

*Hey-oh, here comes the danger up in this club  
When we get started and we ain't gonna stop  
We gonna turn it out 'til it gets too hot  
Everybody sing, hey-oh  
Tell 'em turn it up 'til they can't no more  
Let's get this thing shakin' like a disco ball  
This is your last warning, a courtesy call  
There's a rumble in the floor  
So get prepared for war  
When it hits, it'll knock you to the ground  
When it shakes up everything around.*  
From the song "Courtesy Call" by Thousand Foot Krutch

**Caperion System  
Uluv, Ulress  
Near Club Antonia  
41 ABY**

*The irony, some of the worst scum will hide in the brightest of lights.* Xendar thought to himself as he knelt on one knee, intently watching the surroundings of Club Antonia from the roof of the building across the alleyway on the backside of the club. After a few moments of silence, his earpiece comlink crackled to life.

"Praetorian to Shadow Walker. Come in, Shadow Walker." A voice over the comline ordered. Reaching up, Xendar tapped his comlink. "Shadow Walker to Praetorian. Receiving your signal." "Report," Praetorian ordered.

"In position, waiting for the target to run."

"Understood, Shadow Walker. Be advised; the Aurek investigation team is inbound and should be entering the club in two minutes."

"Affirmative Praetorian, After the target has been tagged; and if he makes his escape, and he makes for a starport, are we to eliminate or let him escape again?" Xendar asked.

"The Emperor and Lord Thran want him running scared. Keep that Quarren almost to the point of hysteria. But do not eliminate. You are authorized to wound the target if necessary as long as the wound is not fatal. The Emperor wants him to lead us to the head of this snake."

"Understood, Praetorian. Will comply, Shadow Walker, out." Xendar said as he started to intently watch the backdoor exits.

A few moments later, another voice was heard over the comline.

"Aurek team in position, entering the building," and then the line went silent again.

Xendar reached over and grabbed an elongated pack sitting on the edge of the wall and hit the activation stud on the side. The pack began to change shape and alter its form; until it turned into an R-444 Imperial Sky Swooper paraglider.

Xendar quickly began to attach himself to the paraglider. After he had done so, he walked back over to the edge of the building and waited.

He didn't have to wait long.

"Aurek to Besh. Target is fleeing. Repeat, target is fleeing. A tracer has been placed on the target, but it will take some time before it starts transmitting."

"Understood, Aurek. In position waiting for the target."

"Copy that, Besh. Remember, you have a blaster on that paraglider; a little H&I is good for the criminal scum. It reminds them just who is in charge of this planet."

Sqygorn Dar whipped the control column hard to the left as he tried to avoid another stream of blaster fire that walked itself along the side of the speeder, scoring and burning holes in the doors and rear window. Mirroring and adding to the damage that the speeder had taken on the right side. Reaching into his jacket and shakily pulled out a blaster, Sqygorn gave a panicked look over his shoulder, as he desperately looked for a target to shoot at, but none could be seen.

Whipping around, Sqygorn pushed the accelerator a little further toward the floor in a panicked hope that he could outrun his pursuers.

He gave off a strangled cry of horror as another stream of blaster fire appeared from behind him. The stream walked from the trunk of the speeder and up the center of the vehicle and into the cockpit, narrowly missing him and causing a massive electrical arcing flash as a blaster bolt exploded into the central console.

Sqygorn stuffed his hand through one of the large gaping holes in the plasteel window and began to fire blindly behind him in the vain hope of hitting his elusive pursuer, but that proved to be all for naught as a second stream of fire started to rain down on him, slightly to the left of the previous stream. This time, it started at the cockpit and walked its way backward toward the trunk of the speeder. This was too much for him. Stomping hard on the accelerator, he gunned the engine and raced off at full speed toward the industrial section of the city. Which is what Scholae Palatinae wanted him to do, expose the operation evermore.

If Sqygorn had been thinking instead of reacting; as he fled Club Antonia. He would have noticed that the stream of blaster fire was shot at an angled trajectory instead of a flat one. Another point he should have noticed was that as the streams of blaster fire rained down on him, was the fact that the shots alternated between starting at the trunk and walking forward; and starting at the cockpit and walking back toward the trunk of the speeder. Which should have led him to figure that he was being attacked by a sky-based vehicle. But Sqygorn was running on his senses, and since he did not hear the whine of a repulsor engine or see a large shadow. He did not think that he was being attacked by a small one-being vehicle. If Sqygorn had considered that thought, he might have taken a different course of action. But Sqygorn was a bully, and as such, any show of power beyond his own; frightened him. And his fear propelled him toward an old abandoned warehouse near an old spaceport landing pad. And as Sqygorn blazed his way into the warehouse, a figure quietly floated down onto a rooftop adjacent to the warehouse and began sending out a transmission for others to gather at the flyers location.

"We need to get out of here!" Sqygorn shouted as he crashed through a bunch of containers.

"What in the galaxy are you yelling about?!" Ixtal indignantly shouted as he spilled his newly opened bottle of ale all over himself.

"Those Palantinae types, they're on to us!" Sqygorn yelled at everyone in the building. "Get everything packed up! We are clearing out of here, tonight!"

"What?! Are you crazy? We just got things set up here, and the credits are rolling in, and now you want to throw that all away?" Ixtal said incredulously.

"Do you want to end up dead or worse?" Some of those Palantinae types have a reputation for nastiness beyond even what we see as pushing the limit! So get moving!" Sqygorn yelled.

"Uh, boss, you might want to see this," one of the mechanics said, carefully peeking out a window.

Both Ixtal and Sqygorn made their way over to a nearby window. They were nearly blinded by a massive blast of light from a bank of spotlights turned on and bathed the warehouse in a huge blanket of light.

"This is the Scholae Palantinae Security Force," a voice over a megaphone disk loudly announced.

"Sqygorn Dar, you and your associates have been found to be in violation of multiple laws, including; the administration of illicit street racing competitions, reckless endangerment of the local citizenry, kidnapping, refusal to comply with the local security forces during an investigation, attempted flight from the local security forces, and attempted murder of a member of the local security forces. We have you surrounded. You are ordered to submit and come out with your hands on your heads! You have two minutes to comply with our orders. Failure to comply will cause us to take appropriate action, and resisting apprehension will cause reprisals, which will be swift and severe."

"You stupid fool!" Ixtal snarled at Sqygorn. "You led them right to us!" Then turning toward the others, "Scatter; they can't catch us all!"

"Isn't that resisting?" One of the mechanics asked in a panicked voice.

"Only if they catch you!" Ixtal fired back.

A mass wave of confusion and yelling broke out until someone shouted.

"Forget that! They brought some monsters with them!"

A fair amount of the denizens of the building bolted over toward the windows and looked out. Silhouetted against the spotlights they stood, twelve massively hulking soldiers in heavy battle armor

"Rancors, forward march!" An arrogant voice smugly shouted.

The whole line of hulking soldiers marched in perfect lockstep forward.

Then, when the soldiers were approximately thirty meters from the warehouse, the voice shouted again.

"Rancors, Halt!" And in perfect unison, the twelve came to a complete stop.

"Why don't we just surrender?" A portly fellow in charge of food prep whined.

"There's no way I'm running or surrendering! I would rather fight it out!" One mechanic said as they pulled a blaster rifle out of a nearby crate."

"Are you crazy?!" a female speeder painter retorted, "Did you even look at who it is out there? Those aren't the regular security forces; I'll bet that is one of their special operations teams, and those barvy maniacs live to fight!"

Another round of yelling broke out until it was brutally silenced by the phantom voice. "Your two minutes have expired. You have not complied with the orders you were given. This will be taken as an act of defiance and shall be dealt with accordingly," The voice stated, then a few seconds later, "Tremor unit, fire the breaching charges!" The voice shouted.

A scream of terror echoed off the walls of the warehouse as the occupants watched as a horde of breaching grenades was sent flying into the wall.

Some occupants made a mad scramble to get as far away from the blast as possible, others dove for whatever cover they could find. And some found a defensible position from which they would fight back.

A heavy clang followed by a massive *Crump*; as the concussive blast from the breaching grenades caused the wall to explode inward.

"Rancors! Forward, march!" The voice ordered.

The sound of uniform heavy footfalls grew ever louder.

"Here they come! Let 'em have it!" The mechanic with the blaster rifle wheezed as they tried to yell through the dust and smoke.

But the soldiers did not appear. In their place; came the cacophonous clanging of a mass of small, metal objects. Which was followed by a blinding flash and finished off with an ear-rupturing roar as the Starfire flashbangs let loose their disorienting payload.

And as the vision returned to the occupants of the warehouse, many of them would have liked it if they were still blinded.

Standing in the large, gaping hole, silhouetted against the smoke and lights, stood the Rancors. With their impressively intimidating size and heavy black armor, they looked frighteningly similar to a Phase Three Dark Trooper.

"Rancors, standby weapons!"

The Rancors each took one synchronized step backward and brought up their weapons. And as each weapon was brought up, a hydrostatic shield began to open up like a flower in bloom; around the barrels of the Medium Repeating blasters that the Rancors carried.

And then, all chaos was unleashed.

"Rancors! Open fire!"

A massive fusillade of blaster fire lit up the darkened interior of the warehouse as the screams of those who resisted and fought back were punished for their indiscretion.

"Let's get out of here!" Ixtal shouted from behind a container that he and Sqygorn were hiding behind as a flurry of blaster fire shot past overhead.

"How?" Sqygorn shouted.

"That container chute behind you. Go!" Ixtal yelled.

Using the crates as cover, Sqygorn and Ixtal quickly crawled toward the chute; a few seconds later, the crates behind them blew up in a plasteel explosion, raining down a massive amount of parts, paint, and tools on the two hapless individuals.

Throwing themselves down the chute, the two looking more like comical circus escapees than fleeing criminals as they were covered in bumps and bruises as well as bright swaths of blue, yellow, red, orange, and black paint. Emerging from the chute, the two staggered around in an almost drunken daze.

"Come on, there is a small courier ship over that way," Ixtal said pointing, as he shook his head in an effort to clear it.

Sqygorn drunkenly wobbled in the direction that Ixtal had pointed; that was, until he heard a strangled choking sound from behind him. *Forget that! Ixtal is on his own!* Sqygorn thought to himself as he started to run as fast as his wobbly legs would carry him.

He ran about five steps when he was hit in the back and knocked over by a heavy object.

Struggling to get out from under the weight. Sqygorn found that it was Ixtal. Fearfully looking back in the direction that they came, the only thing that he saw was empty space.

"What in the Karking world are you doing?" Sqygorn hissed at Ixtal.

"I didn't do anything! Some barvy Sith picked me up by the throat and threw me at you!"

"Where?! I don't see any Sith!" Sqygorn hissed.

"Just as it threw me, it disappeared." Ixtal retorted.

"Yeah, right. I think that you were getting a spice fix, choked on some, and fell on me,"

"Whatever, let's get out of here," Ixtal said, then in a very quiet voice that Sqygorn wasn't supposed to hear but did, "I wonder if I gave those security forces Sqygorn, if they would let me walk."

As the two figures grew smaller, the air by the container chute began to shimmer, and a form appeared.

"Shadow Walker to Mynock. Are you clear?" Xendar said, reaching up and tapping his earpiece comlink.

"Affirmative Shadow Walker. We are clear, and the homing beacon is in place."

"Understood, Mynock. Shadow Walker out." Then tapping his comlink again.

"Team Besh to Cresh. Come in, Cresh."

"Cresh here." A voice responded.

"Target is on the way, but it will be later than expected; I had to delay the target. Part of my team needed some extra time to finish placing a homing beacon and to get away.

"Understood Besh. How many will I be dealing with?"

"Two," Xendar stated.

"Two?!" Cresh replied incredulously. "That will make a two-on-one fight; that seems kind of unfair. Couldn't you have made it five or ten to make things interesting."

"Sorry, Cresh. Two is all there was."

"Right, I guess I'll have to make do with what I have been dealt," Cresh added in a false sorrowful tone.

"Though, you might have to watch them. I think that they might try to kill each other."

"Hmm, perhaps then I can help one of them out," Cresh stated. Xendar could hear a lightsaber igniting in the background.

"You are authorized to wound; but not kill. The Emperor wants to end this problem at the root," *The irony!* Xendar thought to himself. *Having to tell a Sith to restrain themselves* from killing something.

"Understood, Besh; I can see the target in the distance. Cresh out."

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## **Caperion System**

### **Ragnath, in the sewers beneath**

#### **Caelesist City**

"Night Wraith Lead to Shadow Walker. We have the targets pinned down in Sector Three. And hoooh boy! Let me tell you, they are a lively bunch!" Major Jasten Rathlen said over the comline as he ducked to avoid a blaster bolt.

"Understood, Night Wraith Lead, I am on my way. Oriyanna's SPAR team should be in position to block off their escape if they try to use the side tunnels," Xendar stated as his voice came over the comlink.

"Hey, what is going on? I haven't got any infrared or thermal." A voice called out from behind Jasten.

Turning around, Jasten reached up and grabbed the figure by the shoulder, and shoved him to the ground.

"Unless you have a blaster or you really want to get shot, stay down!" Jasten ordered the reporter, his voice modulated to sound more robotic as he spoke through his helmet's speakers.

"But Sergeant, how can I report what is going on if I can't see what is going on?"

"Use that holocam that you were given, it has thermal. And for the last time, stay down!" Jasten said as he activated the cloaking device on his armor.

"Sergeant? This isn't funny! Where did you go? You're not going to leave me alone in this warzone, I can't see anything!" The reporter whined.

Jasten dropped the cloak behind the barrier where his second in command was holed up.

"Tors, the next time command wants us to drag a journalist along. We are leaving them at the base."

Tors chuckled as he let loose a shot from his blaster. He was rewarded for his effort with a loud, indignant squawk as a bright flash as the blaster bolt impacted near the blaster pack causing the blaster to fly out of being's hands.

"Understandable. But the top end wants the optics of the situation being that they are being proactive and quashing any form of evil that threatens the clan." Tors said, speaking through his helmet's comline

"The irony of that statement, as of right now, we are hunting our own," Jasten added.

"Eh, it will be spun that the information found in Sqygorn's office comp; is that they were infiltrators and charlatans," Tors replied.

"Yeah, I imagine they will; have to put a good face on things," Jasten said as he pulled his E-11 sniper rifle off his back.

"I can't believe you brought that thing with you," Tors said incredulously.

"Isn't that useless in here?"

"Deshavara gave this to me on our first anniversary," Jasten said, loving patting the rifle. "And it goes everywhere I go." He then brought the rifle to his shoulder, sighted something in the scope, and let loose a round. A loud shriek was heard, followed by, "I got shot in the backside!"

"Well, here comes the clean-up force," Jasten said as a familiar *Snap-Hiss* sound filled the air, followed by the glowing illumination of lightsabers that appeared behind the pinned-down figures.

"Yep, that's the end of our job. Hounds to the hunters, they say," Tors stated as he watched the Sith and Grey Jedi move in and dispatch the opposition.

"That was amazing!" The reporter stated, popping up from behind a barrier.

"Did you see that, Sergeant? Those force users coming out of nowhere and jumping headlong into the fighting, heedless of the danger they faced! That was incredible! This story and holo are my ticket to covering prime-time news!"

"Take cover, Frag grenades! Lots of them!" Someone shouted.

No one needed to be told twice, non-force user dove for whatever cover they could find. While the force users, who were already using their powers, erected a Force Barrier to protect themselves and others.

A bright flash of light lit up the tunnel, followed by a loud explosion. The tunnel then plunged back into near darkness, as Jasten could hear the sound of fragmented metal colliding with the barrier he and Tors dove behind.

Several moments of silence passed before anyone moved. Slowly getting to his feet, Jasten peeked over the edge of the barrier. He was surprised that apart from pitted walls, which Jasten could see due to the fading heat that the metal had made when it collided with the wall. It seemed there were few casualties.

"Full sweep; everyone, stay on your toes. Medics, start checking for wounded. Corstos, get command on the line and see if they can power up lights in these tunnels and see if they can send down some vehicles," Jasten ordered.

Jasten watched as the last of the traitors were being closely watched by their Sith and Jedi guards as they were being loaded into the security vehicle. Which was going to the spaceport; then ship bound for The Monolith, where they would be interrogated.

"Hey, Corstos," Jasten said, pulling off his helmet as he talked to the communications officer.

"Where are those Med transports? I don't like the idea of anyone dying when it could be avoided."

"On it, Major," Corstos replied.

Jasten gave a nod, then turning to Tors, Jasten added, "And then see about transports for us. I don't think anyone wants to walk all back to base.

Stopping for a moment, Jasten watched various personnel walk around the tunnel.

"Hey kid, what are you doing?" Jasten said with a smile as a familiar black-cloaked figure came into view.

"I was looking for Oriyanna," Xendar said, throwing back his hood and looking around. "Is she here?"

"One sec," Jasten said, turning toward a figure sitting on a barrier. "Hey Slammer, come here, will ya?"

The figure got up and walked over to where Jasten stood. "Slammer, say hello to Shadow Walker," Jasten stated.

"Nice to meet you," Slammer said, extending his hand. "I'm Lieutenant Sovereign Reltis."

Xendar shook his hand, his eyes; going back and forth between Jasten and Slammer.

"I thought that the 2nd SPAR Team was still in training," Xendar said in a questioning tone.

"It is. I'm the commander of SPAR Team One."

"Isn't that Captain Rathelin's command?" Xendar asked, a bit of terseness in his voice.

"It is. Captain Rathelin and half the team were pulled for a special assignment. Leaving me in temporary command of the team."

"Half the team?"

"Yeah, the Captain, Filtcher, Blaze, Ice, Maelstrom, Dark Star, and even Cuddles! It must have been something crazy if you have to specifically ask for a Barabell."

"It's the same way with my team, Jasten stated. "To bring their team up to mission strength, SPAR had double up with the Mynocs, and my Wraiths had to double up with the Rancors. I had about a quarter of my team pulled, and the Mynocs had about half their team pulled as well including Captain Monjus. The only team that I know of that didn't lose any personnel was the Rancors. Right Braish?"

"That would be an incorrect conclusion Major Jasten. While the Rancors did indeed incur some losses of personnel, it was not as large as the other teams. As it stands, the only person that was pulled from the Rancors, was Lieutenant Trista Rastvlen," the mountainous Iradonain stated.

"I don't think I have met her; is she a new team member?" Jasten asked.

"Yes, she joined the Rancors about three months ago."

"I remember the Rancors having a parade lineup for a presentation of a medal to one of your members last month; which one was she?" Jasten asked.

"She was the one that was two meters tall with purple-red skin and black-purple hair, pointed ears, and blue eyes."

"Wow," Slammer said. "She sounds like a real head-turner. Is she single?"

Braish gave a half smile. "Lieutenant Rastvalen is very particular about the men she shows a romantic interest in. As her commanding officer, I'll say, good luck."

Braish stepped forward, looking down at Slammer, "But as her father, I have to warn you, it's not happening!" He growled.

A round of hearty laughter broke out from everyone in the circle, even Slammer managed to eke out a small laugh.

"Ah, sir. I apologize for the intrusion, but we have a matter that needs attending to," A medic from the Rancors said to Braish as he stepped up beside him.

"Something wrong, Treis?" Braish asked his medic.

"I have a wounded mortally patient, he has a short time left he insists that he needs to talk to someone."

The medic then turned and looked at Xendar, "He wants to talk to you."

"And no, sir, there is no mistake; the patient described you in very thorough detail. In his words: You are looking for a tall figure in black armor, a hooded, black cloak; If his hood is down, look for someone with a black, faceless visage and red glowing eyes. He also favors wearing glowing blood-red claws and talons. If he is unhooded, he has the look of a man in his twenties with black



hair, short in the front and in a single braid down the back. He will have a vaguely feline face and silver cat-like eyes."

Xendar followed the medic over to the far side of the tunnel. As he dodged the various soldiers, transports, and those who were wounded. Xendar found himself standing in front of a figure lying on a repulsor board.

The figure was a blood-sodden mess wrapped in a swath of bandages.

"Ah, there he is, just about how I expected you to look," The figure said in a wheezing voice.

"Talk," Xendar said in a cold, lifeless voice.

The figure gave a wheezing laugh, "Always one to keep your professional persona, eh Shadow Walker. Though, I would have thought that with your hood up, you would have also had the glowing red eyes going as well. I if wasn't on death's door, I more than likely would be scared silly. Strange how being so to death causes one to lose their fear of almost anything."

Xendar said nothing but stared at the figure.

The figure gave a chuckle. "Yep, just like your file says, you aren't one to waste time with what you think are excessive formalities." The figure then reached under the sheet that draped over his body and brought out a small holo cam droid. Activating it, the droid lifted off and fluttered in the air above the figure.

"I am recording this conversation. You can show it to whomever you wish after it is done. Do you know why I asked to talk to you?"

Xendar just stared at him.

"It's simple, really. You are a lot like I was when I joined the clan; incredibly loyal and wanting the best for the clan," The figure gave a snort of derision, "And was I a misguided fool! At least those whom I work with now, you know what they are from the beginning, and they don't hide behind the pretense of altruism."

Xendar stood in there silence, impassive and inscrutable as a blank statue.

"Still won't show your hand, eh, Shadow Walker? I have three reasons for wanting to talk to you. One: You are high enough in the clan to afford yourself some clout while still being low enough to be unnoticed. Second: You are a gray, which means you are more than likely to see things from a more balanced perspective. And three: You ruffled the Emperor's feathers during the invasion of Seraph. Not has anything to do with the situation, I just like it due to the fact that you ruffled his feathers. But back to the matter at hand; yes, I know there are other grays like you; but how many of them are able to do something, and when was the last time you saw them? Give this information to Lord Reiden, you might say? No. He has become too closely tied to Lord Thran and Emperor Kamjin. And is possibly complacent in their machinations. So that leads me to you. But I am not going to make this easy for you. All that I will say; is look into the Imperial Missions. They aren't what they seem to be."

The figure gave a wheezing gasp and took a long breath before continuing.

"This isn't about me begging for absolution or clemency; it's revenge. And contrary to what they say of revenge being a bitter pill, In my last moments of life, I find it to be most sweet indeed. Because at this moment, your emperor is about to find out how painful a blaster bolt can feel!"

Xendar turned quickly around and took off as fast as he could run for a transport while trying to get a hold of the Monolith with the sound of the figure's laughter ringing in his ears.

## **Monolith**

### **Seraph**

#### **10+ hours after the assassination attempt on the Emperor.**

Xendar stood against one of the walls in the room that he, the Wraith, Rancors, Mynocs, and the SPAR teams now occupied.

"Still feeling edgy?" Jasten said as he walked up to him.

"Not any more than normal," Xendar replied.

"You are made of tougher stuff than me," Jasten added, putting a hand on Xendar's shoulder.

"I don't think so. But have you heard anything?"

"Not a word, in or out. I imagine we will hear something. Though I think my guys would like it a bit more if they could contact their wives, girlfriends, and fiancées."

"Really?" Xendar dryly stated. "According to the holovids, the average spec ops soldier is a carefree individual with nothing to tie them down, and the mission always comes first."

Jasten gave him a flat look.

"Those types are like a flash bang, they work good when you have them, but once they are used up, they're gone. My old drill instructor, Sgt Dilgen, said something that stuck with me. He said, ***If you don't have something to hold you in place and stand your ground and fight for, how can you call yourself a soldier?***"

"That is surprising, come from what you have told me about Dilgen," Xendar said.

"Eh, shouldn't be, as it turns out; was he talking about the moral compass of love and family? Nope. He was talking about Corellian Whiskey," Jasten stated in a matter-of-fact voice.

A chorus of stifled snorts and snickers broke about the room.

"Hey, don't laugh too loudly; I know a couple of you hard cases really like that stuff!" Jasten said with a smile.

The slight mood of levity was broken as the door to the room opened, and a single figure walked in

"Major Rathelin, Major Rastvalen," The figure said as they entered the room, walking up to where Briash and Jasten were.

"Sirs, I have a message from Special Operation Command; with your permission?" The sergeant asked.

Both Braish and Jasten gave a single nod of approval.

"As of this evening, you and your teams are to stand down and be placed on off-duty status for two weeks time," The aide stated. The aide looked around in surprise when no response was garnered but continued. "At that time, You will be able to contact your families to let them know what is going on. But until that time, you are required to stay within the confines of this facility." The sergeant then turned and walked over to Xendar.

"Operative Shadow Walker, please follow me." The sergeant said as they spun around on their heel and walked toward the open doorway.

Xendar was led to a small room with a small table, three chairs, and single light hanging from the ceiling.

*An Interrogation Room; cute.* Xendar thought to himself as he stepped into the room and sat in the chair opposite the door.

Xendar did not have to wait long, as within a few minutes, the sergeant came back with a pile of holo pads and was flanked by two other individuals. The other two stayed back in the shadows until the sergeant had placed the holo pads in front of Xendar. Each pad showing a different face.

After the sergeant had left, the two figures stepped forward.

As the first figure sat down, Xendar felt a conflicted twinge of both respect and suspicion. *Give this information to Lord Reiden, you might say? No. He has become too closely tied to Lord Thran and Emperor Kamjin. And is possibly complacent in their machinations.* Xendar heard the figure's voice ringing in his mind.

And as the second figure sat down, the twinge that Xendar felt turned itself into one very large knot. *Lady Rayne, she works hand in hand with Lord Thran.* Xendar thought to himself.

"Can you pick out the person that told you about the attempt on Emperor?" Rayne said gently.

Looking down at the pictures, Xendar began to analyze and recall information. *Human, Male*, he thought, as he moved the pictures of any nonhumans and females away from the center of the table. *Middle-aged, from the sound of his voice.* With that, he pushed away a few more pictures, leaving only three, one that was incredibly pale white, one that had the same coloring as Oriyanna, and one darker even still. *That's him.* Xendar thought, recalling that he could see the skin around the figure's eyes.

"This one," Xendar said, pushing forward the holo of the pale-skinned one.

"Colonel Bes'stine Heriz of Scholae Intelligence," Lord Reiden stated; in a flat voice.

"Operative Shadow Walker, could you tell us what Colonel Heriz told you before his death?"

Lady Rayne stated in a soft, encouraging tone.

"He stated that he was going to be getting his revenge on the Emperor for some unknown reason."

"In what way?" Rayne asked.

"His response was to the effect of, *Your Emperor is about to find out how painful a blaster bolt can feel!*" Xendar replied.

"Nothing else? Like why, or whom he had aligned himself with?"

"No," Xendar said, looking them both straight in the eyes.

"I see," Lord Reiden said, a note of disappointment in his voice. Then looking up at Xendar, "There is a special transport leaving in an hour for a specific location; you are to be on it. You will receive your mission orders when it breaks orbit."

"Understood," Xendar said, standing up. Then added "Lord Reiden, Lady Rayne" as he addressed them singularly and gave a bow to each before leaving the room.

"He was lying, you know that, don't you?" Rayne said as a slight growl slipped into her voice.

"Yes, I do, But it begs the question, why would he lie?" Reiden wondered aloud. "According to one of the other Force users taking part in that mission, stayed behind when there was no more room on board the transports due to the prisoners so this particular force user volunteered to take

a later one with the soldiers. They then watched as a medic escorted our friend there, over toward Colonel Heriz and the two started talking, for they guessed about five minutes, though they weren't sure if it was a two-way or just a one-sided conversation. But Colonel Heriz let loose a small hover cam droid which recorded their conversation. After Heriz started going into a crazed laugh and our operative friend took off, Hertz suddenly died. And the other force user started to make their way over to get that small droid, and as if the luck of the galaxy was against us, the medic came over to cover Hertz, saw the hover can droid, grabbed it, and chased after our running operative."

Reiden gave a sigh and then turned toward Rayne. "What do we do know about that operative?"

"His name is Xendar Thendaris. He's operative for Scholea Intelligence, designation; Shadow Walker." Rayne responded, looking up from a personnel pad that she had been given.

"Anything else? Who's his handler?"

"No handler, he's a Force Hound; think of them like the old Emperor's Hands. Though, this is interesting. He was an unknowing participant in the Unified Force Experiment."

"What is that?" Reiden asked.

"It was someone's hair-brained idea at an attempt to create an extremely cohesive two-being fighting team. I don't know if it got anywhere. I just found it interesting."

"Is there anything else? Notable fights, family in high places, that sort of thing, just anything that could give us a clue about what is going on in his head." Reiden asked.

"He's of a mixed species heritage; Human, Juhani-Cathar, Zeltron, and Echani,"

"That doesn't sound very promising," Reiden said with a sigh as he got up from the chair where he had been sitting. "Thran wants every infiltrator we have on their way to Koudooin within the hour. Let's assign someone to watch our friend, just to make sure that he doesn't cause any trouble."

