

Color Coding Reference

Rrogon Skar Agrona: https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/character_sheets/8394

Qyreia Arronen: <https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/members/14369/snapshots/1034/2095>

Fort Blindshot, Selen

Twenty minutes after the riots have begun

“You got here surprisingly quick, Mister Agrona,” the Quaestor said with clear agitation for the situation lining her voice.

“I was already awake,” he lied, “and there is a certain benefit to being your Aedile when one needs transportation.” Skar looked at the nervous faces surrounding them in the building that was in effect House Galeres’ headquarters as much as it was for the Dajorran Defense Force. “Seems the oversized mold fuzz called us out at the right time.”

“I understand you don’t like Kordath just as much as I understand he — among many other people — don’t like you,” she chided sternly, motioning toward his artificial limbs. “So do me a favor: keep the snide mockery to a minimum right now.”

The Kaleesh huffed in quiet indignance but kept quiet as they neared the space in the building they not-so-affectionately called the war room. He was somewhat surprised to see a multitude of DDF officers and select members of their respective staff huddled around the blue glow, the low murmur in the room showing they were already well into their deliberations. It made him reconsider having brought his lightsaber at all, hidden on his person though it was.

Don’t reveal that you or anyone else in the Citadel is a Force user. Of the few direct instructions they received, this was as frustrating as it was poignant toward the situation.

“Ladies. Gentlemen,” the Zeltron intoned as the others present paused their deliberations. “As of twenty minutes ago, Estle City and several other locations around Selen have come under attack by dissident civilian groups, as I’m sure you’re all aware.” Nods of affirmation came from several of the officers, others just staring back soberly. “We’ve been called up to defend those civilians that are in danger of being overwhelmed by this violence, as well as several key infrastructure locations.”

“It goes without saying,” Skar added, much to the surprise of the assemblage, “that these... *civilians* participating in this anarchy are still not military targets and are to be handled with the minimum force required to neutralize any threat they might pose.”

Qyreia looked over with quizzical admiration. “Indeed. Very astute, Mister Agrona.” *For a scary-looking murder lizard, he’s pretty smart.* “You’ve all seen the potential threats list?”

“The Parade Grounds should be safe,” Colonel Rathgard, current commander of the regiment stationed on Blindshot pointed out. “They have defenses in abundance and plenty of troops to man a perimeter.”

The Zeltron peered thoughtfully at the map, trying to appear unbothered, though her Arconan counterpart could see her chewing on a knuckle in the dim light of the room. “At least we can nix that off our list,” he heard her mumble almost imperceptibly.

“What are your orders, colonel?” Rathgard asked, subtle mockery in the aged soldier’s voice. It made the Queastor’s glare that much more poignant.

“Mister Agrona, please chime in if you feel any revisions are needed.”

“Of course,” he replied with some pleasure at the officers’ adverse reactions.

“We’ve got four battalions to work with and a lot of ground to cover. The First Battalion will remain here as a reserve and to prevent any mischief. We’re very remote out here, but that means any attacks will be just as dangerous as they are unlikely.” She turned her attention, and that of the officers, toward the holomap. “The 40th Street Clinic will be a prime target for its medical supplies and as a point of contention from the plague. That’ll fall to the Second Battalion.”

The middle-aged Selenian major scratched her head. “Too small to fit the whole formation. I think two companies should do it: one on the outside forming a perimeter, the other inside and on the rooftop.”

“And that will free up troops for another location,” Skar added. “Perhaps the desalination plant.”

“That’s a big location.”

“But underground with only a few small entry points,” he reminded them.

“Moving on,” Qyreia said to finalize the decision before any more arguments arose, “we’ve got Foundries Three, Five, and Logistic Hub Twelve.”

“Third Battalion can take this objective, and Fourth the Hub,” Rathgard dictated, trying to maintain at least a semblance of being in charge of his own soldiers.

“We still need troops for the Citadel,” Qyeria pointed out.

The commander of the Third Battalion, a narrow-eyed human-Selenian mix, stepped toward the blue light of the holoprojector. “I can spare a company and hold one in reserve. The Foundries are big, but we should be able to set up barriers and roadblocks at key locations to minimize troop requirements.”

The red woman looked at Skar for insight. “That should be sufficient. There are additional security forces there already that can supplement our needs. The Hub is vast enough that they will need every member available.”

“And given it’s a hotbed right now,” Qyreia added quietly, “what with the automation takeover, there could be as much inside threat as outside.” She looked up from the map. “Civilian casualties to a minimum. Heavy stun setting only. If you haven’t started drawing riot gear and crowd-suppression gas, you have precious little time. Colonel Rathgard, get the LAAT/i platoons on the airfield in the next twenty minutes. We’re already behind the curve, folks. Questions?” They shook their heads soberly. “Alright. Dismissed.”

As they filtered out of the room, the Kaleesh looked at the Zeltron appreciatively. “Are you ready to put down a rebellion?”

That only drew an exasperated sigh. “Heavy stun setting, Rogon. Don’t get carried away.”

“Oh please. When have I ever gotten carried away?” he asked innocently even though he knew the answer that would come.

“Well let's see... There was that time with the soldier at the base when you broke his arm for accidentally discharging his weapon and stunning you,” she pointed out as they made their way out of the briefing room and toward the landing pads.

“An honest mistake I take full credit for,” he replied with a smile that soon faded as she continued on with the mental list of headaches he had caused.

“Then there’s the constant fighting between you and Satsi and the amount of damages we’ve had to repair from the traps that the troops set off.” She sighed remembering the poor cadet encased in foam.

“She keeps instigating the problem and now that leather head Grot has the idea that he gets his so called points for any of his traps that get set off.” Skar retorted as he rolled his shoulder letting the mechanical bits reset back into place.

“Lastly, your blatant disregard for military protocol is abysmal. I know it’s been a awhile since you served in the military, but please *try* for my sake.” She looked back at him her expression almost pleading but it quickly it faded back into a stern expression when he turned his face again.

They walked in silence for a few minutes before the Kaleesh spoke up again.

“You know this is not going to stop after we put this rebellion down. The people will still have misgivings about any government that might take our place,” he said, slowly picking up his pace to walk beside her, placing his hands behind the small of his back.

“For both our sakes, I hope not.”

“You know my father, spirits rest his soul, had a way of dealing with uprisings like this within our clan when we absorbed fallen clans that might have fought with us in the past,” Skar said, his voice almost waxing nostalgia were it not for the heavy metallic overtone from the voice modulator that regulated his voice box.

“Oh?” Since they’d started working together, Rogon had never spoken about his family. In the background of their conversation, standing on the landing airstrip, the LAAT/i gunships were already lined up and ready to take off, the crews directing troops to get ready to load up.

“Whenever we took on a new tribe or clan, we would take half of the males and females regardless of family ties or marital status and gave them a choice: choose a representative to voice their concerns, or have them challenge for the right to rule.” He said simply as the walked up to one of the closest LAAT's

“And if they refused?”

“Death by exile in the desert.” Skar said coldly as he began to board the waiting airship.

Soldiers poured into the nimble transports, laden with body armor, weapons, and riot control gear, and Qyreia couldn’t help but feel a little underdressed. Skar, on the other hand, looked formidable enough on his own, but the Inquisitorial armor filled out his figure, or what was left of the organic bits at any rate. The Zeltron was still lost in her thoughts when the shudder of the

LAAT/i taking off jolted her out of the daze. She fidgeted with her earpiece in an effort to find something to do.

Whether good or bad for the Quaestor's nerves, the trip was fairly short. It wasn't long before the doors opened to reveal the mountainous city, pockets of riots burning like embers on its dark, benighted surface.

"Where'd you send Spectre?" Qyreia asked through her headset, the rushing roar of air drowning out voices for the moment.

"I told Grot to make his own judgement calls, so long as it was in line with the Consul's intent."

She only nodded, bracing herself just like everyone else as the gunship landed with an abrupt *thud*. Directly in their view was the two-story facade of the 40th Street Medical Clinic. Scattered police officers stood outside to ward off the pockets of ne'er-do-wells, but just like the mass of DDF troops, rioters began arriving on the scene in droves.

"Cordon off the area!" the major barked, seeing the same thing the Arconans were. "Company commanders, you have your assignments. Report as soon as you're in position."

While the battalion commander gave her orders, Qyreia and Skar sought out the security officer in charge. The Selenian they were directed to was shorter than expected and stocky as a bull bantha, with a high pitched voice that did not match the visuals in the slightest.

"You the one in charge of these guys?" he asked, his heavy brows furrowed in frustration and curiosity in equal measure.

"Yes. Please withdraw your officers to our perimeter. We'll need to set up a checkpoint so that the sick and wounded can still be looked at."

"Don't think my guys can handle it, huh?"

"I *think* that your training and experience is more suited to the task than a bunch of soldiers. That said, I also wasn't *asking*. Now go," she said tersely, looking at the growing crowd, "quickly."

The policeman grumbled and swore under his breath, but he kept it just unintelligible enough that he wouldn't get in trouble as he sauntered off, eyeing the tall Kaleesh warily in passing. As the government forces tightened around the clinic, it left the two Galerians alone in the gap

between the opposing sides — an eye in the storm that was as loud as it was, for the moment, peaceful. Rogon's eyes narrowed at the encroaching rioters, seeing weapons of many kinds, though most were crude cudgels or homemade firebombs.

“They want to kill Arcona.” His tone was neutral, flat, but somehow it carried an icy quality that his counterpart could feel.

“They want to kill the *Citadel*,” she corrected. “We could just as easily abandon the place and they wouldn't know the difference. There's something fishy going on here though. I can feel it.”

“I did not know you were a Force user.”

“I'm not. Just a Zeltron thing.” A rock whizzed through the air between them. “Okay, I think it's time we get back to the clinic.”

Barricades that were usually used for operational headquarters were already being emplaced as barricades and cover against the rioters. To their credit, the police had taken what few speeders they had and made a rather effective checkpoint, with patients already filtering through. As the pair got closer, it became apparent that some of these unfortunates sported injuries that could only have come from violence. It was impossible to tell if they'd clashed with the rioters, or if they'd fought *alongside* the rioters, but so long as they were not armed or posing any immediate danger, they were allowed inside. If anyone was foolhardy enough to start trouble once through the doors, they'd have some one hundred fifty troopers to contend with.

That density was as much an advantage as a danger. If explosives came into play, there would be a lot more damage than they'd be able to handle. Fortunately, there didn't seem to be any in the crowds that were willing to become suicide bombers.

“As if this place wasn't cramped enough,” they heard one of the nurses say. “Now there's a bunch of soldiers filling in every gap of space.”

Looking around, the nurse was not far off. Even with sentries on the roof, there were still a lot of moving bodies. With more patients trickling in by the minute, the building would be full-to-bursting in only a couple hours. Qyreia was about to track down the DDF commanders to work out a plan for that eventuality, but a touch of Rogon's hand caught her attention and turned her back toward the door, where a senior sergeant was motioning for them both.

“You’re wanted outside. The... *protesters*,” he said carefully, “want to speak to the one in charge.”

She leaned toward the Kaleesh warrior to whisper. “That’s me, isn’t it?”

“It is indeed.”

“I was worried you were gonna say something like that.”

In a previous life, the Force user might have at least offered a conciliatory chuckle. For now though, he merely followed the smaller woman back outside where the crowds had clearly choked off any easy ingress. *I wonder how many injured folks are totally fracked now that they can’t get to a doctor. Good job, morons.* They came shoulder-to-shoulder with the battalion commander who was waiting for them, being stared down by some kid that probably wasn’t even legal to drink, but had somehow managed to collect quite the street following.

“*You* were the one wanting to speak to me?”

“I’m representing the people you see gathered here, we...”

“Aight kid,” she nearly chuckled, “I’m gonna stop you right there. Let me guess. You want the government forces gone and all the medicine openly distributed? Something along those lines?”

The young man’s face twisted, not entirely sure how to parse out his reaction between the insult and the accurate candor. “Uhm... y-yes? I mean, yes! The people have a right to it!” Appreciative voices were raised behind him, but not enough.

“Something is not right here.” His eyes flitted among the crowd, his infrared vision catching awkward and ungainly movements in the rear of the morass of people. Qyreia only responded with a hand on his shoulder, but kept her attention on the crowd and the kid.

“You’re right. The people *do* have a right to it, along with the medical care that comes with it. But this is just one small clinic.” She smirked. “And there’s a whole lot of you. You’ll have to wait in line like the rest of these good folk,” she said, motioning to the small group of bandaged persons slowly working through the checkpoint.

“Down with the Citadel!” a voice yelled from the back of the crowd.

“You take all the medicine here, and you know what happens? You’ve got doctors and nurses — *medical professionals* — that don’t have anything to treat their patients with. Do *you* know the proper doses for...” She turned and whispered to a nearby observing nurse, “Gimme a medication name.”

“Quinine? Sildenafil?”

“Do you know the proper doses for quinine and sildenafil? Do *you* know how to reattach a leg or suture...” She motioned to the nurse, who whispered more lingo. “...suture an aortic valve?”

While the DDF major next to her covered her eyes in shame at the haphazard negotiating, there were plenty of persons in the crowd that started to shuffle nervously. Just when Qyreia was going to go for the argumentative jugular, the sound of an explosion echoed through the air, the orange and black of a smoky fireball lighting up the rear of the building.

“Rrogon!”

“On it.”

Skar quickly spun on his heel and sprinted toward the back of the building where the explosion had occurred, stopping only briefly to order two of the DDF troopers to follow him along with their squad medic. His senses were on edge and he was ready for a fight if the need came.

The fire was still burning on the side of the stone walls when the Kaleesh rounded the corner, the troops still on his heels. His eyes fell on three to four men, all of them hefting makeshift clubs or knives. To their left, more DDF troops were sprinting to engage and arrest these same men who had just thrown a flaming bottle at the building’s back door. The Sith could see another flaming bottle ready in one of the other men’s hands, ready to throw it at the incoming troopers. Skar saw this and, charging forward, he attempted to reach and grab the man's wrist to make him drop the firebomb.

A younger human in the group saw the hulking alien quickly closing the distance and panicked, backing up and tripping over one of his friends. As he fell, so too did the bottle, where it shattered upon hitting the ground. Flames began to spread over the four men who began to scream in pain as the fire burned away their skin and clothes. Switching tactics, the Sith tackled one of the men out of the fire and began to restrain him while making sure to put out whatever fire had caught on his clothes.

“Stay down kid. I don't want to hurt you if I don't need to!” he yelled down at the young man who was struggling against Kaleesh, but he quickly stopped when he realized the futility of the action.

Behind him the other men were still rolling around, fire curling off of their bodies, when the troops began to come over and help them put the fires out. Once extinguished, they could be arrested then tended to by the medic. Standing up and letting another trooper take over, he reorganized the security perimeter, handing off the situation to the sergeant that had followed him before returning to the front of the clinic.

Marching up to Qyreia he leaned down and spoke into her ear. “The situation has been handled and the troops have taken over. It looks like this demonstration was a distraction to draw our attention,” he said simply, looking over at the crowd who was attempting to get over the barrier and riot personnel and were not having much luck with the endeavor. He watched young men and women getting clubbed or shocked, the few lucky ones that did manage to get through were immediately stunned, taken into custody, and brought to a little cordoned area.

“I believe that this area is well in hand,” the Kaleesh said as he started to get bored with the pathetic attempt from the crowd. “This is so sad. They can't hope to ever take the city like this,” he said quietly shaking his head in dismay.

Qyreia was more worried about what lengths they hadn't *yet* gone to. “Any casualties back there?”

“Burns and cuts; mostly civilians. Our forces were largely stunned.”

“Any dead?”

“Not yet.”

Skar's cold candor was not helping the Quaestor's nerves in the slightest. “Seems we got here just in time. I don't think the police would've been able to handle this by themselves.”

“Agreed,” Rogon said simply. “Perhaps we should relocate. The Logistics Hub forces may require some assistance.”

It didn't sit right in the Zeltron's gut, leaving a fight that was still in progress, but the Sith had a point. Whatever the rioters were doing here, they wouldn't be able to fully beat back the

well-positioned forces they'd come in with. Stopping only to pass official command to the Selenian major, they climbed to the roof where a LAAT/i was already waiting for them.

The Kaleesh shrugged against the wind as they took off. "You think the rioters will try to take the hub in force?"

"I'm more worried about the folks that work there. From what the DIA docket said, the workers aren't too happy with losing their jobs to automation. It's a short frackin' line between discontent and sabotage at times like these."

It was also a short ride from the clinic to the cargo center. If there was one advantage they held over the rioters, it was airpower, even if it was strictly for transportation. Using the military was already going to be a public relations nightmare. Dropping *anything* from the skies other than pamphlets would be bad press, and even any publications would likely be met with a variety of derision. *We can afford fleets of ships and the troops to man them, but we can't feed one measly planet. The rioters are right about one thing: the system is definitely broken somewhere.* As they flew past the foundries, they could see civilians trying to break in with much more violent intent than at the clinic. Blaster fire could be seen flashing across the void of darkness into the belligerents. Qyreia made a mental note to make sure they were using stun rounds once they landed.

Even before they touched down though, things within Logistics Hub 12 were clearly already heated. While the external perimeter was steady enough, dock workers were arguing with several of the ranking members of the Fourth Battalion.

"Tha hell's the Citadel done for us lately but take our jobs?!"

"Sir, please, the riots are bad enough already," one empathetic sergeant said placatingly.

"Come on, Jebb," one of his coworkers pleaded. "Don't start anythin' now. Think of Minnie and the kids at home. You pick a fight, then they lose their food and maybe their dad too."

"We keep letting them do what they want, and we lose everything anyway!"

Rrogon's pace quickened as the pair approached, but Qyreia reined him in with a hand, stepping forward into the fray as calmly as she could. "Something I can help with?"

"Who're you," the Jebb fellow said gruffly, wanting to rant but too curious about the red-skinned soldier appearing all of a sudden.

“Colonel Arronen,” she replied, pointing to the rank insignia on the breast of her jacket. “I’m in overall command right now.” She could see him relax somewhat, and it seemed to be from her presence as much as the soft words. *I had to lose control of my Zeltron crap right before this all happened.* “Jebb was it?”

“Yeah. What’s it to you?” He tried to sound rude, but his tone faltered and fell flat.

She motioned away from the other DDF personnel. “Walk with me, would you?”

“S’cuse me...” his friend piped in.

“You too, please.” The two men looked at each other nervously and at the weapons she was so brazenly carrying. “Don’t worry. I just want to talk. Can you show me to your supervisor’s office?” As they cautiously motioned her toward the inner area of the hub, she waved Rogon away. *They’re scared enough without you.*

He could see it in her expression. “Hmph.”

“Problem...?” the sergeant asked casually until he saw the Kaleesh’s expression. “...er, sir?”

Taking another cautious look at the Zeltron, he turned away and started walking toward the battle lines. “Show me the perimeter. I want to make sure there are no fire hazards.”

“Fire hazards sir?”

“Trust me.”

Across the lot, surrounded by soldiers, workers, and ever-growing stacks of goods, Qyreia and her two new companions made almost casual pace toward the main office structure. Were it not for the scattered and nigh constant presence of the DDF troops, she might have been nervous about being otherwise alone with two others in what would have been a secluded location.

“Ma’am,” Jebb’s friend implored quietly, “Jebb didn’t mean no harm. He’s got a family to feed an’ all.”

What is this guy worried about? “I don’t plan on doing anything to you or Jebb, Mister...”

“Lial.”

“Mister Lial. Don’t worry. Now,” she said, pausing before the building that served as hub headquarters, “which office is the boss’?”

Almost reluctantly, they motioned her inside and toward the stairway. As much as the Arconan had tried to reassure them, simple words weren’t going to work on them. Their fears of losing their jobs — the ability to feed their families and themselves — was as deeply ingrained as those outside the perimeter feared the overreach of the Citadel itself. *How many others are out in the hub causing trouble or planning it?* As they reached the top of the stairs, they could all hear raised voices, causing the Zeltron to sigh audibly. *What now?*

Passing by the secretary with little formality, the trio entered the room to see the Selenian woman she assumed was the manager arguing with the battalion commander and one of the workers from the hub, judging by his coveralls.

“There a problem here?”

“Who’re you?” the manager half snarled, her curiosity tainted mid-argument.

“She’s in charge of the soldiers, boss,” Lial said. “Right Jebb?” His friend nodded.

“I can see you’re the big cheese here, and I know you,” Qyreia said in recognition of the DDF officer, “buuut I’m not following who this guy is.”

“Shuyl Briggs, union rep,” he said with an air of pride. “I’m here to put this place on strike until the workers’ safety and jobs can be assured.”

The Zeltron looked around the room, apparently and sarcastically confounded. “I think their safety is just fine, what with all the big strong men with guns outside.” The manager and commander both eyed her. “*And* women. There are women with guns too.”

“You think they can stop the riots?”

“No. But then again, we don’t need them to stop the riots; just keep it out of the hub. We’re here for local... what’s the phrase?”

“Strategic security,” the officer finished, as much prideful as cautious in the face of the bellicose unionist.

“So? This place gets run over by the Citadel, and now their jobs and families are safe?”

“Mister Briggs, I am *very* much not in the mood to be arguing jobs. Case in point,” she said, pointing to Jebb and Lial, who reacted with surprised fear, “these two gentlemen are just as worried, but they were out on the loading floor instead of arguing for a strike, which would prevent them from earning *any* money.” She turned to the boss. “They’re not in trouble. They were doing good out there. I brought them in to add some faces to the worries.”

The shift in mood was palpable on the air for the humans and Selenians, so the Zeltron could feel it potently. “You’re not here ta get us fired?” Jebb asked in the way that would clearly implicate him for something, but Qyreia dismissed it.

“Hell no!” She looked to the room at large. “What I think you guys don’t understand is that this place is *essential* to keeping Estle City and Selen on its feet. You think things are hard now? See how much food and medicine comes through when a logistics center stops moving goods. This is coming from a former trader,” *and smuggler*, “so I know what I’m talking about here.”

“We’ve already lost jobs to the droids, though! What’s to stop them from taking the rest of it?!”

She could feel Lial and Jebb staring at the back of her head in worried expectation. *Think Q, ol’ girl. Think.* “You... Who do you think is moving this food and medicine right now? We don’t have the logistics space to buy a frackton of droids to take over.”

In the background she could see the manager mouth, “*We barely have anything to move as it is.*”

“Listen. The crops situation will get sorted. The insurgency from the invasion is dying down, so shipments will be coming in more and more. We *need* you not to lose it here. Too many people are counting on you. *I* am counting on you! All these Dajorrans in uniform and their families are counting on you!” Briggs looked down, not quite shamed, but humbled enough in the face of the two workers behind her clearly rallied to the cause. “We need as much help as we can get right now. Please.” She turned to Lial and Jebb. “Can you keep this world moving?”

Ten minutes later...

“Where the hell did you pull that cheesy crap from, ma’am?” the battalion commander asked as they left the managerial office building, Briggs and the hub boss already making plans to rally the workers in “support of Selen.”

“You attract more Dekk flies with honey than with vinegar. Also desperation. Lots of desperation, major.”

Rrogon was just returning from his tour of the perimeter, satisfied with its condition, with an exasperated lieutenant following close behind.

“I told you that the perimeter was all clear sir. I don't know why you were so insistent in checking anyway, and for fire hazards no less. I cannot fathom why you needed to do this.” From what Qyreia could tell this conversation had been going on for a while now and the Kaleesh did not look happy at all.

“Like I said before Lieutenant, no perimeter is safe and must always be checked and double checked. The fact that you are arguing this point says more to your lack of commitment and skill. I have half a mind to demote you back to sergeant for your back-talk alone. Now go back to your position and have the guard rotation keep up the watch until the all clear has been sounded!” the Sith roared down at the human male who quickly backed off in surprise and fear before he began to run back to the temporary command post they had set up within the complex.

The Juggernaut growled as he looked back to the two commanders who were both looking at him with wide eyes and more than ample amount of disdain.

“I'm not apologizing for what I said and I meant it,” the Arconan said, the lack of care or worry absent from his voice “Other than that, I think this place is safe from any attempt to take it whether it be external or internal. How did your endeavors go?”

“Well enough. The workers are going to keep working, so the supplies that we *do* have on hand won't be stuck in proverbial limbo,” replied Qyreia, looking a little worn from the exchange she just went through.

Just then, all of their personal comms went off as a burst of static-turned-message was broadcasted over the DDF frequency.

“Be advised: the Citadel perimeter is under heavy attack. All attempts to push back the rioters with non lethal force has failed. Requesting backup ASAP!” aid the man on the radio worry and concern filling his voice as the sounds of a angry crowd could be clearly heard in the background as well as small arms balster fire.

The two Galerians shared a look before wordlessly sprinting toward the waiting LAAT/i that had dropped them off at the Logistics hub.

“This is bad,” Skar growled as he ran. “If they managed to push the troops this bad, they have got to be more organized or equipped with better weapons than we have seen thus far.” There was a slight bit of concern in his voice but nonetheless they sprinted onto the waiting gunship and speed off into the night.

“I know what you mean. Once we get there we’ll see what we can do.”

At the foot of the Citadel...

Throngs of humanoid shapes filled the courtyard. Glittering with fire and electric light, the body of malcontent life forms narrowed with the terrain, becoming a violent snake as it pulsed with angry energy. Occasionally, a flash of green or red energy would light up the writhing mass to collide with the tightly-packed soldiers, guarded only by riot shields and no small amount of tenacity. Periodically, a glass bottle full of burning alcohol or fuel would crash against this same armor, scorching clothes, lungs, and skin alike. Just as much of their resolved burned away, bit by smouldering bit.

“Requesting reinforcements!” The captain called over the radio over and over with situation reports and pleas for more troops but, as yet, even the reserve company hadn’t been able to stem the tide.

“Hold tight Captain. Reinforcements inbound.”

The feminine, somewhat worn voice on the other end of the call didn’t exactly fill him with hope, but the promise of additional forces supplanted his fears; at least for the moment. When the LAAT/i gunship arrived overhead, the pressure on the phalanx of soldiers eased as the riotous civilians paused out of fear. This was multiplied when the ship sent a green beam into the stony cliff face, sending small rocks falling and scaring many away from the shield wall.

While the vessel could not fully land on the ramp leading up to the Citadel proper, it hovered just low enough for its occupants to leap down to the smooth surface below. The captain’s fears were not availed by the two figures left in the dissipating wake of the gunship’s engines.

“Where’s the reinforcements?”

“You’re looking at ‘em, captain,” Qyreia said tersely, more interested in the large mass of rioters filling the courtyard below. “You already called up the reserves?”

They all knew the answer already. Asking it was merely a formality. “Yes ma’am. The Citadel guard refuse to come down to assist.”

“Good. They’re not supposed to.”

“M-ma’am?”

Rrogon narrowed the distance between himself and the DDF officer. “Are you questioning a superior, *captain*?”

“N-no sir,” he replied, his nerves shaken near to a point of breaking.

They watched the crowds hover at the edge of resuming their assault, testing the mass of soldiers to see if they would flinch at a feigned rush or two. Fortunately for the two Galerians — and all of the troops — they held firm.

“Have you used blasters? Tear gas?”

“We used some gas earlier, but it had little effect.”

“How much?”

“Two, maybe three grenades.”

A blaster bolt rocketed toward them, burning the air with a screech characteristic of the energy weapon as the green projectile passed within a meter of their heads. Skar backpedaled a step, and the captain shrunk low, but the Zeltron hardly moved. As brave as she appeared, her heart was pounding in her chest, and it felt liable to burst any minute. Her reaction, or lack thereof, was at least enough to bring the officer back to his feet.

“Captain, your... *our* forces here are the primary line of defense for the seat of government in Dajorra. We *have* to hold this position at all costs. Understand?”

“Y-yes ma’am,” he returned, his voice equalizing and steadying slowly but surely.

“Take what crowd-suppression gas you have left and saturate the area. Every karking canister you’ve got.”

“And if they still don’t withdraw?” Skar asked, a tinge of excitement in his voice.

Qyreia grimaced. “Heavy stun setting, Mister Agrona.” She looked up into his crimson eyes.
“Don’t get carried away.”

