

Clan Plagueis & Clan Taldryan

Raiders of the Lost Ark

Chapter I

Ascendancy
Kenari System
Mid Rim Territories
41 ABY

Toxic, derelict, and infested...

That was what they said about Kenari.

The fact that it was so remote was probably the only reason the locals weren't exterminated at the start of the Galactic Civil War. The fact that two successive galactic governments had seen the planet designated as toxic and uninhabitable probably hadn't hurt, either.

Still, the planet still held treasures to be found. Scavengers and prospectors made their way throughout the galaxy, searching for the undiscovered riches that lay in the most obscure corners. Contacts throughout the fringe, cultivated during Selika's time as Herald and then maintained after her return to Plagueis had produced information on a possible trove of useful technology on Kenari in the form of the *Venator*-class Star Destroyer *Covenant*. The *Covenant* was a ship that had been testing experimental systems during the Clone Wars that had, apparently, crashed on Kenari and had been lost to history ever since. It was as much a time capsule to a period of war and conflict as it was a scavenger's dream. Reports said that she carried a new Ark Reactor within, an experimental Kyber-Hypermatter Reactor System, that still remained valuable technology.

There was just *one* problem...

Selika tapped her fingers against the armrest of the command chair on the *Ascendancy's* bridge. Apparently the information as to the discovery of the *Covenant* had made its way to other parties, and one of them was drifting in orbit before them.

The Taldryan Republic Navy.

Selika wasn't stupid, far from it. One does not rise to the Dark Council and twice lead a clan by sheer chance. There was a lot of blood, sweat, backstabbing, and treachery involved. She knew this was no mere coincidence. She didn't believe in such things. Those who did met an early grave.

Nora Olen, Quaestor of House Ventress, and Left Hand of Dread, however, saw this as an opportunity to have a little bit of fun. "So... should we order the fleet to attack? Convert these erstwhile Republicans into expanding clouds of vapor?"

TuQ'uan Varick di Plagia shook his head. "That is an ill-advised course of action."

Nora scoffed and folded her arms across her chest. "Honestly, TuQ. You're no fun. You need to learn to live a little. Have an adventure! Have a bit of fun!"

"I've lived as long as I have by not making rash decisions," TuQ'uan chided her. "Unless of course, that is what you wish of us, Dread Lord."

All personnel looked to Selika for guidance. Her word was *law* in this matter.

"We will not open fire," Selika bit the corner of her mouth. "The Canto Bight Accords were too hard fought for us to toss aside so lightly, no matter what awaits us below."

Nora gestured towards the holographic view of the Taldryan Navy. "They are clearly hostile, they've assumed blockade positions! They're obviously going to attempt to block our landings."

TuQ'uan shot her a glare. "Defensive is not hostile, as they have merely assumed a defensive stance. They are clearly as surprised to see us as we are to see them, and are just as clearly on the back foot."

"Hail the Taldryan flagship," Selika interjected before the situation turned sour between her summit. "I'd like to invite the Supreme Chancellor aboard our ship."

Both Left and Right Hands of Dread looked at Selika.

"Are you sure that's wise, m'lady?" TuQ'uan asked.

"How sure can we even be that his Supreme Chancellor-ness won't have to bring an entire committee with him to take a vote?" Nora piped in.

A small smile tugged at the corner of her mouth. "Are you implying that you don't think I can handle this Mandalorian?"

TuQ'uan felt a shiver drop down his spine. "No..."

"Of course not," Nora replied.

"Good," Selika gave a nod in approval. "I doubt Appius is foolish enough to try anything so brazen, given the number of weapons we have pointed at his ships. We will have measures in place to deal with him. Won't we, Furious?"

Out of the darkness emerged a tower of an Epicanthix, Furios Morega di Plagia. Despite his lithe frame, he stood with an eager look on his face. His arms were folded behind his back with one hand grazing his lightsaber, silently praying he'd get to use it.

It'd been too long since he got to kill something worth his time.

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The Leviathan

Taldryan Republic Navy

41 ABY

It was like a scene straight out of the history holograms. Above the Kenari atmosphere were both Plagueis' Ascendant Fleet, and the Taldryan Republic Fleet. Neither had initiated contact, and neither had made a move towards the planet surface in case of eliciting a response from the other.

Appius let out an exasperated groan. "Damn it, I thought we were the only ones who had uncovered this information!"

Of *course* Plagueis was here. They had a habit of turning up when it was least convenient. Who else would have interest in Clone Wars-era technology? You only had to look at their fleet to see it firsthand.

The imposing heart of their fleet was a Lucrehulk-Class battleship, and the entire formation was of similar vintage. The ships might have been old, yes, but it didn't matter how old the weapons were that fired the hail of turbolaser fire that killed you.

Taldryan's own Navy was nothing to scoff at either, Appius was confident with that. He was *supremely* confident they would put up a damn good fight if tensions escalated into open hostilities.

That was a big *if*. The Canto Bight Accords signed by six of the seven Clans declared a non-aggression pact between them. Still, this was *Clan Plagueis* they were dealing with. Appius wouldn't put it past them to break their own Accord for their own benefit. That was how the Dark Clan operated, after all, especially if the rumours surrounding their trade agreements with Scholae Palatinae were to be believed.

Slavers.

Sadists.

Opportunists.

That was what Appius knew of Clan Plagueis. He knew first-hand from his time in Vizsla how dangerous Plagueis and its members could be.

Loud beeps sounded through the command bridge. Aylin Sajark was manning the communication systems when she saw something come through. "Erm... Zappy? We are receiving a transmission. It's coming from the *Ascendancy*."

Appius' eyes hardened. Whatever was about to happen was either going to be really good or really bad, with no in-between. "Patch it through."

Aylin gave a curt nod and did as instructed. The holographic image of the Dread Lord Selika Roh di Plagia coalesced from the holo display.

"Selika!" Appius greeted her with arms wide open. "Fancy seeing you all the way out here! How have you been?"

"I was perfectly fine until I saw the fleet of the Taldryan Republic above the atmosphere of this backwater," Selika said.

Appius snorted. "Well, it's good to see you too," he clasped his hands together, brushing away her previous comment. "Don't worry, we don't plan on staying very long. We'll get what we came for and we'll be on our way..."

"No."

Appius tilted his head to the side. "Sorry, I don't think I caught that. Did you just say no?"

A small smile graced Selika's face. "My apologies, I wasn't aware those helmets impeded one's hearing that much. I said *no*. I think you'll find that Clan Plagueis's claim holds primacy..."

"I can hear you perfectly well, thank you very much," Appius interjected. "Perhaps the holo is somehow preventing you from seeing what is right in front of you. Whether or not you claim that you hold primacy here, The Taldryan Republic was plainly here first. And you know what they say about finders keepers."

A slight twitch tugged at the corner of Selia's mouth until it formed into a curved smile. "Then it appears that we are at an impasse. What say you to joining me on

board the *Ascendancy* so we can discuss this matter face-to-face? I would hate for such quibbles to serve to undermine our collective purpose against the Children of Mortis"

Appius tilted his head to the side. He mulled it over for a moment. "Of course, we can't forget the bigger picture. It's settled then, I'll see you shortly. Have the caf-stim ready for when I arrive."

The holographic image of Selika vanished from sight. Koda Kendis, the newly returned Elysia Governor, marched up to Appius with his arms folded across his chest. "I smell a trap."

"I smell free caf-stim," Appius clasped his hands together eagerly, much to the displeasure of Aylin, who was now standing behind him.

"Zappy, I have a bad feeling about this," she said. "What if she tries to kill you?"

Appius pursed his lips for a moment. "Selika might be ruthless, but she's also as often as not in love with the sound of her own voice. You can take the Sith out of the Council, but you cannot take the Council out of the Sith. It's all schemes and verbal traps before the knives come out. Besides, there's no way she'd break the accords so brazenly. She'd be left to face the Children essentially alone, and she expended far too much effort and made too many concessions to throw that away."

"This is Clan *Plagueis*, Appius," Koda affirmed. "From what you've told me, they can't be trusted. Accords or not."

"That's why I plan on taking backup, just in case," Appius held a coy smile from behind his visor. "Isn't that right, Aticus?"

Aticus Jade, a newly returning member of Taldryan, observed the conversation taking place with an almost uninterested slump in his posture. He let out a grunt, which the droid on his shoulder happily translated for him.

"I, of course, would be happy to assist the Supreme Chancellor in whatever way I can!"

Aticus looked at the droid with visible scorn in his eyes. He needed to do something about the chirpy tone.

"I'm going too," Aylin put her foot down on the matter. "Ankira will kill me if I let anything happen to you."

"Wonderful!" Appius cheered. "Then it'll be me, you, Koda, and Aticus."

Koda did a double take. "Wait, why am I going?"

Aylin pointed at Appius. "To make sure he doesn't say, or do anything stupid."

"Hey!" Appius protested. "I'm not *that* bad."

They all looked at him, and he scoffed in response.

"Come on... it'll be an adventure! We don't know what's going to happen. How bad could it be?"

Ascendancy
Kenari System
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They were about to find out.

The walk to the *Ascendancy's* conference room went about as well as expected. As soon as Koda's *Lancer*-class pursuit craft touched down in the hangar bay, all eyes were on them as ship personnel and key Plagueis members halted what they were doing to inspect the new arrivals. Well, all organic eyes anyway. The battle droids all across the deck took no notice of the Taldryan delegation, but Appius knew that looks were deceiving in this case.

The doors to the conference room slid open, Appius leading the way inside with Koda, Aticus, and Aylin following closely behind.

Selika Roh, Clan Plagueis Consul and Dread Lord, was sitting in the largest chair with both her Hands of Dread flanking either side of her. A particularly tall Epicanthix stood behind her, making up the Plagueis contingent for the meeting. Nora leaned over to whisper something in Selika's ear, the only word of which Appius caught was "committee".

"Oh, I see you've redecorated," Appius folded his arms and looked around the room before shaking his head. "I don't like it."

"Says the one with the ostentatious lightning bolt on his armor," Selika retorted.

"Hey!" Aylin's face became stern. "I designed that armor."

Nora rolled her eyes. "That explains a lot."

Aylin practically shot daggers at Nora with her eyes. "And what's *that* supposed to mean?"

"Nora, don't castigate our guests," TuQ'uan scolded.

Koda stepped forward, hands ready to grab his trusty hammer. "Tell her to keep her mouth shut. Or else."

Nora made no attempt to hide the grin on her face. "Are you sure you all don't have to take a vote before you tell me what to do?"

Aticus bent his knees as he readied to draw upon his weapons. It was a gesture not unseen to the Plagueians as they readied to fight, only to be halted by Selika making a slight gesture. The B2 battle droids that stood along the walls of the conference room all raised their arms and trained their dual weapons on the Governor of Elysia.

"If we are *quite* done with the adolescent posturing," Selika raised her voice slightly, grabbing the attention of the room. She gestured towards Appius. "Supreme Chancellor, please take a seat."

With a flick of a wrist, a seat close to Selika's moved out from under the table. Appius, first inclining his head towards Koda to signal him to stand down, shrugged and sat down in it.

Selika gestured for the battle droids to withdraw and then pushed forward a small spherical object with the Force.

"What I'm proposing is unorthodox, but I believe it will suit both our needs as Clan heads. In the absence of a better method to determine whose claim is valid, I propose a... competition to determine who gets it."

Appius raised a brow. "What? Are we playing Huttball now?"

"Not exactly," a smile curved on Selika's face.

Appius took the object as the holographic view of a document came into view. He read the lines carefully, and could already see Selika's signature at the bottom. When he finished reading, he rose from his seat and slammed both of his palms on the table in front of him.

"Are you out of your mind, Selika!?"

Selika deadpanned him.. "I most certainly am not. This agreement allows us to bypass the Canto Blight agreement for the purpose of-"

"All you are doing is making an excuse for war without calling it one! Having our members fight and kill each other over this hardly seems like a productive way to spend an afternoon. I won't throw away their lives like they mean nothing!"

"We are merely agreeing that the surface of Kenari and whatever downed ships therein are outside of the jurisdiction of the Accords. And besides," Selika said, her voice dropping in volume as her eyes locked on the T-visor on Appius's helmet, "I thought the pacifists and cowards had long since been buried in the ashes of Mandalore."

The room fell silent and tense. Aylin, Koda and Aticus looked at each other as Appius balled his hands into fists.

"I am no coward, Selika. Unlike you, and unlike your Clan, I don't feel the need to prove anything."

Selika furrowed her brows. "What's *that* supposed to mean?"

Appius raised a finger. "Vizsla..."

Then another finger. "Odan-Urr. That's two Clans you've fought in the last few years alone, and now you want to fight *us*? Taldryan hasn't been at war with another Clan for over a decade. How many times are you going to go do this before you realise maybe it's not everyone else that's the problem. It's *you*."

Unfortunately for Appius, his comments did not go unnoticed by Furios. He was looking for an excuse to cut loose, and he'd finally found it with the attack on the honour of his Clan. Despite his size, he was more lithe and agile than anyone expected him to be. He leapt into the air, landing on the table with the grace of a sand panther. An azure blue blade snapped out of the hilt in his hand as he moved to strike Appius down where he was.

Appius felt the attack coming, a blade of violet energy stopping Furios' attack.

Lightsabers ignited and blasters primed around the room, with one particularly large hammer ready in Koda's hands.

Aticus was already behind Furios, ready to stab him in the back if he made another swing towards Appius.

"Call off your attack dog, before we put him down!" Appius demanded.

A few moments passed before Furios looked to Selika for her command. She gave him a nod, and he broke apart from Appius, sheathing his weapon and stepping off the table.

"I would, however, remind everyone that the Canto Bite Accords still remain in effect on this ship," Selika said, her voice near enough to a growl.

With a crisis averted, all weapons were lowered.

"I must say, Appius. I'm a little disappointed. The conflicts you speak of were all under the reign of my predecessors, as I have never warred upon the other Clans of the Brotherhood. I thought you would be able to see beyond your prejudices but I guess I overestimated you, just as I overestimated your Clan," Selika shrugged and took a small swig of the drink by her armrest. "Taldryan was once the beating heart of the Brotherhood. There were few who could match your power. Though it seems these days your Republic is filled with nothing but old timers and glory seekers looking to relive the old days. It's quite sad and pathetic."

Appius had heard enough.

"You know what? You want a fight, Selika? Fine. You've got one," Appius signed the document, officially designating Kenari as outside of the Canto Bight Accords. "But when your members lay dead in the dirt, and their ashes scattered into the wind, you will have no-one to blame but yourself."

Appius stormed out of the room with the rest of the Taldryan contingent in tow. Once the doors slid shut, TuQ'uan addressed the Dread Lord.

"What now?" he asked.

"Prepare the battle droids for landing," Selika gave a low chuckle. "This is going to be fun."

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Leviathan
Kenari System
41 ABY

"So, what now, Appius?"

The question was an obvious one, and one expected from Koda. He couldn't even wait until they were back in the *Leviathan* conference room. Luckily, Appius had an answer ready.

"Prepare the troops for immediate landing. Tell everyone that if they see any Plagueian, it's an automatic kill on sight."

If Selika wanted to play games, then play they shall. There was only going to be one winner.

Only one could find success in the raid for the lost Ark.