

Evant Taelyan, #9118

The Dark Depths Competition Entry

### The Truth in Nightmares

Massive oversized banners displaying the logo of Clan Scholae Palatinae, and that of the Empire of the Cocytus System flanked both walls of the massive entry corridor of the Imperial Palace. Below them stood portions of the Praetorian Guard that stood in protection of the Emperor who sat on the throne beyond the doors at the end of the hall. Everything was as it should be, nothing out of place.

As Proconsul, Evant Taelyan was tasked with running the military of Scholae Palatinae, all divisions, in defense of their glorious Empire. Day in and day out he work tirelessly into the night on training regiments and plans that tightened their grip on their small portion of the galaxy and left it better defended from those who would do harm.

Today was no different.

Except, his brain was a bit fuzzier than usual on why he found himself back at the Imperial Palace. The Emperor usually received his in secure conference rooms or in the floors above them reserved for the Summit of Clan Scholae Palatinae.

His feet carried him forward, his robes flowing from his decorative yet functional Imperial style armor as he strode on. His mind raced with exactly what he was doing there, yet he moved only with purpose, as an inspiration to all those who looked up to their commanders and the Dark Jedi who upheld the pillars of the Empire.

The doors began to part as he approached, a nice touch that Emperor Vismorsus had begun during his reign. Subtle, yet an important small attention to detail that highlighted just how much power the Empire had.

His mind went blank as he walked through the door. Remember where he was he began to look for the Emperor. Instead he found himself in a small poorly lit hexagon room with three doors in front of him. Rapidly he looked around, confused.

Nowhere to be found were the massive pillars in the throne room towering around him, or the elaborate décor that covered the walls behind the throne. No throne. No Emperor.

Carefully he observed the style of the small hexagon room, clearly Imperial styling, dark grays and clean lines. It was entirely possible he was still inside the Imperial Palace but, where.

Brushing off the impossibility of the entire situation he approached the door to the right.

It slide open as he approached. Beyond it, a firefight.

Hunkered down behind boxes and crates in cover were members of the Praetorian Guard. A few had their blasters pulled up and were returning fire but mostly they remained suppressed as several heavy blaster turrets rained down on their position.

Evant struggled to understand how he could have missed that they were under attack. His mind raced about who could possibly be attacking them and how they got past all the Imperial Palace defenses.

His eyes quickly traced the room and oriented his position. One of the lower public hangars of the Imperial Palace that received guests. He figured it must have been an isolated attack that erupted from a ship.

How had he arrived at it though was beyond him, yet his instincts kicked in, and he jumped to action.

As his sapphire blade erupted from his hilt the Sith Battlemaster jumped up on top of the crates and into the direct line of fire. His blade whirling through the air to deflect the blaster bolts back on their attackers and push back to gain some breathing room for his soldiers.

Each carefully positioned movement of his blade did nothing. The blaster bolts went through his blade and found their target on the other end. Blaster bolts that could move through a lightsaber blade seemed impossible.

He continued to swipe and elegantly move his blade through the air only to continue to have no effect.

One of the Praetorian Guard who came up to return fire took a volley to the face, melting his helmet before casting his lifeless body backwards. A crate far to the left flank came to pieces under the sustained fire and the pair of soldiers behind it in cover were easily torn apart by the heavy fire.

Evant watched in horror as his men were being killed, and he was seemingly unable to prevent it.

Jumping down behind the barricade to join his fellow troops, realizing his lightsaber was doing nothing, he reached out with the Force to lift a crate in the middle of the battlefield and toss it towards the attackers using their own crates for cover. Yet the crate just fell apart on impact and the attacks continued.

“Where are our reinforcements?!” Evant yelled, looking behind him at the open entrance to the hangar with nobody to be seen.

One by one his troops fell to the enemy fire. Evant saw the few left hunkered behind crates, the clones didn't have a speck of fear in their entire bodies as they continued to defend and prevent the enemy from advancing. More than willing to die for the Empire.

Evant jumped from behind the crates, igniting his lightsaber as he rushed across the hangar towards the enemy. He wasn't about to lay down and take it.

As he rushed across the room he mentally prepared himself for what lay ahead. No mere soldiers were a match for a trained Dark Jedi.

Yet, as he reached their defensive position and jumped over it, he found himself once again in the hexagon room with the three doors.

The hum of his combat right lightsaber and his labored breaths the only sounds in the room.

Anger was the only emotion he felt, far beyond any confusion, he felt a lack of control. An inability to defend the Empire.

Without hesitation he ran towards the door to the left that opened as he approached. As he entered, he found himself on the bridge of the *Imperial*-class Star Destroyer *Warspite*, in the midst of the battle. Klaxon alarms filled the air and blinking red warning lights illuminated every workstation in the area. At

the front of the bridge, an unrecognizable officer was uncomfortably issuing orders. Evant immediately rushed to the forward viewport to relieve him of command and take over the ship that served as the flagship for nearly their entire military force.

“What’s going on here? I need a status report now!” Evant yelled as he stared down the commander who quickly stepped aside.

“Shields are at sixty-three percent, I’m redirecting reserve power from the rear shields to protect the bridge but they won’t hold under this type of fire,” one of the defense technicians reported.

The entire ship shook as shields in some other portion of the ship failed to protect it from a proton torpedo. Evant rushed to look out the viewport and take a visual assessment, no time to analyze the battle station reports.

Out the viewport on the bridge, his eyes were immediately drawn to two different MC80A Star Cruisers, turned with their guns drawn on the *Warspite* pouring an incredibly amount of crimson red energy into the forward shields. Elsewhere in space, countless starfighters and smaller cruisers and ships engaged one another or had their long range weapons firing on the *Warspite* as well.

In the distance, as a backdrop to the battle around him, the familiar outlines of the continents of Judecca reveal them to be in orbit above the home planet of the Cocytus System. Large scorched portions of ground show that the planet itself is under attack, at a scale that’s visible from space.

Things were not going well.

“Sir, bridge shields are failing, we are venting atmosphere from the lower decks. There isn’t enough power left to divert. The *Warspite* is falling apart.”

Fear flooded in next, replacing anger. The transparisteel viewport of the bridge began to crack as a floor of crimson energy from the star destroyers took advantage of the lack of shields.

Evant turned, and rushed from the bridge as the viewport failed under the fire and cracked open. The process of the bridge depressurizing began as everything began to be pulled out and sucked into the vacuum of space. Strangely he didn’t feel the effects as he rounded a corner into the turbolift.

As the turbolift door closed. He once again found himself in the hexagon shaped room.

Scared, angry, and confused, the Sith just screamed out in anger and frustration.

His entire Empire was falling apart around him, and he didn’t understand why. He rushed forward through the middle door, at almost a run. Emerging into the bright sunny outdoors.

Exhaustion had begun to set in, through the rollercoaster of emotions. Sweat dripped down Evant’s face as his eyes took in a half destroyed and devastated capital city of the Empire. Ohmen sat around him in ruins, pillars of smoke poured from buildings. Troops marched around pulling people from buildings or standing guard.

His eyes peered up, to the peak at the middle of the city where the Imperial Palace stood, only to find it missing. Instead replaced by a charred black peak that smoldered with a pillar of smoke that drifted off almost indefinitely.

Evant didn't understand how he got where he was. He just felt so powerless. He spotted people coming in and out of a nearby cantina that still seemed open. A few citizens of the Empire loitered near the entrance.

Not even caring that he stood out in his Imperial style armor, and flowing cape that clearly advertised the arms of Scholae Palatinae. He moved towards the bar and stepped inside, into the mess of tables and broken glass that made up what was once a place of entertainment.

He somberly walked up to the bar, and caught eyes with the bartender, "What the frak happened around here?"

His heart sank, the Empire had fallen, and despair was the only emotion left.

"My mission is complete Evant," the bartender responded, in a tone that wasn't too fitting of a weathered old barkeep.

Raising an eyebrow Evant didn't respond, he just stared at the man, perplexed and confused. Finally he responded, "What?"

"Target Bantha," the voice responded, a tone of confusion on it as well, "Is eliminated, as you've requested. No complications. What other mission could I possibly be alluding to?"

Evant blinked heavily, shaking his head as his vision cleared and the old barkeep slowly transformed as golden eyes came into view with long brown hair around a pale face. He immediately recognized it as Shadow Nighthunter. He had never been happier to see another member of Scholae Palatinae.

"Shadow!" Evant exclaimed, standing up and looking around seeing the rest of his quarters. His messy desk in front of him and a cold cup of caf where he had obviously fallen asleep.

"That's me," Shadow exclaimed, looking confused as she took a few steps back. "Are you okay?"

"How is the Empire?" Evant asked, clicking his datapad and scanning the subjects of his incoming messages for anything urgent but finding only the mundane.

"Strong as ever. Even as you sleep," Shadow said, drawing attention to the fact he had been sleeping though she hadn't realized it in the dark quarters, shaking her head and smiling. "Crazy Sith."

Evant laughed a bit uncomfortably, "I'm starting to get a bit worried there's truth in that statement."

"Oh no, it's true. You're crazy," Shadow responded, smiling and walking from his quarters leaving the Sith alone to his thoughts.

It was all a nightmare. One that Evant made sure to remember every day.