**Mimosa-Inahj Homestead**

**Elysia**

Kooki was not pleased. Andrelious had disappeared to Chyron, apparently on business, but the Alderaanian suspected that her spouse was more likely to have slipped away for a few drinks. Thankfully, Poppy and Etty were happily drawing pictures rather than squabbling, whilst Mostynn fed peacefully.

The home’s holocommunicator beeped, indicating an incoming message. Seeing her mother couldn’t get up easily, Poppy moved over to the device and activated it, beaming happily when the holographic form of Andrelious appeared.

“Daddy!” the girls chorused.

The male Sith smiled briefly, before turning to look at Kooki. Mostynn, hearing the commotion, turned his head and noticed his father.

“I just thought that I would check in with you. Everything’s fine here on Chyron. With luck I’ll be home within a couple of hours,” Andrelious declared.

“I certainly hope so! These three are a lot of work on their own!” Kooki responded crossly.

“I’ll see what I can do. I love you,” the Seeker stated with another smile. Before the Alderaanian could answer, the hologram faded out of existence.

For any other couple, the affection Andrelious displayed at the end of the holocall would be perfectly normal. But for Kooki, such an ending meant that Andrelious was potentially in trouble- and that the Mimosa-Inahj family were too.

Kooki placed Mostynn on the floor near his sisters, and moved quickly over to a control panel that usually managed the mountain home’s heating, lighting and humidity. Without hesitating, Kooki pressed a button near the top of the control panel.

Lighting throughout the homestead brightened as large shades covered the transparisteel windows. From the outside, the homestead, which was already difficult to spot, became totally invisible as specially designed flaps of rock and durasteel covered the windows and door. As each flap moved into place, small fans blew a thin layer of snow in place over the newly exposed rock.

**New Spanky’s Tavern**

**Taldryan Sector**

**Chyron**

“She’ll have hidden the house now. Our own people won’t be able to find it, let alone the CSF,” Andrelious explained.

“You’re not wrong. The CSF have catalogued the residential addresses of all Taldryan members who live on one of the moons. We knew you were living on Elysia, but we didn’t have any idea *where*,” Jiq Morvit stated.

“If they’ve information like that, is it possible that the CSF will move against the rest of the Clan?” Ceyra asked.

“That would depend on your brother’s intentions. If he wants to take control over Taldryan, then he’s probably not going to want to kill our members. He’s probably expecting a good few of them to just surrender, especially if he can subdue Rian,” the Archanis Quaestor said firmly.

“Is that at all likely?” the female Ky’lien queried.

“Of course not. Nobody in Archanis will even consider it,” Andrelious declared confidently. “In fact, most of them will probably be en route to the Consul’s location. We’re going to need them if the CSF is as loyal to Drayen as they were to his father,”

Jiq raised his head as if he were about to speak, but the trio’s attention was drawn to half a dozen CSF operatives bursting in through the main door.

The leader, a female soldier wearing the insignia of a Lieutenant, approached Andrelious, keeping her weapon pointed towards Jiq Morvit. Others kept their blasters trained on Ceyra.

“Andrelious Mimosa-Inahj?” the Lieutenant questioned.

“Indeed. Can I help you, Lieutenant? Surely you’re aware that this sector isn’t under the jurisdiction of the CSF anymore?” Andrelious responded harshly.

“In light of the current crisis, the previous agreement between the CSF and Taldryan is null and void. Besides, we are looking for these two traitors,” the female declared, gesturing towards Jiq and Ceyra.

Andrelious examined the situation. He’d have liked to have carved a way out with his lightsaber, but the CSF soldiers would have plenty of time to fire at his allies. Whilst he was not convinced that either would ultimately prove useful, the fact that Ceyra was Drayen Ky’lien’s sister made her a potential bargaining chip.

“But these people aren’t traitors,” Andrelious stated, waving his hand.

“These people aren’t traitors,” the Lieutenant answered tonelessly.

“You’re going to let us walk out of here,” the Archanis Quaestor continued.

“Let them walk out of here!” the female ordered, standing aside.

**-x-**

“How did you get us out of there? They were ready to kill me. And Lady Ky’lien,” Jiq Morvit questioned.

“That is kind of affect the Force can have. The Lieutenant and her entourage are weak minded fools,” Andrelious explained.

“How long before they realise the deception?” Ceyra queried.

“Put it this way. We need to get moving,” Mimosa-Inahj stated, pointing at a 2-M Hover Tank idling nearby.

**-x-**

**Maintenance Corridor Aurek 6**

**MC80 Star Cruiser *Paragon***

Loy Greja double checked that he was alone. The unique, almost organic nature of the Mon Calamari’s ships, combined with the *Paragon* still running at below its optimal crew meant that the many maintenance corridors were more often than not completely deserted.

Loy had enlisted with Taldryan’s military not long after the mysterious group arrived in the Caelus system, but he was far from the simple technician he claimed to be. In reality, he was one of the CSF’s finest intelligence agents.

With the death of Astor Ky’lien, it was time for Greja to carry out his orders.

Opening one of the many access panels, the Human carefully examined the exposed conduits. Weeks of studying the *Paragon*’s complex power networks came back to him in an instant. Reaching into his toolbox, he extracted a special device and carefully attached it to the conduit he identified as leading straight from the ship’s main reactor. The device beeped and wrapped itself around the conduit as though it were a large snake trying to strangle its prey.

Loy smiled as he closed the access panel. He didn’t know the specifics of the device he’d just attached, only that it would slowly build up charge, before exploding, destroying the conduit with its own power. He also knew that any attempts to remove the device would result in an earlier, albeit less powerful detonation.

*Let’s just hope the others got theirs in place*! Loy thought to himself as he moved along the corridor.

**-x-**

Andrelious J. Mimosa-Inahj steered the stolen tank through the thoroughfares of the Taldryan sector. Although he had never piloted a 2-M Hover Tank before, the Sith hadn’t taken long to figure out the controls.

Jiq Morvit was manning the mobile gun turret. Already, he had taken out several of his former CSF colleagues. It was looking increasingly unlikely that he would be able to return to whatever was left of the CSF once the mission was complete.

“So what’s the plan? This tank isn’t fast enough!” Ceyra complained.

“Speed isn’t what we need. We need firepower. They’re going to have tried to lock the Taldryan sector down. A faster vehicle won’t get us past that. I’m going to blast our way out. I just need to get us back to the spaceport. The *Paragon* is secure. We can get to the Consul with that. Easily,” Andrelious explained.

“But that’s docked in the spaceport. You’re heading towards Checkpoint Cresh! That’s the wrong way!” the female commented crossly.

“The Motti Memorial is probably crawling with enemies. If we destroy Checkpoint Cresh, they’ll have to split their forces. With that and some backup from my men, I should be able to get to the *Paragon*,” the Sith declared.

**Checkpoint Cresh**

After a long firefight, the CSF had forced Taldryan’s forces back and taken control of Checkpoint Cresh. The infamous checkpoint linked the Taldryan Sector with the notorious ‘Dark Sector’, a relatively undeveloped part of the city that was home to many criminal elements.

The fighting at the checkpoint was enough to have whipped the Dark Sector’s denizens into a frenzy of their own, but they lacked the firepower to directly attack the checkpoint.

Lieutenant Grayn Pulart was the senior officer remaining in the CSF detachment, and wasted no time in erecting as many barricades as he could find. His men had been heavily depleted in the fight against Taldryan, but he was certain that they could still hold the area in the event of a counter attack.

The officer activated his comlink. “This is Lieutenant Pulart. We’ve taken control of Checkpoint Cresh, but Captain Wester is dead. What are my orders?”

“Morvit and the former Lady Ky’lien have stolen one of our 2-M tanks. They’re headed your way,” a voice announced over the comlink.

“Don’t worry, sir, we’ll stop it,” Pulart stated.

The Lieutenant signalled to his men. They moved into position behind the barricades, blasters at the ready.

**-x-**

Andrelious hauled his tank around a corner so heavily that Ceyra nearly fell out of her seat.

“Careful!” the female warned.

“This is war. We don’t have time to be careful,” Andrelious replied. “We’re nearly at Checkpoint Cresh now,”

“I hope you’re right about this. I don’t know how long your Consul will be able to hold out against my brother,” Ceyra stated worriedly.

“Rian will be fine. He’s dealt with a lot tougher than a spiteful child,” the Sith answered.

“I think we’re in range now!” Jiq Morvit shouted from the gun turret.

Andrelious didn’t waste any time in firing a salvo of the tank’s missiles straight at Checkpoint Cresh. The missiles slammed into the hastily set up barricades, shattering them into millions of pieces. The men hiding behind the barricades were knocked back by the force of the blasts, leaving the way clear for the tank to proceed through the checkpoint itself.

Jiq span his turret around and shot one of the survivors, before noticing something in the sky above.

“They’re sending fighters in!” he cried.

Andrelious didn’t panic. He switched on the tank’s holocommunicator, quickly selecting the channel that connected to the bridge of the *Paragon*.

“Admiral Farhan. Get our squadrons in the air. I want complete air supremacy over the Taldryan sector,” the Archanis Quaestor ordered.

**-x-**

With the *Paragon* docked in the Motti Memorial Spaceport, the pilots of the starfighter squadrons attached to the cruiser weren’t expecting to be called into action. Nonetheless, when the klaxon sounded, it didn’t take very long for the squadrons to assemble.

There wasn’t even time for a proper briefing. The orders were to get into the air as soon as possible. Word was that Andrelious Mimosa-Inahj, a renowned pilot himself and the Quaestor of the reformed House Archanis, had given the command.

In short order, the three TIE Defender squadrons were launched, with the X-Wing squadrons not far behind.

“We’re airborne. Just remember to adjust for atmosphere flight!” one of the senior squadron commanders announced.

**-x-**

The first enemy TIE, a TIE/IN ‘Interceptor’ approached the stolen M-2 tank. Jiq Morvit swivelled his gun turret and took aim. The blaster bolt slammed straight into the Interceptor’s cockpit window, cracking the transparisteel, but the enemy continued on their path. Morvit fired again, this time shattering the damaged window. The shards of transparisteel flew everywhere, but the force of the blast was enough to have already knocked the pilot unconscious. The TIE continued straight on, its pilot coming to just in time to see her starfighter careering headlong into a nearby building.

With a loud explosion, both enemy fighter and building were consumed in a massive fireball.

“Good shots, Jiq!” Andrelious shouted from the tank’s cockpit.

“There were civilians in that building, sir! I wouldn’t call that a good shot!” the CSF operative replied.

Andrelious ignored the comment and craned his head around as he heard the sound of several TIEs. He allowed himself a smile when he spotted that the noise belonged to the squadrons of the Taldryan Starfighter Corps.

“It’s time to head to the *Paragon*, Lady Ky’lien. And then we’ll pay your dear brother a little visit,” the Sith declared.

**-x-**

Aldaric hadn’t been with Taldryan very long, but he was already finding his new role as Aedile of Archanis to be a little more front line oriented than he’d been led to believe. He’d been ordered to gather as many troops as he could by his Quaestor, Andrelious, and was currently leading them into battle with members of the Caelus Security Forces.

The battle only became more complicated when it transpired that Checkpoint Cresh, apparently a key part of the Taldryan Sector’s defensive perimeter, had been destroyed in the fighting. That had allowed criminals from the so-called ‘Dark Sector’ into the area. The criminals fired on anyone they came across, regardless of faction or even if they were armed.

Aldaric sliced his lightsaber straight through the torso of a blaster toting criminal. As the man dropped to the ground, the Chiss noticed something troubling.

*Cybernetics.*

Looking over at some of the other fallen enemies, the Archanis Aedile realised that many of them weren’t entirely organic.

*The Collective. They’re here. In the Dark Sector.*

**-x-**

Even with the squadrons of the *Paragon* overhead, Andrelious did not feel safe enough to leave his commandeered tank. As he continued to drive through the streets of the Taldryan sector, he noticed a large group of CSF members trying to pin down a large Zabrak. The horned humanoid leapt at his enemies, twirling a blue bladed saberstaff that appeared to almost effortlessly cut through the group.

“Is he one of yours?” Ceyra asked, worriedly.

“That’s Sithspawn. I didn’t even know if we’d get hold of him. Glad that we did; he’s one of our best,” Andrelious explained.

“My father never really told me how many of you there were. But the number of fighters you’ve put into the sky – how big *ARE* Taldryan?” the female queried.

The Archanis Quaestor shrugged. “Your father wasn’t ever told. If we revealed our true numbers, or indeed our true nature, there’s no way that we would have been allowed to stay here. At least not without a fight.”

“But you’re not here without a fight now…” Ceyra protested.

“True, but we’ve had time to take stock. To make a presence here. If we’d been attacked on arrival, then I suspect things would have been a great deal bloodier. I don’t like to think what would have happened if the *Paragon* had been brought down over Chyron. Not to mention the fact that Kooki and the twins would have been a lot closer to the front line. Let’s not entertain how that could have gone,” Andrelious responded.

The blazing remains of a shot down enemy TIE smashing into the ground just ahead of the tank broke Andrelious and Ceyra’s trains of thought.

“From what I’ve seen today, I think you’d have given my father a lot of trouble. Perhaps you’d have even saved him from being betrayed by his own son. He’d have died serving the Empire, in a way,” Ceyra commented.

Andrelious sighed. “He might have thought that, but the Empire he served is long gone. If the Empire were still around, none of this would have had to happen. But the agents of chaos destroyed everything, Lady Ky’lien,”

“If you’re quite finished with the politics, sir, I’m sure you’ll notice we’re nearly at the spaceport,” Jiq Morvit interrupted, having joined the pair in the tank’s cockpit.

**MC80 Star Cruiser *Paragon***

**En route to 200 Stellaris**

The Taldryan flagship flew with care among Chyron’s tallest buildings. Admiral Chaf'arha'nuruodo wasn’t too keen on the idea of flying so close to the city moon’s surface, but he wasn’t about to argue with Andrelious, especially when it became clear that the Consul’s life was in danger.

“If what you’re telling me about the Consul is true, is it really wise that you’ve brought his captor’s sister onto my bridge?” Farhan questioned.

“She is on our side, Admiral. That makes her useful. At least for now,” Andrelious explained.

“Very well. Are you sure you don’t want us to provide more support for you? We have plenty of troops aboard, even with all the fighting in the city,” the Chiss declared.

“No. I have my own backup already making their way to the location. Once I’ve landed, have the rest of the troops join the fighting. I’m not taking any chances, even against the CSF,” Andrelious ordered.

The Admiral tried his best not to roll his eyes. Whilst his relationship with Rian and other members of the summit were good, the same could not be said about his connection with Andrelious. The veteran Chiss still remembered the former Imperial as a member of Taldryan’s rival, Clan Arcona, and knew that Andrelious had killed plenty of Taldyanite forces before his sudden defection. Now the Sith claimed to be loyal to Taldryan, but Farhan suspected that his true loyalty was to his own family.

“Sir. This is as close as we can get safely. Looks like the CSF have the exterior surrounded,” one of the crew announced, peering at a sensor monitor.

“I suspect that a good few of them don’t know we have Lady Ky’lien in tow,” Jiq Morvit announced. “That might be enough to convince some not to fight,”

“They were pretty clearly gunning for her before. Those officers in Spanky’s were about to kill her,” Andrelious argued.

“And they were probably sent straight from my brother. He’s already seemed to have an idea about where I’ve been, even if I’m the other side of Chyron,” Ceyra stated.

“Hopefully, he won’t be able to sense you right now. He’s right next to Rian, and you’re right next to me. That’s two massive presences,” Andrelious explained. “Assuming that he is using the Force rather than a more conventional tracking measure,”

**Approach to 200 Stellaris**

Andrelious, followed by Jiq Morvit and Ceyra Ky’lien made their way along one of the walkways that led to 200 Stellaris. They immediately spotted half a dozen CSF officers directly in front of them.

“Halt! This building is currently off limits, per orders of the new Chancellor,” one of the officers said, pointing his blaster at Andrelious.

“Wait. Sir, he’s with Lady Ky’lien,” one of the others pointed out.

“The orders are clear. Nobody is to enter or leave. No exceptions,” the first officer snapped.

“I hardly think it would apply to a member of the Ky’lien family..”

The second officer was cut off as a crimson blade bisected his colleague. Before he could react, he too fell to Andrelious’ lightsaber. The remaining quartet of CSF members started firing their blasters at the attacking Sith, but Jiq Morvit, seeing his chance, shot another two of his former colleagues.

“I thought there would a lot more resistance here,” Jiq commented as Andrelious finished off the last two enemies.

“Most of the CSF is probably fighting with members of Taldryan. You’ll remember they wanted me to surrender in Spanky’s. Good chance that that happened everywhere. Very few would have even considered surrender,” Andrelious explained.

“So where’s the backup you were talking about?” Ceyra demanded.

“Aldaric. Where are you?” Andrelious shouted into his comlink.

**“**I am not far away from you. My team and I will be with you in two minutes,” the Aedile replied.

“That’s a strange accent,” Ceyra observed.

“Chiss. You’ve probably never met one before,” the Sith answered sneeringly.

“There’s no need to be so rude. I was only asking,” the female responded in a hurt tone.

“We’re dealing with a war situation, it’s likely that either my Consul or your brother will die, and you’re worried about your feelings?” Andrelious questioned.

“It’s just that my brother’s always been very anti-alien. I hate when people think that I have the same views, just because I’m his sister,” Ceyra stated.

The Sith nodded. “He wouldn’t have been the only one. The anti-alien view was common throughout the Empire, especially among those from the core worlds. I actually didn’t think we’d be able to pass as Imperials because Rian isn’t Human,”

Aldaric sprinted into view, followed by several soldiers from Taldryan’s army. He offered his superior a sharp salute.

“My team and I have performed as instructed. The fighting is still happening throughout the Taldryan sector, but I noticed something interesting. Some of the local security forces don’t appear to be allied to the new Chancellor. Some of them simply ignored us, and others even helped us out. It would seem that the locals are not entirely behind the regime change,” Aldaric explained.

“Excellent work, but save the analysis for later. Right now, I want you and your men to secure the area around this building. Take Morvit with you. Lady Ky’lien, the time has come for us to interrupt whatever that bastard’s doing to Rian in there,”

­**-x-**

The interior of 200 Stellaris was completely undefended. Andrelious suspected that Drayen didn’t dare to station members of his military inside such a prestigious residence, especially with so many CSF officers hunting the rest of Taldryan down. Still three quarters of Taldryan’s membership hadn’t reported in, and the Archanis Quaestor already knew that he’d been dealing with a large number of casualties. The priority now was to stop Drayen Ky’lien, and whatever his plans for the Clan were.

“I can’t believe it’s come to this. Drayen is my brother! You have children, don’t you, Andrelious? How would you feel if it was them in this situation?” Ceyra questioned.

“I would prefer if we did not discuss such things, Lady Ky’lien. Rest assured, your father would never have intended for this to be the case. I will do what needs to be done. For Taldryan. And for *MY* family,” Andrelious answered.

The turbolift reached its destination and the doors slid open. The entire top floor of the complex acted as the Chancellor’s residence, and was, like the rest of the building, seemingly unguarded.

“Here. I’ll get us in. I doubt Drayen had time to remove my fingerprint from the entry system,” Ceyra announced, placing her index finger on a small circular plate at the side of the door. The door immediately slid open.

Andrelious and Ceyra walked through the entrance hall, and were immediately presented with a scene of destruction as they entered the lounge. Smashed furniture was strewn all over the room, whilst the floor was littered with remains of various ornaments that fallen from place.

“You wait here. I can sense them. They’re still fighting,” Andrelious informed Ceyra. The female nodded and perched herself on the only chair still standing.

**-x-**

“We’ll hold here,” Admiral Farhan ordered. He’d moved the *Paragon* well clear of the taller buildings and the Taldryan flagship was now flying slowly over the Consortium of Free Merchants sector, which seemed to have been spared from much of the fighting.

“Admiral, I’ve just had a report from security. They caught one of our technicians trying to leave via an escape pod. When they confronted him, he fired on them. In short, he ended up dead,” a Lieutenant announced.

Farhan nodded. The report was troubling, but there was little he could do. Whatever the man had been doing would likely remain a mystery.

**-x-**

Andrelious breezed into a room that was clearly supposed to be a bedroom. As with the lounge, the room had been devastated by a lengthy battle. This time, however, the battle was still going on. Andrelious spotted a man in black armour doing his best to hold off Rian, who appeared to have the upper hand.

“Surrender, now, Ky’lien. You’ve got no chance against *TWO* of Taldryan’s finest,” Andrelious announced, moving in to the battle.

“Wait, Andrelious, no!” Rian warned, but he was too late. Drayen extended his right hand towards the Archanis Quaestor, allowing the Force to course through the amulet. Andrelious was knocked back, crashing into an expensive looking nightstand.

“It is *YOU* who must surrender!” Drayen ordered as the Archanis Quaestor climbed back onto his feet.

Rian lunged at Drayen, making the most of the brief distraction, but the Chancellor managed to side-step the attack and send the Miralian flying with another quick use of his amulet.

Andrelious charged in. As he approached the Chancellor, he braced himself to be hit by another wave of Force energy. Sure enough, Drayen tried the move again, but the Archanis Quaestor was ready for it and countered with a Force push of his own. He felt the Force trying to drag him off his feet, but he pressed on, as though trying to make his way through one of Elysia’s blizzards.

Andrelious slashed forwards as far as he could reach, his grimace turning to a smile as his crimson blade chopped through Drayen’s right wrist.

“FRAK YOU, IMPERIAL STOOGE!” Drayen yelled, his lightsaber suddenly in his remaining hand. But his target wasn’t Andrelious; he rushed past the Quaestor, and dug his blade straight into the stomach of his unfortunate sister, who had been unable to resist seeing the battle come to a conclusion. With Ceyra badly wounded, the Chancellor turned to face the onrushing Andrelious. He blocked the Archanis Quaestor’s first attack, but the second, a slower, much more powerful slash, easily knocked Drayen’s blade away before slicing straight through his neck.

“Get a medteam up here!” Rian ordered.

-x-

Jiq Morvit had become separated from Aldaric and the others. He was chasing a small group of CSF officers, but they had managed to escape into the Consortium of Free Merchants sector. Overhead, Jiq saw the *Paragon*, still flying at its slowest safe speed.

Craning his neck about the area, Morvit tried in vain to find his prey, and was suddenly distracted by a loud explosion. He looked up and to his horror saw explosions all around the *Paragon*, mostly centred around its engines.

*It’s coming down. Here. Now!* Jiq realised.

As the Taldryan flagship began to fall to the surface, everything went black for Jiq Morvit.

**6 hours later**

**Mimosa-Inahj homestead**

**Elysia**

With the *Paragon* permanently out of action and Chyron still burning from the aftermath of the battle, Andrelious organised an impromptu meeting at his own homestead. Kooki wasn’t too pleased with the idea of so many people in her children’s home, but the twins were delighted to see their father again.

“So that’s pretty much everything. Drayen Ky’lien managed to keep me busy for ages with that amulet. Once Andrelious got to me, he couldn’t keep both of us back for long,” Rian explained.

“Did he really try and kill his own sister? Sounds like a quick death was too merciful for him,” Kooki sneered.

“You know how war situations are. You’re a veteran, these days,” Andrelious quipped, bouncing Mostynn on his knee.

“It never ceases to amaze me how calm you can be, Andrelious,” Justinios commented. “We’ve lost dozens of men today. Not to mention our flagship. Did we find out what happened to the *Paragon*?”

“We think that Ky’lien managed to get operatives aboard quite some time ago. Whatever they did completely wrecked the sublight engines. Ended up bringing the ship down onto the city. Most of the Consortium of Free Merchants sector was completely destroyed. And there’s no telling what kinds of radiation damage it’s done…” Quejo stated.

“We’ll find out in time. Aldaric, you had some other news for us?” Rian asked.

“Yes. During the fighting, I found a lot of enemies with cybernetics. And they fought far too effectively to be simple criminals,” the Chiss Aedile announced.

The assembled group eyed each other.

“The Collective. Their presence here is far more established than we hoped…” Andrelious stated.

*FIN*