
Field of the Fallen
Formerly known as Nerys Field
Central Karufr Lowlands

The sun had already set by the time the preparations were complete. Large fiery pyres dotted the perimeter of the landscape, providing the main source of light over the area that had been known as the grassy knoll ruins where one of the first battles had taken place during the siege of Port Kasiya years prior. In solid rows and columns were dozens of coffins, each draped with the Taldryan flag. While most of the mercenaries had gone home, their mission completed, some chose to remain behind in attendance along with the entirety of the Taldryan Republic 1st Legion. The Legion stood vigil around the perimeter of the coffins, separated by individual battalions. Among them as well were the various Taldryanites that had chosen to be present to pay respects to the fallen, or did not have critical duties that required attending to after this deadly event.

That event, the intentional delivery of weapons crates to the field to the Red Charhounds that had been modified not to stun...but locked into regular blaster mode. With the Charhounds completely unaware of this sabotage, what had been planned as a simulated battle quickly became a slaughterfest. It was only through the mental realization of several force-sensitives present on the field that the force was crying out in pain, that the battle was stopped and the dire ramifications became readily apparent.

On a nearby hill a short distance away stood Cassandra Tyriss, Supreme Chancellor of the Taldryan Republic, flanked by Koda Kendis and Celevon on her right and left respectively. Further away on guard were the various white garbed members of the Summit Guard. Erinyes, the Summit Guard Commander who was the only one of the guard without her helmet, stood several feet behind the Chancellor. Koda's arms were crossed as he stared silently at the sight before them, ever judging. Celevon's hands were in his pockets, and oddly enough he was the first to speak before Koda for once.

"Do we know what happened yet?" he asked in a quiet voice, just loud enough to be heard by the other two over the crackles of the nearby flaming pyres.

Cassandra stood without words, her eyes unflinching and unmoving from the field below. Her BD-6 droid lept up to her shoulder before it looked down to the ground and activated its holographic projector with the figure of Vodo appearing before them. Already knowing where her thoughts and attention were centered, he looked over at Celevon and responded instead.

"We've actually just confirmed the chain of custody back to the Caleria weapons manufacturing plant where they were supposed to be altered for the mock war," Vodo said firmly with little emotion to his voice. "From there they were placed on a naval transport and brought directly here ahead of the confrontation between the teams. With absolute certainty I can say

that whatever happened, it had to have happened in the facility.”

“Are you absolutely certain?” Koda sternly interjected, using Vodo's own words as he knew what that accusation meant. All four of them knew what it meant. He turned his gaze towards Vodo. “Without a shadow of a doubt? Because if what you are saying is true, then we have a major problem.”

Pursing his lips, Vodo simply nodded in affirmation. Before the conversation could continue however, a member of the summit guard approached.

“Excuse the interruption,” the guardsman said, “You have a visitor wishing to speak with you directly, Lady Second.”

“Send them up.” Cassandra softly replied. The guardsman nodded before they motioned down the hill to two other guards that had stopped someone. As the figure approached, it quickly became clear that it was the Vornskr Battalion General, Zentru’la. Cassandra turned and closed her eyes briefly as she bowed towards him. “General.”

“Chancellor.” Zentru’la replied in kind. “The Vornskr Battalion upholds its initial contract with Taldryan. We would take no action that would harm Taldryan or its allies. Some of the other mercenary groups wanted me to relay their condolences.”

She listened carefully to his words, reading his emotions and thoughts at the same time. As expected, nothing betrayed them and sincerity and honesty were at the forefront. With a smile she extended her hand outward. “Be sure and thank them on behalf of the Republic, we appreciate their kindness. And you do not have to worry, General. Your record speaks for itself, as does your loyalties. If you say there was no involvement we will turn our attention elsewhere, I have no reason to doubt you.”

“I will relay the message,” he said back, shaking her hand. “and it was a pleasure doing business once more. Let me know if there is anything else you need, you know how to reach me.”

“Of course. Thank you, General. Keep an open comm, as I may have need of your services once again much sooner than we think. I will see you at the ceremony.”

With that, he gave a slight bow with his right arm on his chest before he turned on his heel and walked back down the hill. Once he was away, Vodo had started to continue. “I had the same apprehensions, but when I realized that my network access had been cut off from the city entirely, it only served to confirm my initial fears.”

That statement caused Cassandra to immediately turn her attention to Vodo. “What do you mean ‘cut off’?”

"I mean exactly that." Vodo replied with a deep, cold voice. "I no longer have access to the Caleria network."

Placing her left elbow in her right hand, she tapped her lips with her left hand and glared at the ground, her eyes darting around the grass. Something wasn't adding up.

Taldryan Tower
Conference Hall S-4
Floor 21
Four Hours Later

The large expansive conference hall was beaming with light, with members of the Naval Forces on the left side and the Armed Forces on the right. In front of the Navy, were the Taldryanites of the Red Charhounds, and in front of the Army were the Taldryanites of the Blue Wampas. On a large stage, with multiple marble columns in the rear with additional lighting, luscious green vines, and Taldryan flags that hung from the ceiling, stood the various flag officers of the two branches on their respective sides facing their troops, the summit themselves in the center, and the summit guard around the lower perimeter keeping watch.

The last of the armed forces that had taken part had just left the stage, having received their accolades and awards for their individual performances. Each Taldryanite themselves had also received the same. The room was silent for a brief moment as Cassandra stepped forward towards the edge of the stage. All eyes were on her, including those behind her.

"Before we move to the final awards and the announcement of the winning team, I want to say a few words." she started, looking across one side and then the other, giving a gaze over the entirety of those present. "What happened today was a true tragedy. One that none of us could have foreseen, much less avoided. Let me say with sincerity, that we do not blame any of you for the deaths that occurred this day. No, my anger...and the anger of Taldryan...is directed at the ones whose malicious actions resulted in these senseless and unneeded deaths."

Many eyes throughout the crowd lowered, some holding back tears as they themselves had lost a family member or close comrade. After taking a slow, deep breath, she continued. "What they have done breaks every honor, tradition, and oath to protect and help those in our brotherhood within a brotherhood. As far as I am concerned, they are no brothers of ours and they will face absolute justice to answer for their crimes. Whomever you are, we are coming for you. To this, I swear and pledge. For the Republic, for Taldryan."

"For Taldryan! For the Republic!" The entire room bellowed in a loud cacophony as everyone within the room saluted.

Cassandra turned her attention to a pedestal that rose from the floor next to her. On it sat four golden medals emblazoned with the Taldryan crest, its ribbon consisting of a familiar

mix of red, blue, and purple colors. She looked off to the side where the Taldryan Honor Guard stood, instruments in hand and gave a slight motion of her hand as a signal.

They raised their instruments and began playing in unison, the large doors at the entrance of the hall slowly sliding open moments after they started. Everyone on the floor of the conference hall turned to face the center aisle just as three individuals made their way inside and along the aisle towards the front. Those three were General Zentru'la, Nobilus, and Zenod'ande'rson. Once they were all together at the stage, they slowly climbed the set of stairs and stopped halfway up.

The music continued as Cassandra grasped onto the first ribbon and carefully lifted the medal from the pedestal, turning to face Zentru'la. He leaned his head forward but never took his eyes off of her even as she placed it over his head and rested it upon his shoulders.

She turned back to the pedestal and grasped onto the second ribbon, lifting it from the pedestal. Taking several steps over towards the armored and cloaked Zabrak, Nobilus. Save the reflection of light off of his eyes, nothing else of his features were visible. Everything was hidden behind the veil that was his black hood and mask. As he stepped up towards her, he knelt down with his right arm resting upon his knee. She lifted the second medal from the ribbon, and looked down at him quietly asking. "May I?"

Nobilus said nothing, instead giving a brief and quick nod. She reached under his hood with the ribbon and carefully maneuvered it over his head, careful not to remove or disturb his hood more than it needed to be, before resting it on his shoulders. After she had done so, she took a step back and nodded to him before returning to the pedestal.

As she grasped onto the last ribbon and lifted it, she stepped over to the third individual, the blue-skinned Chiss Anders. He was fully dressed in the uniform of his station, black colored hair that was down to his neck. His eyes glowed like red embers, a smirk upon his lips as he stood in front of her.

"I warned you, Chancellor." he hissed quietly through a brief telepathic link between them. Her expression and demeanor was unchanged, with only a brief mental reply back to him.

"Just bow your head."

With a quick but quiet exhale, he bowed his head forward and she placed the ribbon around his neck and rested it upon his shoulders. The pedestal began to lower into the floor as Cassandra took several steps back and motioned for the three to turn.

No sooner than they faced the crowd before them, the entire room broke out in cheers and applause. Despite the darkness that had filled this day, this was a moment to rekindle

spirits and push everyone beyond what had occurred. To show the unity, and the bonds, that held them together were unwavering and unbreakable.

That no matter what may come, one thing was certain. They were a Brotherhood within a Brotherhood.