether we police them or not." Locke Oannes explained, "I figured that if it's going to be around anyways, might as well put some boundaries on it."

"Right, and the credits had nothing to do with it." Selena countered.

"Shouldn't I be rewarded for my efforts to put organized crime under control?" Locke Oannes asked.

Selena shook her head in disbelief.

"You're selling Yuuzhan Vong weapons, hardly controlled." Tycho countered.

"They were going to be out on the streets anyways, at least now it's under control." Locke Oannes answered.

"Alright, enough!" Rubis Silaro shouted, "Either kill them, or recruit them. I don't care which."

Locke Oannes looked at Selena, "How about it? I'll cut you in, you turn a blind eye. Everybody wins here."

"Sorry." Selena sternly replied.

Locke Oannes shook his head, "So be it."

He immediately activated his green-bladed lightsaber; meanwhile, the rest of the Black Sun thugs took out sword hilts, and activated them. The Mandalorian Iron blade flipped into place within seconds. Locke Oannes charged at Selena, while the Black Sun thugs attacked Tycho.

Tycho immediately defended himself. The attacks from the Black Sun thugs were wild, and unskilled for the most part. Tycho immediately blocked and parried the attacks; his movements were swift and fluid. Tycho expertly twirled his energy blade, and twisted his body with perfect precision. However, the Black Sun thugs were able to defend themselves; their flip-swords were made of Mandalorian Iron, a metal that was resistant to the energy blade of a lightsaber. Tycho's counter-attacks were swift and accurate. Quick slashes and powerful lunges were Tycho's main method of attacks.

Meanwhile, Selena was engaged in a vicious lightsaber duel with Locke Oannes. Locke Oannes was a gifted Jedi Knight, and had extensive lightsaber training. His attacks were lightning fast, and deadly accurate; however, Selena was a skilled Jedi as well, easily able to defend herself. Locke Oannes seemed to be using an aggressive lightsaber form, while Selena used a more elegant technique. Locke Oannes attacked her with a powerful overhead smash, engaging a sabre-lock. A shower of sparked rained down from the two lightsaber blades, and an explosion of light followed.

"Why did you do it Oannes?" Selena struggled to say.

A crackling and sizzling sound emanated from the lightsaber blades.

"Isn't it obvious?" Locke Oannes asked, "For the credits."

Locke Oannes kicked Selena in the gut, causing her to stumble backwards. Locke Oannes charged, and swung his green-bladed lightsaber wildly. She quickly blocked and parried the onslaught of attacks.

"That doesn't work, Oannes. Credits can't be the whole story." Selena replied in the middle of battle.

"You're right. I did it for my future as well." Locke Oannes answered, "Jedi don't have pensions and retirements. I want mine."

Locke Oannes attacked again with a series of wild strikes, and powerful overhead smashes. Locke Oannes attacked with greater strength, and with quicker strikes. Locke Oannes took a strike at Selena's head; Selena blocked it, and engaged in another sabre-lock. Selena fought hard against the green blade, straining for her life. Suddenly, the green blade jabbed forward, nicking her shoulder. The sudden pain surprised her, and she screamed from shock. Locke Oannes, with lightning fast reflexes, then thrust his lightsaber into her chest. Her eyes went wide, and her mouth was open with surprise. The searing hot energy blade scorched her flesh; the smell of burnt flesh filled the air.

"Sorry, girly, but you were going to ruin everything." Locke Oannes commented.

Meanwhile, Tycho had been fighting the Black Sun thugs for a while now. He had killed several already, but they were still attacking him; the dead bodies of the Black Sun thugs littered the sandstone and limestone ground. Suddenly, he felt a disturbance in the Force. Tycho immediately disengaged the Black Sun thugs, leapt over the crowd, and ran towards Selena. He ran towards her, and saw her laying on the ground motionless with Locke Oannes nowhere to be seen.

Fear permeated his mind. He ran and slid to her side, "Selena! Wake up!"

Locke Oannes appeared behind him, "She's dead, kid."

Tycho looked at the lightsaber wound in her chest; the wound, cauterized, was burnt and smoking. His heart immediately filled with anguish and rage. He looked up at Locke Oannes; tears started welling up in his eyes.

"Don't make the same mistake she did, kid." Locke Oannes replied, "Join us, or die."

Tycho slowly stood up. He reached out with the Force, and retrieved Selena's lightsaber. It flew into his hand, and he activated it. Both blades activated with a *snap-hiss*, and the light glowed off the cave walls. Tycho held both lightsabers in his hands, and prepared to attack.

"Okay, kid." Locke Oannes replied.

Tycho lashed out with both lightsabers; he attacked with unrestrained fury, and rage. The flurry of attacks from two lightsabers threatened to overwhelm Locke Oannes. He defended himself as best he could, but Tycho's attacks were relentless. Tycho spun and twirled the two lightsabers in his hands with perfect precision and elegant grace. His attacks were a blur, and his strikes were powerful. Tycho let himself go completely to the Force, allowing it to fuel him, and guide his hands; his body, arms and wrists were in constant, fluid motion. Locke Oannes defended and blocked the attacks, but his defences were failing. Suddenly, with a powerful swipe of his lightsaber, Tycho managed to disarm Locke Oannes, destroying his lightsaber, cutting it in half.

Locke Oannes fell to his knees; he looked up at Tycho and pleaded, "Okay, okay, you win." Locke Oannes replied, "Arrest me."

Tycho stood over him for a moment; emotions of raw anger and rage filled his heart. He glanced over at the dead body of Selena, then with a sudden surge of rage,

decapitated Locke Oannes with a single swipe. His head rolled on the ground for a few seconds before coming to rest in a puddle of water. Tycho looked around and saw no one else in the cavern. Only eight of the Black Sun thugs were killed, and Rubis Silaro was not among them. Tycho quickly ran over to Selena, picked her up in his hands, and walked out of the cave system.

Nine standard months pass, and since his encounter with Locke Oannes on Tatooine, the Galactic Alliance and the Jedi Order herald Tycho as a hero; the Jedi Order, proclaiming the act of defeating Locke Oannes a vital contribution, knighted Tycho Xar. He was praised for his actions, and his skill in dispatching a corrupted Jedi Knight. Reports of Black Sun related activity indicated it was down, all attributed to Tycho. The single best moment of his life, the one thing that everyone praised him for, that everyone talked about, the thing that got him knighted, was also intrinsically linked with the worst moment of his life, the death of his love, Selena Versio. Over time, he couldn't take it anymore, and slowly descended into isolation.

Rubis Silaro was still out there, however, and Tycho was determined to find him. Recent reports have indicated that Rubis Silaro, and a small gang of Black Sun thugs, have been spotted near Anchorhead. Black market deals were still common around Anchorhead, and Rubis Silaro was thriving. Tycho decided that the raid of the Black Sun complex should take place at night. That way, darkness covered their arrival.

The Black Sun complex looked small from the ground, only a few domed structures linked together with tunnels. Guards were standing by the entrances. Galactic Alliance troops took them out quietly, using a variety of silenced weapons, like vibroblades. Tycho immediately entered the complex; the first room was very small, but led into other, much larger rooms. Tycho immediately ran forward; another guard appeared in front of him. Tycho immediately activated his lightsaber, and stabbed the guard in the chest. Tycho immediately deactivated the energy blade, and looked around. He saw no one else around. Suddenly, Galactic Alliance troops flooded the room.

"Down." Tycho ordered.

They nodded their heads, and started moving downward through the complex. The complex was like a maze; the corridors zigzagged back and forth, making it hard to move any quicker. After a few minutes of walking through the maze of corridors, they

reached the bottom floor. The entire bottom floor was one large open room where crates of supplies of illegal weapons and other contraband were being kept.

Galactic Alliance troops immediately stormed into the room yelling, "Galactic Alliance! We have a warrant! Galactic Alliance! Warrant!"

Tycho followed the troops into the room. He stretched out with the Force, and found Rubis Silaro almost immediately; he was running for a back exit. Tycho immediately chased him. All around Tycho, Galactic Alliance troops were arresting the thugs of the Black Sun, as well as confiscating contraband supplies. Tycho reached the backdoor exit, which led to a set of stairs leading upwards. Tycho sped upwards, trying to catch up with the Neimoidian.

Suddenly, Tycho caught up with Rubis Silaro in one of the small rooms that made up the dome structures on the ground. All around him were crates filled with illegal weapons and ammunition. Tycho activated his blue-bladed lightsaber; the *snap-hiss* startled Rubis Silaro. Immediately, he activated his flip-sword, and attacked Tycho with an overhead smash. Surprisingly, his attacks were powerful, and quite fast. However, Tycho had the Force, allowing him to move much faster, and perform much more powerful attacks; Tycho was able to anticipate his opponents attacks, and counter them perfectly. After only a few good strikes, fancy lightsaber twirling, and quick jabs, Tycho managed to disarm Rubis Silaro, knocking the flip-sword out of his hands. The Neimoidian fell to the floor, holding his hands up in front of him.

"Okay, Jedi. You win this time." Rubis Silaro replied.

Tycho still had his blue blade activated; the light from the blade reflected off his angry face, and the energy blade hummed with a vicious consistency. Tycho's breathing was hard, not due to exertion, but due to the flood of rage pouring out of him. Suddenly, Tycho reached out in front of him, and started to choke the Neimoidian with the Force. Rubis Silaro clutched his throat, trying to free himself from the death-grip, gasping for air. The slit-pupil eyes of the Neimoidian started to twitch and roll back into his head. Soon, a loud crack resonated from his throat; the sound of the Neimoidian's neck being broken.

Tycho immediately knew what he had done. He gave into his hate, and emotions, and murdered someone. He gave into the dark-side of the Force, his Masters would say. Tycho knew there was no going back now. He quickly looked around, and saw that there was a crate full of proton rockets, and other kinds of explosives. He immediately started rigging the explosives together, and activated the detonator.

Tycho left the small room, when he looked down at his lightsaber. Tycho immediately threw the lightsaber into the small room, and ripped off his Jedi robes, leaving them behind in the small room. Taking nothing else, Tycho ran out of the complex, and into the vast desert. Tycho headed for Anchorhead, only a few kilometres away. Suddenly, the explosives went off, and a massive fireball rose into the air; the flash of light was incredibly bright, lighting up the night sky momentarily. The small room where the explosives were being kept was completely destroyed, as well as parts of the other rooms. Tycho stared at the fireball, as it rose into the sky in slow-motion. After a few moments, Tycho turned around, and headed for Anchorhead, alone.

A week after the raid on the Black Sun, the HoloNet news had been covering the story almost non-stop. Tycho walked into a local cantina in Anchorhead; he looked around and saw no familiar faces. The customers were mostly alien species, probably smugglers, low-time criminals, or spacers. He walked up to the bar; the bartender, a male Rodian, looked at him.

"What'd you have?" The Rodian said in basic.

"Whatever you've got in a bottle." Tycho replied.

The Rodian removed the cap on the bottle, and handed it to Tycho. Tycho left ten credits on the table, and walked towards an isolated booth in the dark corner. He slowly sipped his beer, looking around at the beings that came and went. Suddenly, another news report on the Black Sun raid came on the HoloNet.

" Galactic Alliance officers successfully conducted a raid against the notorious Black Sun gang late last week." The female reporter stated, "The Black Sun, a crime syndicate known to be involved with drugs, prostitution, and illegal arms, has recently been terrorizing the Tatoo system. Many freighters have reported hijackings associated with The Black Sun. Recently, The Black Sun was reported to have been selling black market Yuuzhan Vong bio-weapons; this was the main reason for the increased Galactic Alliance involvement. This was just one of many successful raids conducted by the Galactic Alliance in an ongoing attempt to crack down on interplanetary crime. During the raid, one Galactic Alliance operative was killed in an explosion, while attempting to apprehend Rubis Silaro, a known Black Sun member, and possible Vigo of the region. The explosion was thought to have been ignited when some illegal arms were accidentally detonated. Rubis Silaro was pronounced dead on scene. In other news..."

Tycho smiled at the news. They thought he was dead, and now he had a clean slate to build a new life. He finished off his beer, and walked out of the bar a new man.

STAR WARS

Endurance:



Written by: Sean P. Funk

Last Updated: July 22nd, 2009



Dramatis Personae

**Amelia*: Empress of the Empire

Antares Draco: Imperial Master

Ganner Krieg: Imperial Knight

**Hatren, Darth*: Sith Lord

**Lachlan Cole*: Imperial officer; member of the Coalition for a Free Empire

Marasiah Fel: Imperial Knight; heir to the Imperial throne

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

* Denotes original characters

The Night of the Break-Out: Galactic City, Coruscant: 138.5 ABY:

Marasiah Fel leaped into the air, and landed on the *Sigma*-class long-ranged shuttle that had just swooped into the hangar bay. She landed gracefully on the durasteel boarding ramp. She looked behind her; the *Sigma*-class long-ranged shuttle was hovering about three metres from the permacrete floor. Behind her, Ganner Krieg jumped into the air, and onto the boarding ramp. He landed beside her; the crimson armour clanked when he landed. He stood up, and looked at Marasiah Fel; he gave her a nod, then turned back to watch Tycho and Antares Draco talking. Marasiah Fel couldn't hear what they were saying over the roar of the ion engines. Suddenly, Antares Draco jumped into the air; Ganner Krieg grabbed hold of him, and helped him into the shuttle. Antares Draco didn't say a word, and proceeded into the long-ranged shuttle. Marasiah waited for Tycho, but then the long-ranged shuttle started to take-off.

"What about Tycho?" Marasiah Fel screamed.

Antares Draco reappeared from inside the shuttle, and leaned towards Marasiah; he wore a face of worry, "He's not coming." He said into her ear, hoping he would be clear.

Marasiah gave him a look of confusion, then terror, "What!"

Marasiah looked back at Tycho, who was looking back at her. She reached out to him with her hands, but Antares Draco held her back. She struggled for a few moments, then realized it was a futile effort.

Before the shuttle could leave the hangar, Marasiah shouted, "Taivas!"

The shuttle suddenly roared out of the hangar; the ion engines were incredibly loud. The wind was strong, blowing Marasiah Fel's brown, white streaked, hair all around her. Ganner Krieg and Antares Draco helped her up, and brought her back into the holding chamber within the *Sigma*-class long-ranged shuttle. Marasiah's eyes started to tear up; Antares Draco held her in his arms.

"He did it to protect you." Antares Draco explained.

Marasiah Fel wiped the tears from her eyes, "I know."

Suddenly, warning sirens blared; the holding chamber flashed with red and yellow lights. Antares Draco looked up at Ganner Krieg with a confused expression, then got up. Marasiah Fel, looking at the two Imperial Knights, remained seated.

Antares Draco and Ganner Krieg immediately headed towards the cabin. They opened the door, and entered.

"What's going on?" Antares Draco asked.

"Seems we've got company?" The Imperial pilot answered, "Three Predators."

Predators was an Imperial term used as short form for the *Predator*-class starfighters. They were called Predators because of their model designation.

"Damn." Antares Draco whispered.

Antares Draco stormed back into the holding chamber with Ganner Krieg. They both wore expressions of worry. Marasiah immediately picked up on it, projecting confusion into the Force.

"What is it?" Marasiah Fel asked.

Antares Draco shook his head, "We've got incoming fighters."

Almost immediately, they heard medium laser cannon fire streak across their hull. The long-ranged shuttle shuttered, and rocked violently from the hits. Suddenly, the double heavy laser cannons, located on the belly of the long-ranged shuttle, started blazing. The heavy pounding shook the holding chamber of the long-ranged shuttle.

"We can't just stay here and do nothing." Marasiah Fel replied.

"Nothing we can do." Antares Draco answered, "No gunner pods."

Ganner Krieg then came up with a brilliant idea, "These things hold Predators, right?"

Reluctantly, Marasiah Fel shook her head, "No. To reduce the weight in order to get here faster, we didn't take any Predators."

"What then?" Ganner Krieg asked.

Suddenly, medium laser cannon fire perforated the holding chamber. The red energy bolts streaked through the holding chamber, punching holes through the armoured durasteel hull. Marasiah Fel screamed, while Antares Draco protected her with his body.

"See what the hell those pilots are doing!" Antares Draco shouted.

Ganner Krieg started running towards the cabin, when suddenly, a huge explosion rocked the long-ranged shuttle violently. The cabin erupted in fire and shrapnel, knocking Ganner Krieg backwards. The *Sigma*-class long-ranged shuttle suddenly pitched forward, and began to plummet. Smoke, and sparks from the fire, started filling the holding chamber. Marasiah covered her mouth, trying not to breath in the dense, black smoke; the other two Imperial Knights did the same. Worry, and fear started to flood the Force from all three as the long-ranged shuttle started to fall out of the sky. Antares Draco immediately held Marasiah in his arms. Tears started to fill her eyes. Just outside the holding chamber, the screech of the *Predator*-class starfighter's ion engines could be heard circling around the long-ranged shuttle.

"I love you, Marasiah." Antares Draco whispered.

"I love you too, Antares." Marasiah Fel whispered back.

They kissed; a long, passionate kiss that seemed to last forever. Antares Draco then looked into her eyes, and held her. Suddenly, the long-ranged shuttle slammed into the ferrocrete streets of Coruscant's underworld with incredible force. The impact was violent and jarring, and all three personnel in the holding chamber were sent flying across the room. They slammed hard against the floor, or hull of the long-ranged shuttle. The long-ranged shuttle skidded along the road, ripping up ferrocrete chunks as it did; durasteel hull tore and ripped off the long-range shuttle. When the long-ranged shuttle finally came to a stop, the three inside picked themselves up; for the first couple of moments, they were disorientated and confused. Their heads were pounding, and their vision was blurry. The inside of the shuttle had been totally destroyed; it was dark and smoky inside, except for when sparks showered down from electrical equipment, or the odd flares from fires that erupted from the cabin. Antares Draco immediately ran over to Marasiah, who had a large gash on her head; the wound was bleeding profusely, and he feared she might have a concussion.

Antares Draco grabbed her and held her in his arms, "Are you alright?" He asked in a worried and concerned voice.

Marasiah, a little dazed from the crash, held her head with the palm of her hands, "Yeah I'm fine."

"Are you sure, you're bleeding a lot." Antares Draco informed.

Marasiah looked at her hands; they were covered in red blood, "Yeah, I'm fine. It probably looks worse than it actually is."

Antares Draco helped Marasiah onto her feet. Meanwhile, Ganner Krieg had found a place that was stable enough to exit from. He activated his silver-bladed lightsaber, and started cutting through the hull. Sparks showered from the lightsaber as it slowly sliced through the thick armoured durasteel hull of the long-ranged shuttle. Glowing orange-yellow molten metal lined the edged of the lightsaber. Within minutes Ganner Krieg successfully cut an opening through the hull; he jumped through the opening, then turned around to make sure the other two were okay.

A crowd had already started to gather around the crashed long-ranged shuttle. Marasiah leapt from the freshly cut opening, and into Ganner Krieg's arms. Antares Draco was next; he gracefully leapt and landed next to Ganner Krieg. They nodded to one another, then proceeded to run into the maze of buildings. Imperial stormtroopers and Sith Knights were bound to be on their way.

For almost twelve standard hours, the three of them have been on the run. They were hiding, building to building, from the newly dispatched stormtrooper patrols. Occasionally, patrol vehicles would pass them by; the bull-horn would announce who they were looking for to the nearby citizens. So far, they had been successful at out-maneuvring the stormtroopers, and avoiding detection.

Now, the three were held up in an old apartment building. They were silently walking through the dark and shadowy halls, when suddenly, another patrol vehicle passed them by. A group of white armoured stormtroopers exited the patrol vehicle, and started to canvass the area. The stormtroopers entered the apartment building they were in, and immediately started to fan out.

"Back." Antares Draco whispered.

Marasiah Fel and Ganner Krieg immediately started to walk backwards, away from the stormtroopers. They silently ran down the hallway, using the Force to hid their presence, until they reached the end. Stormtroopers had surrounded the building, trapping them.

"What now?" Marasiah Fel whispered.

"Up?" Ganner Krieg suggested.

"No. That would trap us more." Antares Draco replied, "Out."

"How?" Marasiah Fel asked.

Antares Draco looked over to Marasiah Fel and Ganner Krieg, who were both looking at him for the answer. Without saying a word, Antares Draco started to tip-toe towards the closest stormtrooper. Marasiah Fel tried to grab him and pull him back, but it was already too late.

"No. Draco!" Marasiah Fel whispered.

Antares Draco, too far ahead for them to reach, turned around and waved for them to get back. Marasiah Fel and Ganner Krieg reluctantly moved back towards the corner, and out of sight. Antares Draco approached the lone stormtrooper with cunning stealth, using the Force to minimize the sounds he made, as well as his presence in the Force. Antares Draco took out his lightsaber, holding it in his hands, ready to strike. Suddenly, with lightning fast speed, Antares Draco lunged forward and activated his silver-bladed lightsaber. The *snap-hiss* of the blade startled the stormtrooper, and echoed down the halls of the apartment complex. The silver blade plunged through the white plastoid armour of the stormtrooper, easily puncturing it. Antares Draco pulled the silver blade from out of the stormtroopers chest, and readied himself for the coming retaliation. No stormtroopers entered the hallways; he took that as a good sign.

Antares Draco waved his companions towards him, "Come on!" He whispered.

They immediately came around the corner, and started running down the hallway towards Antares Draco. They too used the Force to minimize the sound they made, as well as their Force presence. They reached him in no time.

"Nice move." Marasiah Fel congratulated.

Antares Draco gave her a smug smile, then suddenly, a stormtrooper entered the hallway. The three looked at him, perplexed and shocked. The stormtrooper looked at them, and paused for a moment, no doubt surprised by them too.

"Hey you! Stop!" The stormtrooper shouted.

Immediately, the stormtrooper fired his blaster rifle; the red energy bolts streaked down the hallway, and passed the three Imperial Knights. The Imperial Knights ducked away from the blaster fire. The sound of the blaster rifle no doubt signalled to the rest that they had been found. Antares Draco deflected the next blaster bolt that was shot his way, sending the red energy bolt back towards the stormtrooper. The energy bolt struck him in the chest, burning a hole through his plastoid armour, and killing him. Suddenly, more and more stormtroopers appeared within the hallways. Antares Draco looked around, and saw the transparisteel windows next to

him; they led out into a back alley. With a powerful Force Wave, Antares Draco blew out the windows. Meanwhile, Marasiah Fel and Ganner Krieg had already activated their silver-bladed lightsabers, and were batting and deflecting away red blaster bolts.

Antares Draco grabbed Marasiah by the shoulders, "This way!"

Marasiah immediately leapt through the broken window, followed by Ganner Krieg. Antares Draco deflected two more blaster bolts before following them out into the back alley. The back alley was grimy and dirty; grease and other gunk lined the outside of the brick walls, and steam billowed out of exhaust vents. The three immediately started running down the alley until they reached the main street. They skidded to a stop when they saw what was up ahead. Filling the streets were regiments of stormtroopers, led by a handful of Sith Knights. They all turned to the three Imperial Knights. Almost immediately, after the first moments of surprise, the stormtroopers began firing their blaster rifles. Expertly, the three Imperial Knights deflected and batted away the incoming energy bolts.

"What now?" Ganner Krieg screamed.

"Back!" Antares Draco suggested.

Marasiah turned around, and saw the stormtroopers running up the alley, "Not this way."

The stormtroopers from the alleyway started firing at her. Marasiah expertly deflected the red energy bolts back down the narrow alley, and into the stormtroopers charging towards her. Ganner Krieg looked around, while deflecting blaster bolts, and saw that the stormtroopers were concentrated to their right side.

Ganner Krieg grabbed Antares Draco by the shoulder, "This way!"

Antares Draco looked for only a second, then ordered, "Go!"

Marasiah Fel suddenly sliced the brick walls of the alleyway, then used the Force to pull it towards the alley. The brick walls collapsed into the alleyway, blocking the stormtroopers from advancing. The brick walls came down with a roar, and a large cloud of red dust billowed into the air.

The three Imperial Knights immediately engaged the stormtroopers, slicing and stabbing at the white armoured troopers as they futilely tried to shoot them with blaster rifles. The three Imperial Knights fought with all their skills, and all their might. They amputated limbs, and decapitated heads. They cleanly carved a path through the horde

of stormtroopers, until they finally got passed them. The dead bodies of white armoured stormtroopers littered the ferrocrete street. The Imperial Knights turned around, and started batting away the incoming blaster bolts again. All the stormtroopers were in front of them now, and were approaching the three with caution. The three Imperial Knights started moving backwards, batting and deflecting the red energy bolts into the massive horde of stormtroopers. Some of the stormtroopers dropped to the ground after being hit in the chest or head, others fell by clutching their wounds while screaming.

"We can't hold them off for much longer!" Ganner Krieg shouted. A blaster bolt streaked by his head.

Antares Draco batted two more blaster bolts, "I know!"

Marasiah barely managed to deflect an energy bolt with her silver-bladed lightsaber, "What do we do?" Marasiah Fel shouted.

Antares Draco looked at her for just a moment, "You have to run!"

"No!" She immediately objected, "I'm staying here with you!" She followed it up by deflecting a blaster bolt.

Antares Draco batted another blaster bolt, "We will hold them off! Run! Now!" Marasiah shook her head; Antares looked at her again "Run!"

With tears in her eyes, she reluctantly started running down the street and away from the battle. She used the Force to augment her movements, giving her a massive boost in speed and endurance.

She stretched out with the Force: *I love you.*

Antares felt her in the Force, and reciprocated: *I will be with you, always.*

Antares Draco and Ganner Krieg stared at the armada of stormtroopers in front of them, "Great plan." Ganner Krieg replied in a sarcastic tone.

Antares Draco sighed, then looked over at Ganner Krieg, and smiled, "It seemed like a good idea at the time."

All the stormtroopers had their blaster rifles trained and ready to fire. Suddenly a loud voice, from one of the leading Sith Knights, could be heard, "Stun rods everyone! Let's have some fun!"

The stormtroopers, finally realizing that their blasters were utterly useless against the two Imperial Knights, took out their stun rods. The stun rod was a newly designed baton for urban police to use against criminals; it used a powerful electrical shock at the tip to stun the victim, causing his body to go into uncontrollable convulsions. Ganner Krieg and Antares Draco charged into the massive horde of white armoured stormtroopers; they split up, taking on the stormtroopers single-handedly.

An overzealous stormtrooper charged at Antares Draco; Antares immediately flung the stormtrooper over his shoulders, sending him flying into the ferrocrete street face first. Another stormtrooper followed his attack; Antares forcefully stabbed the stormtrooper in the belly with his silver-bladed lightsaber. Wave after wave of white armoured stormtroopers came at him. One of the stormtroopers took a swipe at Antares Draco; with lightning fast reflexes, Antares sliced one of the stormtroopers arms off just above the elbow. Antares spun around, and stabbed an incoming stormtrooper in the chest. The impact from the stab caused the stormtrooper to be lifted off his feet, and flown backwards. Antares Draco roared at the oncoming stormtroopers.

Ganner Krieg charged into the midst of the battle. Ganner Krieg stabbed a stormtrooper in the chest; the white plastoid melted around the silver energy blade. Suddenly, another stormtrooper leaped at Ganner; Ganner side-stepped the attack, and cut the stormtrooper in half in mid-air. Ganner Krieg's breathing intensified, and his movements quickened. With the intensity of the Force, Ganner Krieg threw his lightsaber around him; the silver blade carved a swath of carnage around him, hacking off limbs and decapitating stormtroopers. After circling Ganner Krieg once, the lightsaber returned into the hands of its wielder. Ganner smiled, and charged once more.

Antares quickly spun around, and decapitated a charging stormtrooper. The silver blade of the lightsaber cleaved off the stormtroopers head; the helmet floated in mid-air, almost as if it were hovering, and then fell onto the ferrocrete street, as if in slow motion. An onslaught of stormtroopers charged at Antares; he smashed and sliced through the bodies of stormtroopers with ease. The flurry of lightsaber attacks was blurry, almost too quick to see. Antares' movements were perfect; his body and mind were in unison. On instinct, Antares Draco threw his lightsaber in front of him like a spear; the silver blade impaled a charging stormtrooper. The hilt of the lightsaber protruded from the chest of the stormtrooper momentarily, before returning back to Antares. Just in time, the lightsaber returned to Antares grasp, as he had to block an incoming attack from a stormtrooper. Suddenly, the heavy body of a stormtrooper slammed into Antares; he stood his ground, causing the stormtrooper to stumble

backwards, and fall onto his back. Antares walked towards the fallen stormtrooper, and plunged his silver blade into his chest, killing him instantly.

Ganner Krieg leapt into the air, and with a powerful overhead smash, slammed his silver-bladed lightsaber into the ferrocrete street. Augmented with the Force, the smash sent the surrounding stormtroopers into the air, flying backwards into the crowd. He quickly returned to his feet, and started hacking and slashing at the oncoming stormtroopers. With a fury, his lightsaber blazed in front of him; the silver blade was moving so fast that it was barely visible to the stormtroopers.

With all his strength, Antares Draco kicked the helmet of an oncoming stormtrooper; the stormtrooper fell to the ground, upon which Antares slashed his throat with his lightsaber. Antares Draco charged into the crowd; the flurry of attacks was impressive. Antares hacked off limbs, and decapitated heads. Already the bodies of dead stormtroopers was mounting. Suddenly, Antares Draco and Ganner Krieg meet in the midst of battle.

"You still here?" Antares Draco sarcastically asked.

"Somebody's got to watch your back." Ganner Krieg replied.

"Not now, I'm a little busy." Antares Draco countered.

They both sprung off their feet, and lunged at the horde of stormtroopers in front of them. Fighting back-to-back, they were more efficient, and more deadly. Their movements were perfect; they were swift, precise, and accurate. Each movement with the lightsaber was fluid, elegant, while powerful. The intensity with the two Imperial Knights was incredible; they screamed, shouted, and roared at the onslaught of the stormtroopers. Their desire to slaughter the enemies of the Empire was overwhelming, and they lost themselves to the battle. Limbs of arms and legs, and decapitated heads flew all around them as the lightsabers made short work of them.

Suddenly, a blaster bolt streaked in front of the Imperial Knights. The stormtroopers, now resorting back to their blasters, began shooting at the two Imperial Knights. The shock of the attack caught Ganner Krieg by surprise; a single blaster bolt got through his defences, and caught him in the chest. Ganner Krieg screamed in surprise, then in pain as the blaster bolt struck him; he fell onto his back, clutching his chest. The crimson plastoid, phrik weaved armour was no match for the blaster bolt. Ganner Krieg fell onto the ferrocrete street, gasping for air; very quickly, he was shot again, and again, until he was dead. Antares Draco was very aware that his best friend

had just died, but he kept on fighting; he had to keep fighting on. Now deflecting both blaster bolts, and stun rod attacks, Antares Draco had to start backstepping to regain his momentum.

Suddenly, one of the Sith Lords appeared in front of Antares; Antares stared at the Sith Lord with awe. He stood his ground, trying to catch his breath. The stormtroopers started to back away from the battle to let the Sith Lord through. The Sith Lord was a towering Cathar, a feline alien species, full of toned muscle and pure rage. The Cathar's long fur was dyed black and red, and he had a large mane around his neck; his eyes were red and sulphur-yellow, just like every other Sith Lord. His canines were gold-plated, and he wielded a double-edged crimson-bladed lightsaber. The claws that held the lightsaber were gigantic, and razor-sharp. Antares took a step back.

"I am Darth Hatren, and I will be your executioner today." Darth Hatren greeted.

"I think you'll find that I'll be more than a match for any Sithspawn the Empire can turn out." Antares Draco countered.

Darth Hatren chuckled in a deep voice, "Imperial Knights are pathetic. I'll show you the true power of the Force."

Darth Hatren charged at Antares Draco; the Sith Lord leapt into the air, and smashed Antares Draco with a powerful overhead attack. Antares Draco blocked the strike with an overhead, horizontal parry. When Darth Hatren landed, he immediately started a series of slashes and stabs. Antares Draco expertly blocked and dodged the attacks, but his body was beginning to tire. After massacring the stormtroopers, his muscles were beginning to weaken and become sore. Sweat started flowing down his forehead and into his eyes; his vision was compromised. Nevertheless, Darth Hatren continued his onslaught of lightsaber attacks, never relenting, or giving mercy. Suddenly, with a lightning fast strike, the Cathar Sith Lord swiped at Antares Draco's arm. The crimson blade struck Antares Draco on the right forearm; the crimson blade began to shutter, and flicker, then suddenly, turned off.

Antares Draco smiled, "Cortosis gauntlet." Antares Draco taunted, "You're useless for the next two minutes."

"The Sith have many ways to kill an enemy." Darth Hatren countered.

Suddenly, a fury of lightning bolts was sent Antares' way; Force Storm. The blue lightning bolts struck his silver blade, blocking the relentless attack. Antares Draco fought with all his might against the torrent of electrical energy. His muscles were

weakening from exhaustion. Suddenly, the electrical torrent stopped, but was followed up by an attack from a Sith Knight. The Sith Knight, a red and black tattooed Zabrak, lunged at Antares Draco from the side, with his yorik coral crimson-bladed lightsaber drawn; he screamed as he flew through the air. Antares Draco stepped aside, allowing the Sith Knight to pass him by; then, with lightning fast reflexes, slashed his back with his silver-bladed lightsaber.

Another Sith Knight came at Antares from the opposite direction. This Sith Knight, a red and black tattooed Mirialan, charged at Antares Draco. The Sith Knight lashed out at Antares with a flurry of attacks; expertly, Antares blocked and parried the attacks, until finally, he managed to stab the Sith Knight in the chest with his lightsaber. Almost immediately, another Sith Knight, a red and black tattooed Chagrian, lunged at Antares Draco. Instantly, Antares Draco leapt into the air, and landed behind the Sith Knight. As Antares was coming down, he slashed the Sith Knight's back, severing his spinal cord, and killing him instantly.

Antares Draco looked back at the Cathar Sith Lord, who just sent another barrage of lightning bolts his way. Just in time, Antares Draco managed to get his silver blade up to block the attack. The barrage of lightning bolts this time was much more powerful than that of the previous once. The flashes of light was intense, blinding Antares Draco momentarily. The heat from the lightning strikes was searing Antares Draco's fingers. Antares fought against the barrage of lightning, grinding his teeth and screaming against the attack. The torrent of electrical shocks coursing through Antares' body caused him to fall to his knees in pain. Unknown to Antares Draco was that the Cathar Sith Lord, Darth Hatren, was slowly approaching the Imperial Knight as he let loose barrage after barrage of lightning bolts. Suddenly, the lightning bolts ceased, surprising Antares Draco. As he looked up, and saw the growling grin of the Cathar Sith Lord. With incredible strength, Darth Hatren kicked Antares Draco over onto his back, cracking two ribs in the process. Antares Draco screamed in pain from the force of the impact, as well as the broken ribs. Antares Draco went to swipe at the Sith Lord, but the silver-bladed lightsaber was batted away, out of his hands. Darth Hatren put one paw on his chest, and started to crush it underneath his feet. Antares screamed in pain again, and struggled to remove the massive paw from off his chest.

"Game over, Imperial Knight." Darth Hatren replied.

Antares looked around the street for a quick moment; hundreds of white armoured stormtroopers laid dead on the ferrocrete street. Knowing the end was near, Antares Draco allowed himself to open up to the Force fully, and completely. For the

last few moments, Antares Draco was at calm, at peace. Suddenly, the crimson blade of the Cathar Sith Lord's lightsaber plunged into Antares Draco's heart. The crimson blade seared through the crimson armour, and cleaved the heart in two. He was killed instantly.

The Cathar Sith Lord roared in triumph; the stormtroopers surrounding him cheered with him. Darth Hatren rose the tip of the crimson blade into the air, and roared again. Several stormtroopers fired their blaster rifles into the air to celebrate. Almost immediately, the stormtroopers started to approach the two fallen Imperial Knights.

"Take them back with us, " Darth Hatren ordered, "as trophies."

Marasiah Fel was now several kilometres away from the battle. She made her way through a maze of old buildings, when suddenly, she felt as if a massive weight was put on top of her shoulders. She fell onto one knee, then started to weep. She couldn't explain it at first, then after only a few moments, she realized the horrible truth.

Antares is dead.

After a few more minutes of weeping, she picked herself up. More determined now, then ever before, to make it out alive.

I have to survive, or Antares sacrifice will mean nothing.

She continued to walk through the buildings, or onto the street when it was safe to do so. The buildings around her were old, and mostly residential. She stumbled into an old abandoned apartment building. As she walked through the dark, damp, shadowy halls, she heard a noise at the end of the hall. One of the doors leading into a room seemed to have a light on inside. She walked towards it.

She got to the door, and slowly opened it. The door creaked as it swung open. She walked inside, and saw no one there. The light was coming from an antique candle holder. She walked towards the candle, when suddenly, she heard the sound of a blaster pistol. She froze instantly, frightened to move another millimetre.

"Who are you?" A man asked.

She said nothing.

"Turn around, slowly." The man ordered.

Marasiah Fel slowly turned around to face the man who surprised her. As she did, she saw that the man was in fact an Imperial officer. Her heart sank. The Imperial officer, wearing an wrinkly, stained grey uniform, seemed surprised to see her.

"Are you Marasiah Fel?" The Imperial officer replied.

With incredibly fast reflexes, Marasiah activated her silver-bladed lightsaber, and lunged at the Imperial officer. The *snap-hiss* of the blade activating startled the Imperial officer, causing him to back up against the rotten walls. Marasiah was posed to strike, when suddenly, the Imperial officer dropped his blaster pistol, and rose his hands into the air.

"No, no, no!" The Imperial officer repeated, "Stop! Stop!"

Marasiah was on top of him within half a second; her silver blade posed underneath the Imperial officer's chin and she wore an expression of rage on her face, "Why should I?" She screamed.

The Imperial officer was clearly fearful; Marasiah could feel it in the Force as well. The Imperial officer eventually managed to reply, "I don't mean you any harm."

"Liar!" Marasiah shouted.

"No, no, no!" The Imperial officer repeated, "Look, my name is Lachlan Cole; I am one of the resistance fighters here."

"What resistance fighters?" Marasiah asked.

"Haven't you heard?" Lachlan Cole asked, "The Coalition for a Free Empire."

"The Coalition for a... what?" Marasiah Fel asked in a confused tone.

"Free Empire." Lachlan Cole finished, "There are those of us, like you, who believe the Sith are ruining the Imperial name, and want it free from their influence." Lachlan Cole explained, "We fight, not with guns or lightsabers, but with pens and paper, to free the Empire from the Sith's grasp, and finally restore honour to the Imperial name."

Marasiah Fel took a moment, "That's a lie."

"No, no! It's not." Lachlan Cole replied, "It's not! I can show you."

Marasiah sensed no deception from the Imperial officer. Marasiah reluctantly withdrew her silver blade from under his chin. Marasiah kept the lightsaber on, and the tip pointed at his chest. Slowly, Lachlan Cole rose from off the floor.

"There." Lachlan Cole pointed to the wooden door.

Lachlan Cole walked over to the spot he just pointed to, and removed the old, stained and dusty carpet. Underneath was a trap door; he opened it.

"Here is where we meet." Lachlan Cole explained.

Marasiah nodded, and Lachlan Cole started to climb down the ladder. Marasiah watched as he climbed down into a wooden-walled tunnel. Lachlan Cole looked back up when he got to the bottom, "C'mon!"

Marasiah reluctantly agreed, and dropped through the trapdoor. She landed gracefully, with a cloud of dust billowing up from under her. Lachlan Cole coughed as the dust reached his lungs, then started to walk through the tunnel with Marasiah following.

"We meet here as often as we can. Usually only once a standard month." Lachlan Cole explained, "We use our position and places of influence to try to better the Imperial name by removing the Sith association with it."

Finally, they reached the end of the dark tunnel, and into a small room. Inside were only a handful of people, all dressed in different Imperial outfits and uniforms. Some were civilians, others were politicians, some were military. They all looked up, and stared at Marasiah in complete surprise and awe. Marasiah was shocked she never heard of this organization before.

"How many are with you?" Marasiah Fel asked.

"The Coalition has over one hundred members, all of whom reside within the Imperial umbrella." Lachlan Cole explained.

Finally, one of the Imperial politicians got up, "Well, what an honour this is." The others nodded their head in agreement, "To have the true heir of the throne in our midst... truly an honour."

"We've been waiting for something like this to happen." Another Imperial officer replied.

"What's that?" Marasiah Fel asked in confusion.

"Someone with the leadership qualities to come along, and lead us in our quest for honour." The Imperial officer explained.

Marasiah was shocked, "I just stumbled across—"

"Luck, destiny, fate... whatever you want to call it, you are here, and you will bring glory to the Empire once more." The politician replied.

The group nodded again. Marasiah was taken aback by the response.

"You are Marasiah Fel, are you not?" The politician asked.

"I am." She replied.

"Then you are the rightful heir to the Imperial throne." The politician continued, "And it is you who will rally more to our cause, and lead us to final glory." He said the last part with a smile.

She stared at the small group with a blank face; finally she smiled, and said, "Alright."

Six Standard Months Later: Galactic City, Coruscant: 139 ABY:

The Coalition for a Free Empire had grown in size substantially since Marasiah Fel joined their ranks, now including more politicians and military personnel. Since then, they have become much more bold in the past six months; while still trying to change the Empire from within, using litigation and legislation, Marasiah Fel has led more active participants on raids, trying to weaken and disrupt the Sith-Imperial war machine.

Marasiah Fel has devised a plan to, once again, disrupt supply lines to the Imperial frontlines. The plan was quite simple; get onboard one of the supply trains, steal what they need, and get out before anyone knew they were there. In and out in less than two minutes. Although they've performed many such daring missions in the past, this one added new elements that could potentially be fatal; for one, the Sith and the Empire have become ascetically aware of their presence, and second, coordination and timing are crucial to success.

* * *

Several airspeeders, about half a dozen, pulled up next to a fast moving supply train, three on each side; the train ran on electromagnetic repulsion, allowing for the train to hover above a curtain of air, and move freely with almost no friction. The darkness of night allowed them to remain relatively concealed while in the open. The airspeeders swooped in quickly, and tried to keep up with the fast magnetic-levitation train. Marasiah Fel was among them, although wearing white plastoid stormtrooper armour; she had to dye her hair completely brown since going on these missions because the risk of anyone recognizing her was too great.

"Get in position!" Marasiah Fel ordered over the headset.

The half dozen airspeeders, with four men each, started moving in closer to the train. Marasiah hooked one end of the rope to a handle on the airspeeder with a clamp, and the other end to her utility belt harness. She looked at the other three men in her airspeeder; the wind caught her hair, causing it to flutter. She smiled at them, and gave them the thumbs-up; then she jumped out of the airspeeder. She plummeted almost twenty metres before the elastic rope caught her, and slowed her descent. She landed on the roof of the train gently, and gracefully, along with five other men. She immediately released her harness, and began to work. She looked back to see the other men of her team descend onto the train. She found what she had been looking for; an excess hatch on the roof of the cabin.

"Cut it!" Marasiah Fel ordered.

One of the men activated a laser cutter, and started cutting through the durasteel hatch. A lightsaber might have been faster, but she realized that lightsabers attract unnecessary, and unwanted, attention. Within ten seconds, the excess hatch was open, and they were already crawling down the tight space into the supply cabin. Marasiah was first; she landed on the floor, and made sure the cabin was clear. It was, and she waved the next one in. The cabin was dark and shadowy, and packed with crates of various supplies, mostly medical, some food rations, others included ammunition and weapons.

"Get to work." Marasiah ordered, "We're out of here in a minute and thirty seconds, regardless."

They immediately started packing the medical supplies and food rations onto hoverboards they brought with them. Others, like ammunition and weapons they packed on their person. Marasiah was busy loading one of the hoverboards with medical supplies. The hoverboard was full, so she closed the top, and sent it up. The

hoverboard, attached to a line, started climbing up the line and towards one of the airspeeders. Marasiah started packing another hoverboard, when suddenly, she heard a noise behind her. She stopped what she was doing, and turned around to look.

"Quiet!" Marasiah Fel whispered.

The men stopped what they were doing, anticipating whatever danger Marasiah had sensed. Suddenly, a loud clank could be heard in the next cabin over. Marasiah unholstered her blaster pistol, preparing for whatever danger was over in the next cabin. Suddenly, the door leading into the next cabin flew off its hinges, and slammed into the cabin. The heavy durasteel door crushed two men under its weight. Immediately the men, and Marasiah, started firing their blasters. Marasiah was particularly close, and started to move back. Suddenly, a crimson blade swooped passed her head; she ducked out of the way, just in time, but was completely surprised by the attack. The crimson blade came at her again, and she had no choice but to defend herself with her own silver-bladed lightsaber. The crimson blade came at her head, and she parried the attack with a horizontal block. She immediately broke free, and started to run away.

"Sith!" Marasiah Fel shouted.

One of the men came to her side, "You've got to get out of here!"

The rest of the men were firing their blaster rifles wildly at the torn open doorway. Red energy bolts filled the cabin, ricocheting off the walls, and bouncing all around. The Sith Lord, draped in shadow and armed with a crimson blade, deflected most of the energy bolts. Several stormtroopers behind the Sith Lord were firing back at the men. Marasiah wanted to stay, but she knew her importance to the cause. She nodded her head, and hooked her harness to a towline. The towline pulled her out of the cabin through the excess hatch they cut; she was brought up slowly to one of the airspeeders hovering above the train. The wind was strong, and rocked her back and forth; the wind blew her hair into her face, but she eventually made it into one of the airspeeders.

A man onboard came up to her, "What happened?"

Marasiah looked at the young man, "Sith happened."

Back in the cabin, the men were slowly being dwindled away. Almost all of them had been shot by blaster bolts, while the others continued to fight. The Sith Lord charged into the cabin after the stormtroopers backed off. His crimson-bladed

lightsaber slashed and stabbed into the men, making short work of them. Within seconds, every one of Marasiah's team was dead. The Sith Lord looked up, and plunged his crimson-bladed lightsaber into the roof of the cabin, slowly cutting away the durasteel to make an exit. Sparks and molten metal poured out from the crimson energy blade.

Marasiah watched as the crimson blade slowly cut through the roof of the cabin. She immediately turned to the pilot, "Get us out of here!"

The man beside her leaned towards her, "What about the rest?"

She shook her head, "They're already dead!"

The pilot immediately took off, as did the rest of the airspeeders. The Sith Lord in the cabin sensed that they had left, and stopped cutting. He looked around the dark cabin; the men were cut to pieces, and were laying lifeless on the floor. Suddenly, the Sith Lord heard a moaning sound. The Sith Lord walked over to where he heard the moaning; it was coming from under the heavy durasteel door. The Sith Lord lifted the heavy door up and off the bodies underneath, revealing that one that had survived. The man was bleeding from his nose and mouth, and suffered from several broken bones. The crushed man looked up at the hideous monstrosity of the Sith Lord, and gasped in terror.

"Where are their bases?" The Sith Lord said in a mechanical voice.

The crushed man shook his head, refusing to answer.

"Where are their bases?" The Sith Lord repeated.

He shook his head again, "I'm not tell you anything." He said in a shaky voice while coughing up blood.

"You will tell me what I want to know, or I'll rip the knowledge from your mind." The Sith Lord threatened in a harsh mechanical voice.

"No! Never!"

"Who was the female with the silver-bladed lightsaber?" The Sith Lord asked.

The crushed man started to tear. He cried out for help, but no one else was alive to hear it.

"So be it." The Sith Lord replied.

The Sith Lord held out his mechanical hand, and placed it on the crushed man's forehead. The dark-side of the Force swelled up inside of the Sith Lord; images, memories, and the knowledge he sought flooded into the Sith Lord's mind. The crushed man screamed as his knowledge was torn from his consciousness. Finally, the Sith Lord stopped.

"Excellent." The Sith Lord replied.

Suddenly, the Sith Lord activated his crimson-bladed lightsaber; the *snap-hiss* echoed within the cabin, and frightened the crushed man. With incredible force, the Sith Lord plunged the crimson blade into the crushed man's chest, killing him instantly.

The Lower Levels, Coruscant:

Later that night, they finally arrived at their home base with the supplies they acquired from the train. Their home base was located on the lower levels of Coruscant, within older, ruined apartment buildings. The traffic around those areas were greatly reduced, thus minimizing possible identification. The men were distraught, and depressed from the latest development.

A man approached Marasiah, and said, "What happened back there?"

"I don't know." She replied, "Something attacked us."

"What?"

"I don't know." Marasiah answered; she looked around at the supplies being brought down from the airspeeders, "How much did we get?"

The man looked at the supplies, "Not a lot, and not enough."

"Damn." Marasiah whispered.

Marasiah proceeded into the apartment building. She kept playing the night over and over in her head, always distraught by the outcome. The rest of the men kept bringing in the supplies, hiding the airspeeders, then proceeded into the apartment building. The entire process took just over two standard hours. By then it was the dead of night; the sky was pitch black and dotted with stars. The streets around this neighbourhood were dimly lit as well, allowing them to stay concealed.

Marasiah was in a meeting with Lachlan Cole, discussing the next step the Coalition for a Free Empire should take. The room they were in was small, poorly lit,

and warm. There were three windows that led to the main street, and only one door into the room. Several other members of the Coalition were also in the room, although they kept quiet. They had been outlining possible safe houses, targets, and methods they should take for over an hour.

"We can't go after these large targets anymore." Marasiah Fel answered.

"We can't keep going after small targets either!" Lachlan Cole countered, "The supplies we get from the smaller targets don't sustain us very long."

"So we make them more frequent." Marasiah Fel suggested.

"No. More frequent attacks exposes us too much." Lachlan Cole rebutted.

Marasiah shook her head; she knew he was right. They needed bigger payoffs, more supplies, but the risks seemed too great after tonight, "They're on to us."

"I know." Lachlan Cole replied.

"No, you don't know." Marasiah Fel countered, "They had a Sith Lord waiting for us on that train."

"Who?" Lachlan Cole asked.

"I don't know, I've never seen him before." Marasiah Fel informed, "But he was powerful, and consumed with the dark-side."

"Aren't they all?" Lachlan Cole replied.

"No... not this much." Marasiah Fel answered, "There was something familiar to him too, but I just can't put my finger on it."

"Familiar?" Lachlan Cole asked.

"I know how it sounds..." Marasiah Fel started, but then stopped.

Marasiah looked around the small, poorly lit room, and reached out with the Force. She sensed a disturbance; danger was approaching.

"They're here!" Marasiah shouted.

Suddenly, the door smashed open, and stormtroopers from the 41st Elite Legion poured into the room. Several Coalition troops started firing blaster rifles, killing the stormtroopers that flooded into the small room. Suddenly, the three transparisteel

windows blew apart, and Imperial shocktroopers slid through the blown out windows. Imperial shocktroopers were a new special forces branch of the Imperial Army that were dressed in black, ceramic armour, and used specially made assault blaster rifles as their standard weapon. The shocktroopers immediately began firing their assault blaster rifles at the men, killing them in no time. Paper flew through the air, as did red energy bolts. Soon, Marasiah Fel and Lachlan Cole were the only ones left.

"You have to get out!" Lachlan Cole ordered.

"What are you going to do?" Marasiah Fel asked.

"Cover you." Lachlan Cole informed.

Suddenly, Lachlan Cole stood up, and started firing his blaster pistol. He struck two stormtroopers in the chest, taking them down instantly. For a moment, the door leading out of the room was clear.

"Go!" Lachlan Cole screamed.

Marasiah Fel leapt for the door. She used the Force to augment her movements, propelling her with incredible speed. Meanwhile, the shocktroopers cut Lachlan Cole down with their assault blaster rifles. Suddenly, the Sith Lord appeared at the doorway, stopping Marasiah in her tracks. She activated her silver-bladed lightsaber just in time to block an overhead strike. She got out from under the attack, and started moving backwards. The shocktroopers inside the room rose their assault blaster rifles to fire.

"Hold." The Sith Lord ordered in a mechanical voice.

"Yes, Lord Tyranid." One of the shocktroopers replied.

Marasiah stared at the hideous Sith Lord in front of her, "So, it has a name."

Darth Tyranid stepped into the light, revealing his true menace. Marasiah could see that his legs were completely cybernetic, with large mechanical talons instead of feet. He wore heavy black cloth Sith robe that covered most of his body, and half his face. Marasiah could see that his arms were flesh, but with razor-sharp nails. She couldn't make out the face because it was hidden behind the hood of the robe.

Suddenly, Darth Tyranid lashed out at Marasiah. His attacks were both lightning fast, and powerful. Darth Tyranid used a combination of quick cuts, powerful lunges, and fancy twirls to confuse and break his opponents defences. Marasiah did her best to block and defend herself, but the attacks were coming at her too fast. In desperation,

she had to back off from the onslaught of lightsaber attacks. She had gotten better in lightsaber combat over the past six standard months, but the Sith Lord's onslaught was too much for her. Darth Tyranid advanced on her again; she lashed out with a powerful swipe to the face. The tip of her silver blade made contact; a short shower of sparks rained down from the Sith Lord's face. Darth Tyranid roared in surprise and pain, then took two steps backward. He clutched his wounded face; the hood of his robe was off, and Marasiah could see the hideous, grey-black flesh that made up much of his face.

Suddenly, she realized why she felt such a familiar presence in him, "Tycho. No, not you."

Darth Tyranid looked back at her, and roared in anger. The roar was mechanical, but loud. Marasiah had to cover her ears in order to prevent any damage to her ear drums. Darth Tyranid took another step towards her.

"Tycho, it's me!" Marasiah Fel shouted, "It's Marasiah!"

Darth Tyranid attacked her with a violent smash. Marasiah barely got up her lightsaber to block the attack. She struggled and strained to fight him, both because of the quickness of the attacks, but also the knowledge that who she was fighting was an old friend. She fought against his attacks, dodging and ducking over most, and only attacking when necessary.

"Tycho! Don't you remember me!" Marasiah Fel pleaded.

Darth Tyranid roared again. Plaster from the walls and ceiling began to flake off and crumble to the floor. Marasiah once again grabbed her ears to protect them from the sonic energy.

"Sia..." Darth Tyranid finally replied.

"Yes! It's me! Sia!" Marasiah Fel answered.

Darth Tyranid violently shook his head. Suddenly, he reared up, and screamed again. He leapt into the air, and smashed Marasiah with an overhead strike. Marasiah blocked the attack, but was knocked off her feet. She landed hard onto her back; Darth Tyranid landed only a few metres away.

"You don't have to do this, Tycho!" Marasiah Fel pleaded, "You can fight this! You're stronger than this!"

Darth Tyranid held his face in his hands, "It hurts so much."

"Fight it, Tycho! Fight it!" Marasiah Fel ordered.

"No!" Darth Tyranid screamed.

Darth Tyranid roared again. Suddenly, Darth Tyranid charged at Marasiah Fel once again. She was still on her back, trying to crawl away. Darth Tyranid stood on top of her, and started a series of powerful smashes that rocked the room they were in. Marasiah relentlessly blocked the powerful attacks. She could feel the impacts in the bones of her arms; her muscles were tiring, and her back was aching in pain.

"Tycho! Stop!" Marasiah Fel pleaded.

Suddenly, Darth Tyranid plunged his crimson blade into her chest; the crimson energy blade seared her flesh, sending waves of pain into her body. Marasiah's eyes went wide, and her mouth was in shock. She gasped for air, then went silent forever. Darth Tyranid felt her die in the Force. He removed the crimson blade from her chest, and deactivated the lightsaber.

He reached up to the sky, and screamed, "No!"

The sudden release of anger caused the entire room to shake violently. Bricks, wooden planks and plaster from the room started crumbling all around him. The shocktroopers immediately retreated out the window from which they entered. Darth Tyranid was bringing the entire building down using the Force. The building shook violently; large chunks started to topple over, and the entire building began to collapse. All of a sudden, the building collapsed all around them; the roar of the building crumbling from within was enormous. After a few moments, the roaring stopped, and only a massive rubble pile and a cloud of dust remained where the apartment building once stood.

Darth Tyranid burst from under the massive rubble pile. Underneath him was the body of Marasiah Fel, completely untouched by the falling debris. Darth Tyranid reached down, and took her lightsaber, and placed it on his utility belt. He lifted her body out from the rubble pile, and walked out of the collapsed building with her in his hands.

Now, you are the tyrant of my enemies, Amelia's voice resonated within Darth Tyranid's mind, go forth, and spread my terror.



<http://darkness.emerges.tripod.com/>