



SUBMITTED IN ENTRY TO HSP COMPETITION: FALL
BREAKERS

Second Life

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House Scholae Palatinae

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1 A Sleeping Phantom

A scissor of morning sunlight glanced through the blinds, dancing across her face. Light slowly spread throughout Corellia University, illuminating the crevices of her small dormitory. Dawn was breaking. Impetus awoke.

Her surroundings were familiar to her now. It had been five years since her scholarly inquisition led her to the life of a scientist. Arriving as a research student, her talents led to a swift rise in reputation, and in five short years she had joined the ranks of the professors, her research in the biosciences spreading her readership offworld, a renowned expert in chemical weapons, epidemiology and mathematics. Her transition from adult actress to scientist may have raised eyebrows, had she not abandoned her identity in the transition. Impetus was dead. Officially confirmed to have been killed during an expedition to the Ryloth Brightlands. Her body was never found.

A million miles away, she lazily rolled out of bed to observe her own reflection. Still slim by the standards of the wider galaxy, she had gained weight in the last five years from an absence of training, no longer the paragon of the twi'lek physical form. With age nipping at her heels, no longer could she move like lightning, but she didn't care. Her body's loss was her mind's gain.

Blue eyes shone brilliantly, glistening in the light before they turned to a murky green. The contact lenses were the simplest part. Her skin required a more esoteric touch, the scientist's affinity for the mystical enduring her haitus. Plain luscious yellow twi'lek skin turned to pale red, white togruta markings around her eyes as her face receded 10 years, to that of a togruta in her mid twenties. Hollow horns completed the look, having been made to look identical to the real thing by a renowned Corellian surgeon, the only one who knew the truth of the scientist Elinicia Rei. But Impetus' secret was safe with him, because he was dead. None knew the truth.

The long white lab coat covered her neck to toe, a stark contrast to her old attire. But this was neither the time or the place for that. Her old life was a long way behind her, with a reputation here crafted purely out of talent. The reflection of a togruta, Dr. Elinicia Rei, finest young researcher around, confident, scholarly and professional, looked back at her. She smiled. Her identity had become more than a disguise. It was a work of art, a masterpiece, her new life. All that remained of her past was her lightsaber, hidden deep in an inside pocket.

2 Calls of Darkness

A dull bleep snapped her into reality. A new message from a collaborator, with whom she had been investigating the most efficient way to spread a poison gas throughout a scale model of a small facility.

Elincia,

Phase one was a success. Lethal concentrations of EA1205 recorded across 95% of the target area within 17 seconds. Phase two set to begin in three standard months.

Best wishes,
Professor Sebu

Of course it worked, Elincia thought to herself. The models had been in development for months, the positive result wasn't at all surprising to her. Phase two would be the true test, distributing the neurotoxin through a full sized building with non-sentient test subjects. The research of course was conducted from a purely academic stance. Diffusion of toxic chemicals posed an interesting modelling problem. After her next message however, the project would be greatly expanded, revised, and perhaps most importantly, used.

FOR YOUR EYES ONLY

Dear Dr. Elincia Rei,

Your application has been reviewed. Your portfolio has been examined, and we deem your work on EA1205 impressive. Please report to our headquarters on Judecca at mid-day standard time in three days. Tell no-one. Come alone or not at all.

Regards,
Professor Yerwyn Metzl
Head of Research and Development

Elincia wasn't supposed to know the truth of her future employers, but she saw through the false front. As soon as her careers agency informed her that a military scientist was required by a corporation in the Cocytus system, she knew. They had no idea

what they were truly getting.

As much as she enjoyed the life of a scientist, life at the university lacked a spark. She formulated the models, her collaborators performed experiments, the results were published. Sometimes she would teach. But it was all the same, the same process, the same end result. She had travelled the galaxy, fought in wars, slaughtered legions, murdered generals, duelled with Sith Lords, led armies. She didn't miss the politics she saw as petty and destructive, but part of her missed the excitement of the Dark Jedi Brotherhood, and of Scholae Palatinae.

She fluttered in anticipation at the prospect of her return. Her plan was clear, she would return as a scientist, recruited as lead mathematician on Scholae Palatinae's military research and development projects. No-one would know the truth. They had secured the services of the mathematician Elinicia Rei, not Impetus M'Nar. The timing had been perfect, her contacts informed her most of the Dark Jedi were away on vacation. She would slot into the science teams before they returned, and keep up her disguise. She would avoid the politics, the bickering, the cut-throat webs of betrayal and deceit, and support her house through the use of science.

Scholae Palatinae had unwittingly acquired the most dangerous mathematician in the galaxy.

3 Departure

She felt a twinge of guilt towards abandoning Professor Sebu. The experimentalist, despite her advancing years, had been a stalwart academic ally of Elinicia, first as an advisor, then as a colleague with unshakable belief and devotion to their combined work. Elinicia had never published anything without Sebu somewhere in the author list. She would keep in contact discretely, for advice, perhaps slowly working on bringing her to Judecca, should the opportunity present itself.

Her research would only remain unfinished in the eyes of the academic community. Corellia University's Department of Applied Mathematics and Biotechnology possessed large quantities of bioweapons, held under restricted access strictly for academic purposes only. An ideal gift for her new hosts.

The University's security was severely inadequate for the threat Elinicia proposed. Suf-

ficient for preventing a student from accessing the wrong equipment, the security guards would prove no problem. Swiftly swiping her keycard through the receiver, Elinia simply walked through the front door, advancing towards the storage rooms with a confident stride.

“Doctor Rei!” Usually she would always make time for her students, but she had more important things on her mind as she reached the storage warehouses. Seven foot tall, strongly built, covered in ebon black armour, wielding a repeater rifle even larger than his giant arms, the security guard was an intimidating presence to students. Elinia briefly wondered how many of him she could take on at once. It had been a while since she had felt the thrill of combat, but a lower profile approach was the most prudent option, not wanting to bring violence to a place of scholarly work.

“State your purpose,” he growled deeply, unfamiliar with the mathematician.

“I require our entire reserves of EA1205, T-238, and FEX-M3, stored in a container fit for off world transport,” Elinia said, and waved her hand, smiling, “You don’t need to know why.” She had become an expert in using the Force to alter her appearance, but she had forgotten how it felt to exercise such control over another’s mind. Out of personal pride she had never used the Force to further her academic career.

“I’ll get them for you,” he grunted. “I don’t need to know why.” It was all too easy as the guard returned with exactly what she required. Travelling lightl, with only the clothes on her body and the chemical weapons, Impetus began the journey home.

4 Touch Down

The mountains of Ohmen pierced the swirling clouds. An incredible feat of engineering, the citadel carved into the mountain, the clan may have been reduced to a house during her absence, but the headquarters were as inspiring as ever, each tier of the mountain utilised to its full capacity. Nothing was wasted. Returning as a scientist, she appreciated the city in a way she never could before, as a scientific miracle. She hoped her overwhelming sense of nostalgia would be interpreted as wonder as her ship circled the city, touching down in a landing pad, having cleared her arrival en-route.

Inside, the science institute was white and sterile. A meticulous amount of effort had been devoted to keeping everything clean. “Dr. Elinia Rei, reporting for interview,”

she informed security, passing over the crate of chemical weapons. “And pass this onto the bioweapons labs, we will have use of it later. The finest and purest from Corellia university. The guard nodded, acknowledging the request.

“Professor Metzl is expecting you in fifteen minutes, Doctor Rei”, the guard informed her. “Proceed to the third floor”.

“Thank you,” Elinicia said politely, inclining her head respectfully. As she passed the security desk, an alarm immediately beeped. Her lightsaber had triggered a hidden weapons detector.

“Halt!”

“You didn’t hear that.”

“I didn’t hear that.”

It was fortunate that all the Dark Jedi were on holiday, otherwise they might have had one on guard duty, and her mental attacks may have been resisted. But as it was, she had a free run into the facility, and to the office of Professor Metzl. An old friend of Impetus’ since her days as Commander of Caliburnus, there would be no opportunity to catch up. She wanted to congratulate the scientist on her ascent from Caliburnus’ tech specialist to the director of the clan’s research efforts, but doing so would blow her cover.

“Take a seat,” Metzl said abruptly as Elinicia entered the office. “I don’t want to waste any time with talk, your chemicals have already been verified to be of excellent quality and your publications speak for themselves.” Elinicia feigned a sense of nervousness as she sat opposite her new superior. “We need no interview, I’m here to tell you about the organisation. I lied to you, S.P. is not a science company. We’re a front for-

“I don’t want to waste any time either,” Elinicia interrupted. “I don’t need a history lesson, just tell me about the job. Besides, I did my research, I know what you are.” She mimicked the abrupt ‘no bullshit’ attitude Metzl brought to her Caliburnus team five years ago, knowing that she wouldn’t bother asking unnecessary questions. Force trickery wasn’t even necessary.

“Very well,” she responded. “You’ll be working as the lead mathematician on our top military projects. Your team will consist of a handful of assembled mathematicians

and their students. Your primary objective is to complete your investigation into the optimisation of chemical weapons distribution. The non-sentients in your proposal will be replaced with prisoners of war during phase 2. Our physicists also require support on missile development, and the geology team will require a student to assist with tectonics. Details of all of our projects will be forwarded on to you shortly. Welcome to Scholae Palatinae. Your living quarters are upstairs, and your office will be on level 2. Your name's already on the door. Now get to work."

5 Epilogue

Hero of Caliburnus, ex-Daughter of Palpatine, Priestess of Lore, Krath Epis Impetus M'Nar is back. Perhaps someday she would reveal her true identity. For now, she will lay low, leading her applied mathematics team in research and development until, if ever, the time is right.

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