



SUBMITTED IN ENTRY TO GJW XIII PHASE I FICTION -  
MULTI-OBJECTIVE PROMPT

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## History's Ghostwriter

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*Author:*

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NOTES: Objective 2 chosen: Uncover evidence that the Collective is framing the  
Brotherhood

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# 1 Prologue

## ISD Retribution, Clan Scholae Palatinae

If one was to draw a picture of a modern-day warrior, they would draw General Zentru'la the Twi'leki Tank. The 62-year-old was a mountain of muscle, heavy guns and heavier armour. His dull yellow skin had been marked by numerous battles, including one prominent scar across the right side of his face, a souvenir from a battle with psychotic Collective bomber Gwendolyn Sparks. A true heavyweight, the Twi'lek's figure exuded a sense of fortitude and power - they said his square chin could crush bricks. The Imperial Star Destroyer *Retribution* almost shook as he walked to the Empress' private study. His Stormtrooper-white armour featured a royal purple pauldron on the right shoulder signifying his position as a general.

Zentru'la's unshakable loyalty and desire to serve the Empress was well known by his troops, but no-one except the Palpatines could ever guess the relationship between the giant Twi'lek general and his daughter - the 'Togruta' Elincia Rei. The thick, heavy plated security door to her study opened on Zentru'la's approach and closed sharply behind him.

"Tonal'la," Zentru'la used his daughter's birth name but still greeted her with a military salute. Whenever he saw his daughter, his mind skipped back thirty years. Despite her Togruta disguise, he saw the newborn baby he blamed for his wife's death in childbirth, the four-year-old girl he had neglected from birth in favour of her brothers, and the seven-year-old that survived better begging for the scraps of strangers than from her own father. He would never see her turn into the woman she became. Nothing he did could undo the wrongs he had committed during her early life, but by serving her, he hoped to atone for his past.

"I have a mission for you General," Elincia responded plainly, not dispensing any time with pleasantries. Zentru'la had burst back into Elincia's life four years ago by saving her from an ancient Sith Lord in possession of Emperor Xen'Mordin's body and subsequently helping her claim the throne. Since then he had taken every effort to try to rekindle a relationship with his daughter, but some damage was irreparable, and while he had proven his value as a warrior, the two were a long way from sharing a traditional familial bond.

Zentru'la gave a rare smile. Whenever his daughter gave him a task, it reminded him

that she valued him for something, and gave him an opportunity to do something right by her. After his three sons had died in Scholae wars, Tonal'la was the only family he had left in the world. "What do you need?"

"The Severian Principate of the Lyra-3K-a System represent an interesting opportunity for the Empire to engage in diplomatic relations," she continued. "You will take a team of elite special forces troops to the Lyra Colony, where you will rendezvous with Amara Cirrus, head of security. You will engage in joint training exercises to demonstrate the prowess of Scholae military forces. The more we can do to impress the key figures in the Principate, the better our diplomatic attempts will go, and the better chance we have of swaying them to our side against The Collective."

"A diplomacy mission?" Zentru'la's eyebrows raised in surprise. "I'm not experi-

"I didn't call you here to have my plans questioned," Elinicia cut across him and Zentru'la fell silent. He knew better than to argue with her when there was an opportunity to help her. "You're there to convince Cirrus that we are the better ally, but the intelligence dossier describes her as very focused on her job. Don't try and win her over with words, do it with action."

"Acknowledged," Zentru'la nodded. His first assignment was guard duty after being drafted into the Imperial Scholae Army twenty-five years ago, so proving talent in protection was well within his skillset. "Any other mission parameters?"

"Do whatever is necessary to protect the colony. Imperial Scholae Intelligence have been warning of Collective plans to attack Lyra, but we don't know how or when. Exercise extreme caution."

"It will be done. For the Empire," he saluted his daughter once more.

"For the Empire," she repeated before he left.

## 2 The False Flag

### Lyra Colony, Severian Principate

Scholae special forces clad in black stormtrooper armour and Lyra Colony officers in police uniforms formed a ring around the pristine white training hall of the security headquarters. Amara Cirrus bore a slender frame: a small human with youthful looks that looked more like she should be on a university campus than a head of security... but she fought like a demon.

Zentru'la moved in close, catching a kick from the security chief on a colossal muscular forearm before grabbing his training partner by the back of the head with a heavy grip. She escaped the brute force of the Twi'lek with fluidity and grace before delivering a palm strike to the general's jaw, causing him to stumble backwards.

It was the security chief's moment to counter-attack and she moved in swiftly, attempting to trip Zentru'la while he was off-balance. She was slightly too late. Her trip landed just at the time Zentru'la regained his footing, and the General's heavy frame and solid stance was too much mass for Cirrus to move. Still in grappling range, he lifted the chief by her waist and threw her across the room with all of his considerable might. The athletic chief controlled her flight with precision, landing in a roll and getting back to her feet as natural as breathing. She regained her stance before Zentru'la could mount a follow-up attack.

"You're strong," she admitted. "And you're quicker than you look."

"The Scholae Empire stands ready to defend the Lyra Colony against the threat of the Collective," Zentru'la promised. Diplomacy was more his daughter's domain, but as he fought with Cirrus he began to understand why he had been chosen for this task. Cirrus respected competence and action, not fancy words. They shared a similar personality in that regard, and after matching Cirrus' score on the firing range, then in hand-to-hand combat, Zentru'la had put on a good show of Scholae combat prowess.

"The Collective would present *you* as the threat," Cirrus said plainly. "But we'd rather have you as an ally than an enemy. This has been a productive exerc- **BOOM**

There was the unmistakable sound of a colossal explosion a few blocks down. The

shockwave shook the building to its core. “What the fwec was that!” Cirrus shouted in surprise.

Zentru’la barely moved under the shake of the building “All Scholae personnel, search the area, secure the colony!” the General ordered, rushing out of the building himself as two more explosions rocked the Colony.

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Wind soared past the open-air passenger platform of an unmarked, plain white LAAT/i gunship. Lyra Colony lay in wait below. Captain ‘CC’ Crimson, dressed head-to-toe in heavy blood-red armour, was well aware of the implications for the Collective if this mission went wrong. Explosives expert Gwendolyn ‘Sparks’ sat alongside her and had well earned her reputation, but her skills were not the concern.

The Togruta that shared the ship with them was an intriguing entity. A softly spoken, polite woman that exuded intelligence with every word she spoke, it was clear that the Scholae defector was the smartest person on the ship. CC found it easy to imagine how Elinicia Rei had bluffed her way to Empress of the Scholae Empire.

Collective Lord Superior Rath Oligard himself had overseen the discreet defection of The Empress. It was a huge gamble, Collective leadership knew full well they were dealing with a very dangerous mind, but their partnership had already paid dividends in the form of a LAAT/i gunship squadron, stolen from the Imperial Scholae Navy’s covert division as well as an on-board arsenal of experimental missile launchers. And as great as Elinicia Rei’s mind was, CC was sure that Oligard’s was the greater.

Three loud explosions from the Colony were followed by a bleep in the ear of the Captain. “The anti-air turrets have been destroyed. Time to move,” she relayed loud enough for the pilot to hear. The light hum of the engines escalated into a roar as the LAAT/i squadron kicked into a higher gear towards a residential area.

CC noticed Sparks could barely take her eyes off the Collective’s new explosive toys. “As much as I love blowing stuff up,” Sparks said with a grin. “Is it wise for us to attack the Severian Principate directly?”

“No,” CC replied flatly. “But this attack isn’t from us. Rei, do your thing.”

Elinicia pressed a button on the back of the gunship. The side panel of every ship in the squadron flipped, revealing the emblem of the Scholae Empire, huge, bold and in a

solid royal purple. “There’s no need to worry about this, Sparks,” Elinicia said serenely. “This attack comes courtesy of the Scholae Empire.”

It was a tactical masterstroke from Oligard, thought CC. Whatever the true motive of Elinicia’s defection, it would be used immediately to set the Scholae Empire on a collision course with the Severian Principate. “So when do we get to drop the bombs?” Sparks asked excitedly.

“We don’t,” CC replied to the disappointment of her mad bomber companion. “Who better to lead the assault than the Empress herself?”

Elinicia lifted a missile launcher off the wall. “I’ve heard many stories about your talents,” she said softly to Sparks. “You almost took out one of my best Generals on Nancora. I’m sure I’m not as good as you, but this one has to be me.”

“Move us in!” CC called to the pilot. “But out of range of small arms fire!”

“You might want to hide in the cockpit,” Elinicia advised as she hoisted the missile launcher on to her shoulder. “Your armour is too distinctive.”

Elinicia stood alone on the edge of the gunship. Her purple blazer rustled in the wind. Below her, security forces scrambled to respond to the explosions in the city. She took a deep breath and fired a stream of missiles at the tallest apartment blocks in sight.

### 3 Fallout

#### ISD Retribution, Clan Scholae Palatinae

News of Elincia's attack on Lyra Colony spread across star systems in minutes. Severian Principate holonews sources led with images of Elincia firing missiles at Lyra Colony's residential areas. She was painted as a war criminal. Every news agency in Principate territory warned of the Scholae Empire as little more than a terrorist organisation, an enemy of the Principate. Graffiti across the walls of the Lyra Colony demanded retaliation.

The Scholae propaganda machine had worked to run its own counter-story, leading with the same images of Elincia Rei but reporting her defection to the Collective. The news was broken across Scholae territory in the Caperion System: The Empress Elincia Rei has defected to the Collective. In Scholae news sources, she was described as a traitor to the Empire and the Collective were blamed for the attack.

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Grand Admiral Mune Cinteroph was once Elincia's master. Now her second in command, he was the highest ranked official in her absence. The ruby eyes of the white haired humanoid fox glared at the holoprojector. This was not a call the swordsman wanted to take. The fate of the Empire could hang in the balance of one conversation, but there was no way out.

A cyan hologram of an elderly twi'lek sparked into life. "Adlez Freewoman, Triumvir of Words." Mune felt her voice cutting into him like a knife as she wasted no time in getting to the point. "Your Empress has attacked an undefended residential area of Lyra Colony. The death toll has reached ten thousand and is growing. The Severian Principate demands answers."

Mune was slightly taken aback by the direct tone of Freewoman. She had a reputation for getting her own way, but he wasn't expecting to be put on the defensive so suddenly. "The Empire are very sorry for this terrible tragedy," Mune replied diplomatically. "You may have heard Elincia has defected. That attack was orchestrated by the Collective."

"And you expect me to believe that?" Freewoman snapped. "Your ships, your weapons, your Empress, and you expect me to believe that Scholae are in no way in-



volved?”

“That is correct,” Mune re-emphasised. “Elinicia has joined the Collective, and stole the ships and weapons as a gift for her new host.”

“Let me make myself very, very clear,” she began to speak slower, more deliberately. “We require proof that this isn’t another one of your Empress’ schemes. The Scholae Empire must eliminate Elinicia Rei.”

Mune grimaced at the thought of ordering the assassination of his own student. Their story had started over two decades ago, when she was a mere childhood spy, and she grew to become the greatest secret agent in the Empire. “And if we refuse?”

“The Severian Principate is a part of the New Galactic Republic,” Freewoman started. “Your Imperial Star Destroyer is the pride of your military. We have ten. If Elinicia is not dealt with, then the Caperion System will be met with the full force of the Severian Principate. You have one standard week. After that, there will be no other possibility than a full scale war. Caelestis City will be burned to the ground.” Freewoman cut the call without even waiting for Mune’s response.

Without skipping a beat Mune activated a new communications link in the holorecorder. “Assemble the Legacy of Palpatine immediately.”

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Sitting beside Zentru’la was the mysterious messenger of the Legacy of Palpatine, a small human with black greasy hair known only as The Envoy of the Legacy. The Envoy watched as Zentru’la listened to a recording of the conversation between Mune and Adlez Freewoman. “So to put it simply,” The Envoy said. “Scholae has to prove it wasn’t involved in that attack.”

A thousand emotions ran through Zentru’la’s head. *Why did his daughter betray the Empire? What did he do wrong? How can he protect his daughter from the Scholae Empire itself?* He had spent over a decade trying to make contact with her again, and then set his wrongs to right. And now she suddenly switches sides? It didn’t make any sense. “And the only way is to kill Elinicia?” Zentru’la growled, furious that the Legacy of Palpatine had even considered this as an option.

“Yes,” the Envoy said gravely. “That’s the only evidence that the Severian Principate will accept. And if they attack, the New Republic have their back. The Legacy have chosen you for this mission. You are to locate Elinia Rei, kill her, and *bring back her lightsaber*. The Palpatines made that last bit very clear.”

Zentru’la’s first thought was to refuse the mission, to fight against the assassination of his daughter, but he caught his words just in time. If not him, they’ll just send someone else. This was his only chance to make contact with her, and bring her home.

“There’s one other thing,” the Envoy unclipped a dagger from his belt and passed it to Zentru’la. The ornate handle was a kind of twisted white enamel, the blade was pure black and curved to a point with vicious serrations along its length. As Zentru’la held it, he felt a strange ominous feeling deep within himself. “The Silencer,” The Envoy explained. “Once owned by a legendary assassin. It will repel Elinia’s lightsaber blade.”

Zentru’la holstered the blade, not wanting to draw it again unless he had to. “So where am I going first?”

“The LAAT Elinia fired from was last seen with Battle Group Elysium, heading in the direction of the Temnos Excavations Co. mining colony on the Moon of Thillon. You will have the *ISN Amedda*, the 4th Imperial Regiment at your disposal, and a carrier as escort. Battle Group Elysium are believed to have occupied the mining colony. Expect heavy resistance.”

## 4 The Moon of Thillon

### ISN Amedda, Clan Scholae Palatinae

Zentru'la stood tall on the bridge of the Acclamator-class assault ship *ISN Amedda*. The assault ship was the Imperial Scholae Navy's primary vector for getting boots on the ground and carried the 4th Imperial Regiment: an infantry focused regiment containing 3000 troops and heavily armoured vehicles. There was an excited buzz around the ship. The crew knew they were heading towards a mission of great importance and of great danger. Had they wanted anything else, they wouldn't have been stationed on the *Amedda*.

"The mission is simple!" Zentru'la announced over the ship's communication systems. "In five minutes we reach the Moon of Thillon. Elinicia Rei is located in a mining colony occupied by The Collective. Notify me immediately if you learn of her position. First priority: storm the mining colony. We go in hard, hit 'em harder and be the only ones standing when the dust settles. For the Empire!"

The grey orb of the Moon of Thillon came into view. "We've got contact!" shouted the navigator as X-wing fighter squadrons became visible in the viewport. "Collective fighters! They outnumber us two-to-one!"

"Then it is an even fight," Zentru'la replied with grim determination.

Scholae fighters, dark as night, swarmed around the *Amedda*. The blackness of space burst into crimson as Collective and Scholae fighters opened fire. Zentru'la watched confidently on the bridge, arms folded behind his back as the grey Collective ships burst into flames one by one. The Imperial Scholae Navy wasn't the largest fighting force, but was built only of the best ships money could buy. As eccentric as Elinicia's Master of War was, he knew how to build a good fleet.

"Full speed ahead! Into the breach!" Zentru'la commanded as the Collective fighters began to rout. The nose of the *Amedda* dipped and the ship began to accelerate towards the Moon of Thillon. The Temnos Excavations Co. mining colony came into focus, a huge complex with giant solar panels visible from space, large storage buildings, offices in-between giant mine shafts, guarded by a thick duracrete wall and a reinforced front gate. "Second wave incoming!"

The viewports exploded into life once more as the second Collective attack struck the depleted Scholae escort. “Multiple contacts!” shouted the voice of the navigator. The *Amedda* rocked under the force of a barrage of laser fire..

“All troops prepare for landing!” the General called to his troops. The ship began to pull out of its dive towards the surface.

“Fires in the engine room!” called an engineer.

“Prepare for impact in five seconds!” shouted the navigator.

The great thud of ship against rocky ground sent many occupants to the floor before the vehicle slid to a halt and the hangars opened. It was the *Amedda* way. “Form a perimeter around the *Amedda*!” Zentru’la, one of the first out of the ship, roared above the cacophony of blaster fire. “Fanatics and Mercenaries!” He hoisted a grenade launcher off his back, unleashing a volley of explosives at the advancing Collective troops as allied soldiers fell around him.

As a perimeter formed around the ship, shambling AT-AT and AT-MP walking tanks emerged from *Amedda*, unleashing death from above onto nearby Collective troops. As the troops occupied more ground, heavy shots from artillery gunners bombarded the entrance to the colony. The reinforced armoured gate was blasted cleanly off its hinges and crashed to the ground. It was an assault tactic drilled over and over again at the Scholae Military Academy. When the heavy guns had thinned out the opposition force, the Juggernauts rolled in, a platoon of four heavily armoured ten-wheel tanks delivering waves of 1,200 troops through the front gate.

Zentru’la kept up with the Juggernauts on foot with the rest of the troops, not letting a single soldier break ranks as he commanded his troops with surgical position. The stakes were too high to let this mission fail. “404th Battalion, into the gate!” he shouted down a commlink. “All others, keep the area secure for evac!”

## 5 The Crystal Shards

### Temnos Excavations Co, Severian Principate

Alarms rang across the facility as Scholae troops and tanks stormed the front gate. Firefights broke out in-between buildings. Fire, smoke and the smell of burning flesh filled the air. Zentru'la had switched to his giant repeating cannon in closer quarters. He had lost count of how many Collective lives he had extinguished. Even Scholae lives were irrelevant compared to his daughter.

A Collective Zealot rolled for cover behind a storage container. Zentru'la had no time for this, and filled the storage container with repeater fire, hearing a scream of pain on the other side. "Medic! Medic!" he heard the Zealot yell. It was the moment he needed.

The General sprinted as fast as his heavy armour would allow him to. The downed soldier had dropped his weapon, a trail of blood ran onto the floor from his shoulder as he called again for a medic. Zentru'la grabbed him by the throat, lifting him in the air with one hand and slamming him back-first against the wall. "Where's the Scholae defector?!" Zentru'la demanded, placing pressure on the Zealot's throat. He tried to say something about not knowing anything but Zentru'la tightened his grip. "The Togruta, where is she?!"

"H-head office," he spluttered. "With Captain C-crimson." Zentru'la immediately let the man drop to the ground and turned to walk away until he heard him speak again, his voice slurred with delirium. "It doesn't matter what you do, Brotherhood scum. You will all perish. There's nothing you can do."

Zentru'la turned back to him, pointing his repeater cannon at his chest. "What do you mean?"

"The crystal fragment... from Ordu Aspectu. Our time draws near."

Zentru'la was at the end of his patience. "What crystal fragments?"

"The ultimate weapon is nearing completion... you will all die..."

His voice was cut off by a cannon bolt through the head. "You first," Zentru'la growled

at the corpse. As fighting continued across the colony, Zentru'la stormed head the office alone. This was his mission.

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With most of the Collective defence forces outside, the head office was not well guarded. Inside the dull grey walls of the corporate building, Zentru'la encountered more office workers fearing for their lives than resistance. He was not concerned with them.

The one-man-army marched through the corridors. He knew he was in the right place as soon as he saw her. Six-foot-tall, armour as red as a blaster bolt, standing guard outside an office door. "Crimson!"

The Captain answered with a percussion of fire from her blaster rifle, but Zentru'la ducked around a corner to safety. Her fire painted flaming holes in the wall behind him. *I don't have time for this!* the General growled to himself. He unholstered a thermal detonator from his belt and threw it around the corner.

First there was the clink of detonator on metal floor. Then there was the sound of footsteps coming towards him at an alarming speed. Then there was the explosive engulfing the corridor in red heat.

Crimson's athleticism took her outside of the blast radius in the blink of an eye as she closed down Zentru'la in hand to hand combat. A flash of red around the corner was the only warning Zentru'la had before an armoured fist crashed against his helmet. The force caused him to stumble backwards. He kept control of his heavy repeater and swung it towards Crimson like a club, feeling a surge of energy course through his veins. Crimson stopped the first blow with her forearm, but was knocked to the floor by the incredible force behind Zentru'la's blow.

Zentru'la didn't relent, smashing his repeater over the head of Crimson with two hands. She tried to cover up but the blows rained down like thunder. By the time Crimson had been knocked unconscious, his trusty weapon had been bent into a right angle. Zentru'la dropped it to the floor and picked up Crimson's pistol as a replacement.

He took a deep breath to compose himself. Never in his sixty-two years had the General felt so nervous. His heart beat like a drum. His limbs were shaking. He took

another deep, slow breath. No amount of waiting was going to help. He opened the door to confront his daughter.

## 6 Loyalty

### Temnos Excavations Co, Severian Principate

“I’ve been waiting for you... father,” Elincia rose to her feet from a meditative pose, turning to walk towards him. She had dropped all semblance of her disguise, standing before him in a black cloak with purple trim, her skin the murky gold of her father. She carried a lightsaber in her right hand.

Zentru’la began to open his mouth and hesitated, not sure what to say, his mind unable to process the mix of emotions as his target - *his daughter* - stood before him. “I was sent here to -”

“I know why you were sent here,” Elincia’s voice was soft with eerie clarity even as she cut across him, like all other noise vanished when she spoke. She stood within touching distance of Zentru’la. “And here you are.”

“I was sent to... kill you... but I came to bring you home,” Zentru’la explained, his breath drawn out in rags. “It’s not too late to return, Tonal’la! It doesn’t have to be like this!”

Elincia was unmoved. “We both know the Empire only has one penalty for defectors,” she stated smoothly, matter-of-factly. “And only one for failures. To defy your orders and return to the Palpatines with me alive would be the death of us both. Only one of us can leave this room alive.”

“Why are you doing this?” Zentru’la asked pleadingly. “You sacrificed everything for the Empire! Why would you betray them now?”

“We all have our own roles to play in this story,” she responded cryptically. “When I founded Imperial Scholae Intelligence, they often said information was my weapon. They were wrong. Misinformation has always been my weapon. I’ve spent my life playing friends against friends, family against family. You don’t want to follow me into these games of lies and deceit. You can never escape them. You are a soldier. You have been given a mission to carry out.”

“Tonal’la!”



“Prove your loyalty!” Elincia shouted, a rare break in her calm demeanour. Her lightsaber exploded into life as she brought it up to a guard. “Finish your mission, soldier!”

Elincia swung her lightsaber at Zentru’la, who took a quick step back to avoid the lethal blade, feeling the radiant heat as it passed by his face. “This is it, father! One of us lives, and one of us dies.” She brought the lightsaber around for another attack but the general swiftly drew the dagger at his waist, parrying the blade. “The Silencer.” Elincia recognised the weapon immediately. “I see the Palpatines have given you my dagger.”

Elincia attacked and attacked, and Zentru’la blocked blow after blow with the blade of The Silencer. He had been fighting his whole life, and pure muscle memory kept him alive as his emotions teased his attention away. He took a slide backwards out of her range. “Stop this! Come back home!”

“That is not an option,” she said before swinging her lightsaber towards him again. It was at that moment, as the violet blade came towards him once more, that Zentru’la realised then he couldn’t just parry all day. Something would have to change. He parried her lightsaber one final time before moving in to grapple. He grabbed his daughter firmly by the wrist, and threw her to the floor as he wrenched her weapon out of her grip. As she lay on the floor, he drew Crimson’s pistol, pointing it at her chest.

“Come back home, Tonal’la. Now.”

Elincia barely seemed to react to her situation. She seemed calm and collected once more, almost dignified as she lay prone and unarmed. Something changed in Zentru’la for a brief second. As he pointed a pistol at his daughter’s heart, he felt a moment of calm, of closure, followed by a sixth sense that he was about to do the right thing.

“For the Empire,” The Illusionist whispered.

“For the Empire,” the General acknowledged... and pulled the trigger.

## 7 Epilogue

### Caelestis City, Scholae Palatinae

The doors opened to a tall, narrow hall - the Hall of Legends. A royal purple carpet ran down the centre, flanked by colossal Bronzium statues: heroes of the Scholae Empire at ten times their actual size, those who had been honoured with the Legacy of Palpatine. Those who summoned him, the statues in the flesh, stood waiting at the end of the walkway. The war was over, but at heavy cost.

As Zentru'la walked down the hall, his eyes glanced from one to the next, looming effigies of war heroes, of leaders, of legends. The ones who ordered Elinicia's assassination. Plaques of gold at the foot of each statue summarised the exploits of the heroes. Everyone in the Scholae Empire knew the Legacies of Palpatine, their stories were told to children to inspire them to grow up to become heroes.

He physically paused at an empty spot. His daughter's statue had been crudely torn down, a simple pile of dull bronze metal where she once stood. He took a deep breath, hiding his emotion as best he could before proceeding.

"General Zentru'la, step forward." said Kell Dante, a human even larger than Zentru'la himself, sporting short blond hair. Zentru'la took a step towards Dante, and handed him his daughter's lightsaber. Dante unscrewed the cap, retrieving a crystal hidden inside. "Zentru'la, for decades of service to the Empire, and for taking down the traitorous Elinicia Rei, you are hereby awarded with the title of Legacy of Palpatine."

There was modest applause from the small congregation as Dante handed Zentru'la a ring that signified his membership of the elite order.

The General seethed with anger. He knew that these people were responsible for killing his daughter, whose death weighed heavily on his heart. He walked straight past the outstretched hand of Mune Cinteroph without saying a word or even looking at him. He would not be celebrated for killing his daughter. He had other places to be.

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The sun pressed against grey cloud with futility. A murky haze drifted across a sea of stone. This was the realm of the fallen. Zentru'la, in military uniform but no weapons or armour, walked sombrely through the graveyard. As he walked through the memorials of those who died serving the Empire, he was reminded of how many other mothers and fathers were going through the same loss as him.

The voice of Mune Cinteroph echoed in his mind, on tremors through a higher plane.

*Zentru'la, your daughter did not betray the Empire. She was loyal to the end. The Dark Council demanded Scholae steal a crystal fragment from The Collective. Only she had the trickery and cunning to earn their trust... except Rath Oligard had an insurance plan...*

*She couldn't keep her cover without attacking Lyra, but she couldn't abandon the crystal either. At that moment, she knew she couldn't come back alive, and hatched a plan to steal the crystal without dooming the Empire... at the cost of her own life.*

*She will be forever remembered as a monster. Scholae will know her as the traitorous Empress who sought to destroy the Empire... and the Principate as a war criminal who killed thousands of innocents. This is what she will be remembered for... bloodshed and deceit... no-one will ever understand what she did. This was to be her final, greatest plot. She sacrificed her life, her legacy, and her honour for her clan.*

*She told me that when it was over, she wanted you to know the truth... it was her that chose you for the mission. You were the only one she trusted. And most of all, she wanted you to know that she loved you.*

Zentru'la continued walking through the graveyard. The names of fallen warriors were etched on the headstones with flowers, trinkets and heartfelt goodbyes left behind by loved ones. He took in every name as he passed. Many of them would have served under his command.

He stopped at one that contained no name, no flowers, no trinkets, and no heartfelt goodbyes. A simple stone, modest in size, with one simple line of text.

TO A HERO WHO SAVED THE EMPIRE

The General placed a single flower on the grave... and saluted his fallen daughter one final time. In his mind's eye, a shimmering figure of her saluted back.

## *The End.*

*This marks the end of a character arc that has spanned fifteen real life years. I hope people have enjoyed reading her story as much as I've enjoyed writing it, and thanks to the Voice team for creating a fictional environment that can support this kind of story.*

*I'm aware that Elinicia stealing one of the AI crystal shards might cross a few lines. I wanted her death to have purpose. However, the stolen crystal could easily be a fake, and this whole chain of events instigated by fake intelligence planted by Oligard in a masterplan to simultaneously launch the most effective false flag attack and remove a Dark Brotherhood power player from the fold.*