

Welcome to the continuation of the DARK TIMES SAGA. In our first event, the TRF leader was assassinated. It was discovered that a rogue group of light Jedi known as the Wards of the Force were possibly behind it. These Wards blame CSP for the death of their leader. This fiction and the upcoming Clan competition deal with the fallout of the events of the last Clan competition. It is the second part of the DARK TIMES SAGA. Enjoy:

Ragnath
Darmallus Continent, TRF
Outskirts of City of Mount Yoda

“Go! Go! Go!” yelled the stormtrooper, kicking down the door into the secretive shack. A flooded line of stormtroopers followed, slowly making their way down into the base.

Xantros watched from the outside, saber at the ready. Four E-Webs surrounded the shack, just in case the Wards tried something different than expected.

The Duros spoke to the troop commander, “Status update when ready.”

“Aye, sir.”

They all waited patiently. A wing of TIE-fighters flew over their heads. Also a preparation. Didn’t want them to escape in a shuttle.

Something felt off to the Aedile. “Commander...what’s going on?”

The Commander wrapped himself in communication tools, speaking into different microphones and holographic scanners.

“Commander!” snapped the Duros.

“Sorry, sir,” he responded apologetically, “There is nothing.”

“Well there has to be something!”

“Sir, the base is abandoned. Nothing left. Just want seems to look like an above ground droid polishing unit too big to move out of the base. Also some leftover datapads. Initial analysis of the datapads talk about a Jedi-machine interface. Just it seems like nothing else is there.”

“I’m going to report this to the Empress. When the Proconsul sends his initial battlefield recon report, I want to see it! Also, put me in touch with the liaisons to Xendar and Reiden when you can!”

“At once, sir!”

Ragnath
Caelestis City
Empress' Throne Room

Dek looked out of a newly installed window in the Empresses throne room. It overlooked the entirety of Caelestis City. He reminisced about his time in the Clan, thinking back to when he took hold of the Chosen of the Empire. The Conclave he led had collected dust for many months now. The occasional rustling did little. His plans for a new base and a new Conclave were soon in the works. He would not call the throne room home much longer. But for now, he was focused on one thing: preventing Clan Scholae Palatinae from succumbing to the fragility of a former semi-alliance with the Republic of the Force.

"Sir," an elite praetorian guard turned Dek's attention away from the window. Dek wandered over to the guard. He had already read the guard's surface thoughts. *Information from the front*.

"Yes," Dek questioned knowingly.

"Xantros stormed the base. Nothing but this leftover blueprint."

Dek took the blueprint and looked into it while the guard continued.

"Xendar and Reiden each found integral information."

Dek looked up, surprised at the news.

"Budding information seekers! I hope they've divulged everything..."

"Sir, Xendar's intel tells of a unique Jedi Starfighter. A large husk of metal plating surrounded by smaller fighters guarding it."

"And Reiden?"

"He's found TRF intel on the Wards of the Force. Seems like the government refused their existence. But they knew that they were gathering and training a small elite army. Nothing big, but very effective at holding small regions."

"Like a capital city?" Dek responded, testing the guard.

The guard gulped, "I'm not sure, sir."

Dek smiled, already knowing the answer, "You don't know. That's ok. I don't expect you to."

Brush up on your strategy though. I recommend the holograms of the battle of Coruscant, or the History of the Bounty Hunter's Guild: Version Seven, or even the datapad detailing Empress Elincia's take over of the Maqor province."

"The traitor?"

Dek pursed his Sullustan lips, "Traitor? Yes. But that doesn't take away from the great mind they had."

Dek looked away longingly at the torn portrait of Eli above the throne, "Such a great mind, lost to our enemies. Never again shall we be so merciful."

"Of course, sir," responded the guard as he slowly walked off.

"Shadow must know what I know," Dek said to himself.

Space Above Darmallus Continent

ISN Tarkin

Bridge

The bridge was alive with activity as the gunnery crews checked their fire priority and punched in coordinates. The Vindicator was a lumbering behemoth of a warship – dozens of laser batteries and point defense systems all trained to level a withering barrage of indiscriminate firepower upon the TRF positions holding out on Ragnath. It was a smart ploy, hiding in plain sight – the heavily populated colony moon of Seraph was a cultural and economic jewel of the Caparian System – an objective any occupier would loathe to ruin.

But yet, oddly, that was indeed what the TRF was goading Scholae Palatinae to do. It was highly hypocritical, thought Proconsul Wynter, that a sovereign state that's ideological core was based upon the sophistication and elevated status of the Force would stoop to such a political statement and hold hostage millions of people and consign thousands of civilians to the casualty list all in order to make the Imperials look like aggressors.

And there it was. "Weapons Officer Brett. Hold all fire. All gunnery crews' orders have been countermanded. Captain Willhum, take Tarkin out of battle stations. All watch stations to return to normal rotation." Wynter commanded effortlessly, as a host of officers showed immediate irritation, bewilderment, and above all acknowledgement of the order.

"Hanger Officer Zilm, new orders for your Tie Defender squadron. Prepare them for an attack run. The gunnery teams will relay all coordinates now. All fighters are to rearm with smart missiles. All efforts will be made to minimize collateral damage. Even if they have to rearm and refit a dozen times they will NOT fire until they have positive lock on each shot. Any stray fire is

to be severely punished. And finally, prepare my personal fighter. I will fly wing-man for Lieutenant Commander Hazelrig.”

Space Above Darmallus

ISN Tarkin

Hangar Bay

The Proconsul and his flight landed without a scratch back into the hangar bay.

The Tie Defender squadron encountered no opposition either in orbit or upon hitting Ragnath’s atmosphere. All civilian traffic kept a wide berth of the advanced Imperial Starfighters as they briskly made their way towards their targets. The TRF facilities did not lack for anti-air defense capabilities but they were all outdated and unprepared. The squadron had taken no losses and the shields had all held. It was too easy.

“Empress, it appears the TRF have pulled back their front line personnel and have left skeleton crews everywhere else. It was as if they nearly abandoned Ragnath. They knew we would come eventually and made no attempt to make it a costly acquisition.” Wynter reported back to Empress Shadow as the squadron’s Commanding Officer and Executive Officer looked on acknowledging the appraisal.

Seraph

Tokare City

Jedi Temple Summit

A brown-robed figure strode through the main Council chambers. Twenty people of varying stature were almost picking at each other’s throats. Some carried lightsabers. Some carried blasters. Some carried only their words

“The Republic is in danger!”

“We are close to civil war!”

“Our leader was slaughtered! We need peace!”

“Stop this bickering! Let’s unite under the Force, like our fathers before us!”

They barely noticed the figure breach their circle. Some gave him a barely noticeable side eyed glance, while others seemed fully offended by his presence, staring intently into his soul. But they could feel nothing.

The figure spoke under the loud tones, “I am...” but his voice could not be heard.

One of the Council members hushed the rest, and others followed. One unrepentant member continued speaking loudly, "We must fortify our..." but he was cut off by another member, "Quiet! Someone has entered our chamber!"

One of the elder members spoke in a hoarse, soft voice, "What is the meaning of this?"

The figure spoke, "I am Master Lanis. I am here to save our Republic and take the throne."

A younger member responded, "We do not recognize your authority, Lanis. We will decide the future of this government."

Lanis chuckled, "You have failed. You failed us when the Lord died. You have failed us when the Sith Clan prodded and poked our people for information. And now, you continue to fail us. I am not asking."

Lanis reached for a weapon underneath his cloak, but a Council member whipped up some air from the outside and drew it under the hooded, lifting it off their head.

What they saw was a figure unlike anything they had seen. The head was almost fully cybernetic. A head was replaced by what looked like a metal shell. The neck was lined with silvery veins. One eye was human, while the other was a technological monstrosity. The nose was replaced by a shielded sensor. The mouth had a robotic covering of it, which produced sounds according to the vocal desires of the user. The ears had two deep holes in them that curved and twisted like an infinite maze into the skull.

Lanis pulled off the glove that lay on his hand. He revealed a metallic rupture. From it glowed a dark blue crystal. Igniting it, a stream of the color spewed forth into a lightsaber.

"I am not asking. I am Grand Master Lanis, former Master of the TRF dueling academy. And I will be the leader."

The elder member spoke again, "The former Master of the dueling academy died on a diplomatic mission."

"Correction," Lanis growled, "I was abandoned by my government. I will make sure it never happens to anyone ever again."

He ran straight into the Council members. Some were cut down instantly with many side swipes, cloak flailing through the air, confusing those who could draw their blasters quick enough. One was deflected into the skull of the elder Council member. Another blaster was grasped into the removed hand of another. A green lightsaber ignited and was parried instantly, while another swung low, only to be kicked away. Shocked, the user of said saber stepped back.

In only a dozen seconds, three of the Council members remained. Two maintained green lightsabers in an attack position while the other brought out a thermal detonator and armed it.

One of the attackers spoke, "We either survive, or we all die."

The other whispered, "He kicked my lightsaber blade away."

Still cloaked, and not desiring to give away the rest of his body, Lanis moved through the air, attacking both members head on. While no one gained the upper hand, the detonator was reaching a high point of usage, when Lanis knocked off his other hand, revealing a flamethrower. He ignited the non-Force User and proceeded to jump-kick him through the main window, knocking him off the ledge with the bomb detonating mid-air.

Lanis threw his cloak at the one Council member while the other gleaned at the body: most lengthy pieces were metallic. Some joints were of the same material, but parts of the torso were either still olive skin or grey rubber.

"What are you?" clamored the member as the other one shoved the cloak off himself.

"Cortosis, Phrik, Beskar, repellent material. I am alive. I am resistant and the resistance to your failures."

"We aren't finished," one of them said.

Lanis raised his saber in a salute to the people behind the Councilers.

Two shots were leveled against both Council members. Kinetic rifles bullets straight to the head.

"Nice shots," smiled Lanis.

An older woman in a similar brown cloak walked into the chamber. "You just can't wait to show off that body, can you?" she quipped sarcastically.

They both laughed.

"It's a great distraction. They expect an emotionless piece of technology. They don't see that although my appearance has changed, I am still human. I am still alien."

She smiled in return, "The Force has set you free, Master."

"The Force has set us all free," he responded, "and the Force sets the Wards of the Force free."

Soldiers and other robed figures entered the room in a calm pace.

Lanis continued, placing his robe back on, "Now...let's establish our presence. Let the Republic know who is in charge, and let the Sith Clan know what they are facing."

Unknown Planet

Unknown Chamber

The dark, circular room had faint white light at the edge that pointed like arrows towards the low ceiling. The desk in the center had multiple holoprojectors in front of it, allowing the Empress to see multiple individuals at once. Right now, she saw Commander Shran, Chief of Internal Security, and Kamjin, an older member and Adept of the Clan. Both were reporting on specific operations.

"The TRF would not dare go that far," the Empress lashed out. "What motive do they have to blame us?"

"Empress," started Kamjin, "The blame is irrelevant. I'm sure you've received the reports already, as have I as an Elder member of this Clan. The Republic of the Force is not in disarray. They have a small standing army, many cobbled together fighters and base ships, a Force User led guerrilla militia, and of course the Wards themselves guard the capital. This is a country united in the idea that we as a Clan are responsible for the death of their leader. We can say for certain now that it is factually incorrect."

"Further it was most likely an agent of the Wards themselves," Chief spoke.

The Empress let out a sigh. The Clan had feuded for awhile with the Meraxis Empire. Then with The Insidious. Then barely scraped by in the Great Jedi War. Now we're facing an enemy that is fanatically allied against us? A union that not 3 months ago needed protection from one of the strongest militaries in the region?

"I need options. Plans of attack. Defensive postures."

"When?" Kamjin responded.

"3 hours, corale who you need to plan them out. The Summit members are in integral positions."

"Yes, Empress." Kamjin bowed slightly as he left the holoprojector space.

Only the Chief remained, who had a few final words to say.

“Empress, this can only mean one thing.” The Chief spat out.

“Yes?” she paused, giving him some time to finish.

“Invasion.”

Space Above the Sahro Desert

ISN Palpatine

Bridge

The Battlemaster strode onto the bridge, immediately barking orders, “Prepare for attack positions. What is the status of the enemy?”

“5 Capital Ships, 7 Corvettes, Hundreds of Jedi Starfighters and Battle Meditation Ships from the ships and from the surface, sir,” a Captain shot back.

Sykes pressed his hands onto the console at the front of the bridge, looking out of the window onto the view in front of them. “Status of our attack force?”

“Ready and waiting for your orders,” another Commander responded.

“One moment,” Sykes stepped a few paces backward and pressed a button on his wrist. An image of the Shadow Nighthunter appeared in front of the bridge. The bridge yelled out, “All Hail the Empress! All Hail the Empire!” They returned to duty after a unanimous bow.

“My leader,” Sykes started, “Thank you for trusting me with this honorable duty.”

“It will be your first test. I believe in your loyalty. You’ve already brought back so many great members to our new order. It’s time for you to display the power that flows from your thoughts and hands.”

“Thank you, Empress! May I pursue an order of attack?”

“Absolutely. And one more thing...”

Sykes stayed silent awaiting the Empress’ response.

“No mercy. We have a reputation. We have been slighted. Now it’s time to show Caperion what happens when you attempt to persecute our legitimacy.”

“All Hail the Empress!” shouted Sykes. The bridge responded as the projection dissolved.

“Begin the attack on The Republic of the Force. Initiate the air assault. Launch the TIE Defenders. Don’t begin the ground assault yet. Wait for my orders.”

The ISN Palpatine, followed by the ISN Tarkin, and the ISN Thrawn who were just barely behind, threw their fighters at the capital ships of the enemy. The ISN Seraph and ISN Ragnath joined in the attack.