The Long War

By Kell Palpatine Dante
#2407

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**Cocytus System
Judecca
Omen City**

A celebration in honor of their recent victory was going on in the streets of Judecca. Singing could be heard in the streets as the parade made its way down the crowded street full of festive partygoers. Floats full of revelers threw beads, cups, and other items to the waiting crowds who stood in anticipation for each decorated vehicle to come by. The air was a bit chilly as the seasons were changing, and a light snow was falling and added to the picturesque image of the victory parade.

A few blocks off the route, there were a number of Imperials who were not taking part in the festivities, and 1st Lieutenant Nava Janke and Field Marshal Kell Palpatine Dante were among them. The newly issued armored was already prepped and ready from what she could see. Matte black in color with dark gray and black gear, the Nightstalker armor that was worn by members of the 90th Legion was distinctive enough before the vaunted T & O unit insignia was added to the shoulder pauldron of the armor. Although it really stands for Tough ‘Ombres, the joke amongst the members of the 90th was that it stood for the former Emperor who had given Angelo Dante the okay to revamp the Imperial Scholae Guard.

With the focus of Scholae Palatinae on the Grand Crusade, little attention had been paid to the internal security of the Cocytus System, and this was one of the raids that the Imperial Scholae Guard was conducting in order to take back areas from the criminal syndicates that had popped up recently.

The “go” order came through from command, and the troopers suited up quickly and efficiently as the vehicles that were to deliver them on their attack finally showed. They mounted up quickly and moved towards their target.

Upon exiting the transport, the team surrounded the house quickly and moved into their pre-assault positions. The door team leader started the attack with a quick hand motion that told the demolitions tech to blow the main doors off of the building. A couple of concussion grenades were thrown in, and the team stormed through the door into the compound.

That is when the ambush began.

Enemy fire came out of almost thin air as the first two troopers to enter were quickly mowed down by automatic blaster fire. More of the team died moments later as grenades began rolling their way.

The Field Marshal used the force to flip the grenades back from whence they came and dove for cover from the blasts. “Command… this is Nightstalker Lead… ambushed upon entry… need immediate extract… over…”

A second later, the response from the operations center came through with “Roger that, Nightstalker Lead… we have MAAT’s inbound for immediate extraction. Coordinates are Alpha Tango 50134594 by 30042238… Over.”

More incoming fire was coming their way, but Janke and Dante were holding their own in the small hallway. The natural chokepoint created by the T junction was both a saving grace and a hellish environment as more and more enemy guerillas tried to make it into the hallway.

“Let’s make a run for that window, Lieutenant” Dante said as he pointed to a small window that overlooked a courtyard.

“What? That thing is at least twenty feet up from the ground!” Janke yelled as she popped off a few more rounds at the enemy.

“No time like the present!” Kell yelled as he pulled out his sidearm and began firing at the same time as he and Nava began running for the rear exit. Blaster bolts and slugs tore through the walls of the house as the pair headed down a long hallway with only one possible route of escape: the window to outside with a two story drop to the ground below. As they approached it, the Field Marshal yelled “Get ready!” as he fired his twin DL-44’s into the window and its frame. They crashed through the window and out into the cold, crisp air.

Blowing snow filled the air as the pair flew out the window and headed for the embankment below. Kell reached out his hand and used the Force to slow their descent to one that wouldn’t result in a broken bone or worse.

Hitting the ground and rolling, the two military officers came up running towards their awaiting transport. As with most undercover missions, the possibility of being made by the indigenous security forces was great, but this had all of the signs of being a setup of some kind. Traps were hard to get away from, and this had been no exception. If they hadn’t realized with enough time, they would be dead now.

The MAAT/SOC flared as it came in low and fast to the landing zone. With the doors already open, the pair of troopers hopped onto the transport, and it took off as fast as it had landed.

**Cocytus System
Judecca
Imperial Scholae Guard Headquarters**

Leaning back in his chair, the Field Marshal continued reading the latest intel reports on the One Sith as he sipped his caf. The latest battles in the campaign had continued to tear away at any large scale operation that the enemy had been operating prior to the Crusade.

A knock happened at the door, and a young officer entered the office and snapped off a good salute as she said, “Lieutenant Janke reporting for duty, sir.”

“At ease… I was just going over your report on our little mission. It looks pretty thorough…” the Field Marshal said as he tapped through the report on the data pad.

“Yes, sir… I felt that even though our mission was a success, it proved that we have enemy sympathizers within the ranks of both Scholae Palatinae and the Brotherhood at large.” The woman shifted her wait from leg to leg as she mentioned the society of Dark Jedi who secretly ran the Empire here in the Cocytus system as well as in numerous systems throughout the galaxy.

“Hmm… so you know of our arrangement?” responded the Field Marshal as he eyed up the young officer who stood before him. “I see… well, I believe we should be looking at how this offensive is changing the Brotherhood and Scholae Palatinae.”

Another young officer in the briefing spoke up with “Sir, we have already begun an extensive report on that. It isn’t full ready yet, but we do have some pretty general statements. The only thing we can say is that the Iron Throne is trying to advance their schemes at the expense of the clans and houses. Our analysts also suggest that they will continue their buildup to the point that they will not have to have the military forces of the clans and houses.”

“So… you’re thinking that the Iron Throne is pushing to centralize the power even more?” asked Dante.

The officer nodded, and the rest of the group let it soak in that a power play that might destroy the foundations of Scholae Palatinae was about to be completed.

Dante shook his head and said “Get me the Emperor on the comms… we have much to discuss.”