

Objective 2: UNCOVER EVIDENCE THAT THE COLLECTIVE IS FRAMING THE BROTHERHOOD

Dramatis Personae

Augur Rian Taldrya; Consul of Clan Taldryan (Mirialan-human male)

Ranger Justinios Taldrya Drake; Proconsul of Clan Taldryan (Aleena male)

Augur Vrayth Arastair Xyler, Member of Clan Taldryan (Mirialan male) [[Loadout: Shadowstalker](#)]

Lieutenant Colonel Soren Leonis; Member of Clan Taldryan (Human male) [[Loadout: General](#)]

General Alejnya Ninra; Taldryan Naval Officer, Commander of Taskforce Arbiter (Human female)

Master Amari Ana; Member of Clan Taldryan (Zeltron female)

Eminent Amara Cirrus; Head of Security for the Lyra Colony (Human female) [[Loadout: Security Chief](#)]

Commander Colleen Candice; officer of the Collective, commander of the Gravesend (Human female)

Important Ships and Locations

SBC *Resurgent*; Secutor-class Battlecruiser, flagship of Taskforce Arbiter (Clan Flagship)

IGV-55 *Enkindler*, personal starship belonging to Vrayth Arastair Xyler

Lyra-Colony; a small but steadfast multi-species community built from premade housing complexes. The city is constantly under construction as new communities and families ship to join the developing colony. Premade housing and structures spread on a large plateau overlooking a fresh-water river and a large mountain.

EC *Gravesend*; Ton-Falk-class Escort Carrier, used by the Collective to launch captured Brotherhood Fighters in order to frame the negotiations between the Brotherhood and the Severian Principate

G R E A T J E D I W A R X I I I

D I S C O R D

During the Brotherhoods negotiations with the Severian Principate, the Collective has staged an attack on Lyra in an attempt to frame the Brotherhood and scuttle the talkings to set up an alliance with the Severian Principate. To save the negotiations, the Deputy Grandmaster has one of the delegates accompanying him to send out a distress call, asking members of the Brotherhood to capture or recover any source that the Collective is responsible for the attack on Lyra...

Part I

Taldryan Flagship *SBC Resurgent*

Orbit above Chyron

Caelus System

"Focus... yes, that's it! I can feel it!" Vrayth said to his brother. Over the course of the last months Rian had made an astonishing progress and even though this particular Force Power was none Vrayth was trained in, it was undeniable that there was an aura of encouragement expanding from the Taldryan Consul that connected with him on a deeper level, raising a feeling within him that there was nothing ahead of him that could stop him. At first, Rian had problems keeping his focus long enough to touch the mind of others, exaggerating his reserves within minutes with only marginal effect. But now, he could connect within seconds and even keeps his focus for hours without even sweating.

"OK, you can let go now," Vrayth allowed the Consul kneeling in front of him on a large cushion to relax. Like most of the time, the two had opted to train in the quarters reserved for the Consul aboard the Taldryan flagship. "Even a Consul needs to rest in the wake of a brooding storm."

Rian chuckled at the depiction of his brother. "We don't even know for sure what will happen. After all, this was declared a diplomatic mission by the Deputy Grandmaster, let's hope for once this goes without us declaring war to someone."

"Don't tell me you aren't expecting something going south. Otherwise, why would you have everyone allowed a final night out if not that you know they won't be seeing their beloved for the next time."

"You know times have changed." The Consul smiled as he rose from the cushion to clap on his older brother's shoulder before walking to a nearby table where he poured water into a glass. "Besides, the Grandmaster has a standing order for all Clans to have their fleets mobilized so we are ready to strike if things evolve like you are thinking."

"My thoughts are based on experience, there were times when you thought just like that, maybe you spent too much time in that comfy chair on Chyron." The older mirialan mocked his brother.

"I trust Mav," Rian replied, all serious out of a sudden. "But I am not blind, for as much as I wish for peace, I know this wish is illicit."

"So you've already planned to defy Mav's orders," Vrayth's own expression a mirror of the Consul's. "may I ask who you have in mind for this mission?"

"It's going to be made up of the best: You."

Vrayth got the hint though it left him with a bitter taste as this mission required a set of skills not everyone in the Clan would be able to bring to the table.

"Seriously, I had that feeling in my stomach since the moment you started talking, now I do know why." He sighed. "OK, so can you at least tell me that I have permission to mobilize *Vanguard* for this endeavor?"

"That's a straight no. As far as we have been told, the meeting is going to happen at the borders of the Principate territory and due to them being part of the New Republic, we have been advised to keep our Military presence limited, thus both *Valiant* and *Vanguard* will be ordered to stay in the Caelus System and augment Sentinel."

Vrayth wanted to give it an objection but was cut off by the Consul's holoprojector signaling an incoming message.

A miniaturized version of the commanding officer appeared after Rian took on the call.

"My Lord, we received a message from Lady Amari. She sent us her exact location and the schedule of the meeting. Informations have been confirmed by our other contacts within the Inquisitorious. We are ready to move on your command."

"Thank you General, send a message to all ships of the Battlegroup and its respective crews to report back immediately. Also, send a detailed dossier about the circumstances of the meeting and the location to the *Enkindler*."

"As you wish my Lord." The female General obeyed with a slight bow.

"Seems like it's my call now, time to get the *Enkindler* primed," Vrayth said, almost having left the room with his own comlink in hand to inform his KX-Series Security Droid about their immediate departure. "*A-cee*, get the ship ready, we leave once I am aboard."

Arriving at the *Enkindler*, Vrayth was already awaited by another member of Taldryan, a young human male wearing a set of armor once worn by the famous ARC-Troopers of the Old Republic, with its distinctive helmet carried under his right arm. Soren Leonis was no stranger to him, not only for having made himself a name within the Taldryan Armed Forces despite his youth; he was also the ward of Arvalis, a good friend of both Vrayth and his brother and a fellow Force-sensitive of Taldryan.

"You're leaving out for a trip while your brother has called everyone back?" the human said pointing out at the *Enkindlers* engines getting fired up with his one free hand. "I wonder if I should report you to the security."

"Soren, I hadn't expected to see you here." Vrayth greeted the young Taldryanite with their usual fist-bump.

"Did I miss an appointment with you?" he followed up after their greeting while remembering that he had been asked for a favor by the young man a while ago. "Actually it's not a fun trip, Rian is sending me on an important mission."

Honestly, I came here in the hope you finished the customizing of my Westar blasters." The man started but immediately changed the topic with a fire of excitement lighting up his pale blue eyes. "What sort of mission?"

“Nevermind I mentioned it, yeah your Westars are almost done. If you want you can have them for some final adjustments, but as you can see I am in kind of a hurry.”

“About that,” the soldier said smirking. “since you mentioned it. Whenever Rian is sending you on a mission, this usually means there will be some fun wherever you go. If you don’t mind, I would like to come with you, if only to test my Westars and do these final adjustments.”

Vrayth hesitated for a moment, this mission could be of every nature and a soldier running around in heavy armor with guns blazing usually called for unwanted attention. On the other hand, having additional firepower would be something beneficial, just in case.

“Alright, you can come with me, but this is a covert operation, so no one can know our allegiance with Taldryan or the Brotherhood,” Vrayth said, already moving past the soldier and to the boarding lift of his ship with Soren immediately catching up with him.

Meeting A-cee in the ship’s cockpit, the KX-series Security Droid put what was meant to be an annoying impression upon his master not arriving alone but didn’t bother to query the matter. “Master, the coordinates of the Lyra-3K-a system have been loaded into the nav-comp and all systems function at peak efficiency.”

Falling into the pilot’s chair next to the droid, Vrayth’s hands flew over the controls. “Thank you *A-cee*, let’s not waste any more time.”

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Space near Eorilian’s moon
Lyra-3K-a System

The flight was uneventful. While Vrayth studied everything he could about the Lyra-3K-a system and the recent events involving the Severian Principate and its relationship with the Brotherhood, Soren spent the majority of their flight “toying” with his customized blasters. Being half the age of the Force-sensitive this depiction appealed for him as the human was barely a kid. Yet when the situation arose he was more mature than most others of his age when it came to fighting at the frontlines.

It was only when the *Enkindler* dropped from hyperspace somewhere between Eorilia and its moon that the fair-skinned human reappeared in the cockpit of the ship, taking a seat behind Vrayth who sat as usual in the pilot’s chair. “Looks nice. So where are we exactly?”

“The system is called Lyra-3K-a while belonging to the Severian Principate it is declared neutral ground for ongoing negotiations between the Principate and the Brotherhood. Rian

sent us here in case something happens to the negotiations that need the presence of Brotherhood forces until the Clans arrive until then we are just merchants passing by.” Vrayth explained to Soren then turned to his mechanical co-pilot: “Scan for other ships with Brotherhood signatures. I am pretty sure Rian isn’t the only one smart enough to expect something going wrong.”

“Only one signature retrieved, though it is to be expected that other ships are running sensor-” The droid started after a minute but was interrupted by Soren, pointing at a large boxy vessel bearing the insignia of the Iron Throne Navy that was lurking towards the moon that housed the only colony in the system. “I think I know which one.”

“A Ton-Falk,” Vrayth stated, “that’s an uncommon sight. *A-cee*, call them on an encrypted channel, state them our status.”

“I thought this is a covert operation?” Soren asked.

“It is, but I had no idea the Brotherhood already made a military presence in the system outside the Corvette the delegation is supposed to use.”

“Master, they aren’t responding to our call.” The droid tilted his head. “But I am picking up a lot of internal communication signals from within the carrier. Mostly pre-flight checks it seems.”

“Why would they ready their fighters?” Vrayth thought loudly.

“Master, if I may interject. I ran a query through the databanks. None of the known Iron Navy related fleets holds a carrier of that type, though there surely is a number of fleets not publicly known-”

“Look they are launching their fighters.” Again the droid was interrupted by the young human, earning himself what was supposed to be an angry glare from *A-cee*.

Vrayth’s mind somersaulted as he watched the squadrons unfolding from the Escort Carrier split, one half of the ship's complement banking toward the systems shipyard while the other squadrons headed for the nearby colony. *This was odd even for the Brotherhood. Stating official data, the Principate invited the Brotherhood for diplomatic negotiations, so why would the Grandmaster order a military operation, unless...*

“What the - they are attacking the colony.” Soren burst out when he saw the first Tie-fighters opened fire on the shipyard, catching the local authorities off-guard.

“Master, these pilots are breaking official protocol, the comm is full of broadcasts,” *A-cee* replied, putting the comms through the internal speakers.

“Death to the enemies of the Brotherhood.”

“For the Brotherhood.”

“For the glory of the Grandmaster.”

Vrayth muted the comm: “*A-cee*, give me Rian, I need to know if this were the shortest negotiations since the blockade of Naboo or-”

The ghostly form of the Taldryan Consul appeared as an image in front of them. “Vrayth, I haven’t expected you to call in so quickly, is everything alright?”

“You tell me,” Vrayth stated briskly. “*A-cee* show them what we see. .”

The expression of the Consul swapped from puzzled to angry. “I assure we haven’t received word from the Grandmaster to initiate an attack on the Lyra-3K-a System. Whoever is leading that attack isn’t doing it on the order of the Grandmaster.”

“How shall we respond then?” Vrayth asked, already imagining what orders his brother will give him next when the commander of the Taldryan Strike Force appeared at the edge of the holographic image, giving intel to the Consul.

“Listen. We got information over the AIN, it's the Collective, Varryn Antillus and Avitus Oligard somehow managed to get into the negotiations. For now, they are in control of the delegation.

“Do you want us to help to free them?” Vrayth asked.

“The delegation seems to be safe for the moment, for now. No, the Inquisitorius has given orders to all members of the Brotherhood already in or near the Lyra-3K-a System to defend the system and prove the Collective to be responsible.

“Understood. We will engage them immediately.”

“Good luck, we will join you as quickly as possible. May the Force be with you.”

“May the Force be with you too.” Vrayth ended the comm. “Alright, you have heard the Consul. *A-cee*, get the *Clankers* online, I need them in the turrets, now!”

Vrayth fired up the engines, setting an intercept course for the Colony with multiple other crafts bearing Brotherhood and Principate signatures dropping out of hyperspace all over the system, engaging each other.

As they drew closer, Soren asked the inevitable question that has started to bother him since they received the orders to find evidence that the Collective was behind the attack. “Uhm, Vrayth, how are your battle-droids supposed to know who to shoot and whom not?”

“That’s a good question,” Vrayth said his attention fully at maneuvering the *Enkindler* into the mess of starships surrounding Eorillian's moon. “*A-cee*, tell the Clankers to fire at the fighters that have the highest frequency of comm shout outs and not those firing on us.”

“What do you mean by ‘not firing on us’? Soren demanded when the IGV-55 was hit by a salvo from one of the ships associated with the Severian Principate, immediately answering the question. “Also how are we supposed to recover evidence of the Collective’s involvement if we shoot them all down?”

“If I may suggest a solution to this problem,” *A-cee* spoke up. “I assumed to scan Lyra-Colony for vital signs in the fighters with Brotherhood registries that have been shot down already and I am picking up critical vital signs in the remains of a downed starfighter at mark one-three-eight point four-two in a distance of about three-hundred-seventy-one kilometers.”

“Good plan. *A-cee*, take over the controls and get us a place to land as close to that fighter as possible, Soren with me we will do some search and rescue.”

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Center City

Lyra Colony - Eorillian’s Moon

Lyra-3K-a System

Amara Cirrus had almost arrived on the large landing pad holding the various shuttles and starfighters reserved to defend the colony outside the Turbolaser turrets built into the colony’s defense grid. Stepping out onto the pad the loud whine of a starship flying low over the Security Headquarter made her look into the sky.

That transport was way too low for being one of theirs heading into orbit, nor was she aware the colony had such transport in its complement. Meaning instead of going up, this transport was going down. The Brotherhood didn’t waste any time if they were already starting their ground assault on the colony.

Grabbing the nearest soldier, she barked: “Get me a squadron and a transport, we need to strike at them before they can set a foot on the ground.”

The soldier nodded and headed off with Amara's eyes following him until she lost track of him in the mess of troopers running around in preparations of the colony's counter-attack. Shaking her head she caught a glimpse on a speeder-bike ready and waiting.

Starting its engine she made a decision, she would pursue the transport on her own and send a message to the command staff to send reinforcements to her position once she caught up with the transport.

Luckily those citizens of the colony that weren't currently laboring in other parts of the moon or offworld were well trained for situations like that immediately taking shelter in their designated safe rooms. This also left the streets empty and easily maneuverable for her except the rumble where the Brotherhood Tie-fighters had caused destruction on the cityscape. Looking into the sky she could make out the transport hovering in the distance. Pushing the lever she accelerated the speeder. She will make the Brotherhood pay for deceiving the Principate today.

Reaching a large plaza where the transport just had settled onto the ground, she parked the speeder-bike behind a junction, hidden from the view of the Brotherhood transport. Cautiously she moved to the corner of the junction so she could watch how many members of the Brotherhood would emerge from the transport.

To her surprise, the assault team was only made up of two people emerging from the boarding platform. Immediately they started to move away from the transport. Diving back into her cover she tapped the comlink in her ear. "This is Chief of Security Cirrus, I need a squadron immediately at the southern plaza."

Her call was answered with static.

"Lyra Colony, copy, do you read me? This is chief of Security Cirrus, I need reinforcements at the southern plaza." She tapped the comlink again, but again it was met only with static.

Fine, it's only two of them. I can handle that. Amara mused to herself, sneaking around the junction, careful to stay outside the line of sight of the transport while keeping track of the two members of the Brotherhood.

She followed them for several minutes until they stopped near the wreckage of one of the Brotherhood's Tie-fighters, with one of them staying back and the other jumping on top of the wreckage in one clear leap making it obvious that at least one of them was a Force-Sensitive.

She continued to watch them, the one that had jumped onto the fighter was now working to wrench open the entry hatch before jumping down into its cockpit.

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A-cee hadn't joked when he said that the pilot's vital signs were critical. As if droids were ever known to make jokes at all. Anyhow, by the time Vrayth was able to wrench open the fighter's entry hatch, the pilot had already passed away.

"Is the pilot still alive?" Soren asked."

Vrayth didn't answer for the moment. Dead or alive, it didn't matter much to Vrayth right now, sure it would have been easier if he would have been able to capture the pilot alive for interrogation but even in his death, he would serve its purpose to the Taldryanite.

Removing the helmet, Vrayth put a hand on the dead pilots' blood-stained head. Feelings and images immediately flooded his mind: dreading anxiety and pain in conjunction with images of operating tables and torturing equipment akin to that found on Meridian Station fading into blackness. When the darkness finally faded the pilot's awareness became filled with a new emotion. Instead of anxiety and pain, there was now a sense of purpose. Instead of operating tables, there was a hangar and other pilots. They all stood attention but instead of doing it to an officer wearing the uniform of the Iron Navy they did it to a female officer wearing the colors and patterns of the Collective and a datapad in her hand, reading the phrase 'Project Indigo'.

Vrayth let go of the pilot. Anger rose in him. He expected the Collective to play dirty, but this was a low he even hadn't expected from Oligard and his minions. Now he only needed to recover something that would prove the pilot being turned into a soldier of the Collective other than his word. Tilting the pilots head around he found what he was looking for, a small almost invisible scar running down the spine of the pilot. Pushing his luck, Rian procured a small blade from a holster on his lower leg and began to slice the dead man's skin to uncover a set of implants with pulsating lights clearly originating from the Technocratic Guild.

Stowing the implants in one of his pockets, he climbed out of the cockpit. Once he had jumped back onto the ground he replied to Soren, shaking his head in a negating manner. "No, he was dead by our arrival. But I was able to retrieve some Technocratic Implants, though I am-"

A single burst of plasma hit the downed Tie-fighter. The shot clearly wasn't aimed at either Soren or Vrayth as it would have missed them by far.

The shot came from a lone soldier bearing the uniform of the local security forces having her blaster-rifle trained at them. "Freeze and put your hands where I can see them," she said with the hardness of a seasoned soldier.

With the soldier standing several meters away, the two Taldryanites obeyed the order, assessing the situation.

“Don’t shoot, we are not responsible for the attack.” Vrayth declared.

“Liar, you are a Force-Sensitive and those fighters bear the signatures of the Iron Navy,” Cirrus shouted as a group of Tie-fighters buzzed past them. “I should shoot you right now.”

“You wouldn’t be able to hit him even once,” Soren interjected grunting.

“Maybe, but what about you kid,” Cirrus replied coolly whereas Soren’s hands instinctively twitched toward his holstered blasters. “I said don’t move.”

“Let’s all calm down for the moment.” Vrayth tried to sooth the situation. “I swear we aren’t part of the group that is currently attacking your colony, and I can prove it.”

“How so?” The Chief of Security demanded to know.

“I know it sounds weird but its the Collective trying to frame the negotiations between your Principate and our Brotherhood.” Vrayth started while expanding his mind to probe the soldier in front of him.

“If you look at the tactics those pilots apply, it is pretty similar to the tactics applied by the Collective’s suicide pilots.” Vrayth paused, pushing the mind of Cirrus in their favor while pointing with his right index into the air. “Have you noticed that the frequency of their strafing runs lessens every minute? This is not because your capable pilots are thinning their lines. No, I assume your pilots are spending most of the time chasing the arriving ships of the Brotherhood around while their carrier is already preparing its retreat so that when our real fleet arrives they will be gone.”

“That’s a good story, but nothing you said proves its anything else but a story.”

“If you want more proofing, here.” Vrayth’s hand moved faster as Amara’s eyes and mind could grasp and seconds later something bloody hit the ground in front of her feet. “That is Collective technology, I took it from the pilot’s corpse. Feel free to take and examine it, or you can come with us and see it first hand that the Carrier belongs to the Collective.”

Soren glanced at Vrayth, weighing if the other man was stealing time or telling the truth.

Amara Cirrus’ mind still struggled to realize how fast the Force-sensitive in front of her had moved. His hand was even back up in the air before the blood-stained piece of technology

supposedly belonging to the Collective hit the ground before her. Something was odd, although that Force-sensitive could have easily used the opportunity to subdue her, he did not. What if he really told the truth?”

Without taking her head from them, she tapped her comlink again with nothing but static as a reply.

“Listen, there is still time,” Vrayth gave her a final mental push. “you can either come with us or take the implants, but we need to leave now or the Collective will be able to escape with the Brotherhood being falsely accused.

Finally, the Chief of Security lowered her blaster rifle, resulting in both Taldryanites relaxing as well.

“*A-cee*, light her up, we are coming back,” Vrayth said into his comlink. “Oh, and we are bringing a guest.”

Part II

As soon as the *Enkindler* had broken through the atmosphere, it became evident how much chaos the Collective’s framing of the negotiations has caused. With the 5th Fleet of the Severian Principate having moved in to protect the system, it left the various ships of the Brotherhood that spearheaded their respective Clan fleets scattered and torn apart all over the system. Only the Ton-Falk Escort Carrier seemed unphased by the presence of the variety of large warships, slowly making its way from the Eorillian Moon to the Moon of Thillion.

Joining the two Taldryanites in the Cockpit of the *Enkindler*, Amara Cirrus was eager to learn the truth. “How long till we reach that ship?”

“Soon, you better take a seat,” Vrayth replied working the controls of the ship. “*A-cee*, status on the Taldryan fleet?”

“They will arrive within the next hour, but the Proconsul and Sentinel-Flight have arrived a couple of minutes ago and are on an intercept course of the Collective's Escort Carrier as well.”

“Alright. let’s not disappoint them, everybody hold tight.” Vrayth warned the others before pushing a red button on the speed lever, allowing it to be jerked even further forward.

At the same speed as the *Equite* moved the lever, a surge went through the ship, overpowering the engines, pushing it beyond its regular speed limits.

The *Enkindler* raced through space toward the Ton-Falk Escort Carrier that saw itself now forced into defending against no less than four powerful VT-49 Decimators. When the large Carrier's gigantic hangar bay filled the forward viewport of the *Enkindler* entirely, Vrayth abruptly jerked the speed lever back, reverting the speed to zero. The maneuver made the ship's structure groan and shiver under the heavy duress but it stayed intact.

The *Enkindler* skittered to a halt when its four feet connected with the durasteel plating of the hangar. "Well not the smoothest landing, but we made it."

Soren was the first passenger to gain his footing again. "Damn It, that was awesome. You need to teach that to Celia once we get back."

"Whoa, I really can't see at which circumstances this sort of maneuver should be something one should aim for to repeat." Amara got up only a blink later, though her first steps were a bit shaky, sure she had received basic flight training but this went way beyond it. "So what's coming next? Are we going to run through this ship, blasters blazing and trying to take over this ship so we can hand it over to the authorities

"First, not going to promise that," Vrayth replied pointing at the young human loyalist while already on his way towards the boarding lift. "That wouldn't be a good idea, even though the Collective is drawing heavily on automation for their ships, there are still more troops to fight than we can handle. No, what we will be doing is to go for one of the computer terminals. When I touched the dead pilot, I was able to see part of his past. And among the emotions and images, I saw the term 'Project Indigo', we need to slice their computers and find everything about that if we really want to uncover the plans of the Collective."

"I still think it would be better to go to the engine room and disable this ship and call for reinforcements." Amara concurred the plan of the Taldryanite.

"Believe me, this ship isn't of our concern. My brother and the rest of the Brotherhood will surely arrive any minute and they are much more capable to disable and secure this ship for your superiors than we are."

Amara still wasn't totally convinced but it looked as if the other man trusted the mirialan without question and so had she for the moment.

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On the command bridge of the *Gravesend*, Commander Colleen Candice shouted orders, while the initial part of the plan to frame the negotiations between the Brotherhood and the Principate worked accordingly, the following attack on her ship couldn't have been foreseen.

That or no higher-ranking official found it a necessity to inform her of the possibility that their plan might get corrupted at some point during the mission.

“Get us rid of those Assault ships.” She shouted at the officers surrounding her.

“We can’t they are too fast for our gunners.”

“We can’t outmaneuver them either.”

"Then call back our fighters." She barked angrily. "We need to get to the rest of the fleet immediately."

“Commander, there is another ship closing in fast.”

“One of ours?” Candice asked, halfway hoping that someone aboard one of the ships of Battlegroup Elysium that was currently setting itself up hidden behind the moon of Thillion had an insight and decided to help them in their misery.

“Negative, it’s the same ship that has tried to hail us a few hours ago when it entered the system.”

“It’s heading straight for us at top speed.”

The Commander watched the nearing freighter, what the hell were they trying? At last, it dawned her, or not? Coming in at that speed it was nearly impossible they could do a landing maneuver without risking to crash through several bulkheads within the hangar, likewise harming their ship and the *Gravesend*.

“Evasive maneuvers.” She yelled, but it was too late. The freighter came in fast and Candice braced herself for the inevitable impact.

But it didn’t come or did it come and it was all over already? No, those freaking Force-sensitives clung to their lives as a Mynock clung to the hull of a starship.

“Status report.”

“I, I can’t believe it but whoever is flying that ship managed to land it safely within the hangar.”

“You better do.” the Commander said. “Seal the hangar, and call the Partisans. Let that hangar be their grave.”

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Resistance within the hangar was as it had to be expected, with the hangar crew consisting mostly of technicians and only a handful of zealots serving as security in the hangar.

Fighting their way through the hangar it took the trio only a few minutes to reach a diagnostic table with a fitting terminal and secure a perimeter around it.

Looking around while the Force-sensitives worked on the console with their droids assistance, she used her blaster rifle to turn one of the downed crewmen onto his back. Mustering the dead man's appearance, her eyes immediately got caught by the shaved head and the branding on his forehead which she then realized was visible on all his companions as well. She knew that shaving one's head was military regulation in some regions of the galaxy but such a prominent branding was something she had seen nowhere else before, at least not to such a large degree.

"I saw they have the same sort of branding on their forehead, what is that supposed to mean? Are they all serving the same battalion or so?"

"You don't know that?" Vrayth turned to explain it to the Chief of Security after having spiked the console. "That's the three-pillar sign. Each of those pillars stand for one of the groups the Collective is made of. Capital Enterprises, Technocratic Guild and the Liberation Front, which apparently our dead friends here all are a part of."

"I didn't know that. I never had to deal with them until today." Amara replied, wondering why the Collective showed such a great antipathy to the Brotherhood. The moment they had emerged into the hangar, they had swarmed them, opening fire, not even bothering to ask them to surrender.

"Be happy, these were just common soldier, the Collective has much worse they could have thrown at us," Soren interjected, checking with the progress of the slice they had initiated. "Thirteen percent, why is this thing so slow?"

"Calm down Soren, Collective Technology requires advanced slicing, and you know that," Vrayth said, his mind suddenly pulling at his awareness.

One of the blast doors slid open and a dozen troopers burst into the hangar.

"Maybe I should ask one of them for their security codes, would make things much easier for us," Soren said having seen them too after checking the progress bar on the display in front of him one more time.

Amara raised her blaster while taking cover but Vrayth stood up next to her, lowering the barrel of the rifle with his hand. “No, I’ll handle them, you help with the slice.”

“But I’ve never-” She started to object but Vrayth was already on his way, his hand falling onto his back where his lightsaber was secured.

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On the bridge, Colleen Candice watched the video footage transmitted by the internal cameras while her command crew tried its best to prevent the intruders from gaining access to the secured data on the computer core.

Both sides fought a bitter fight over every bit and byte of data but at least one of the intruders must have had received more thorough training in the field of slicing with his skills being further augmented by advanced technologies they had brought with them.

For a brief moment, Colleen had considered giving the order to deactivate the force-field that kept the atmosphere within the hangar from being sucked into the vacuum of space, but decided otherwise when the Partisans finally called in, stating their arrival at the hangar.

Now her gaze was again fixed on the viewscreen.

She saw one of them that had been working on the terminal so far split from the others, his hand on his back procuring a device that first extended to almost twice its size side starting at its lower end and a brilliant pillar of energy erupting from the other. The man closed the gap between himself and the partisans with deliberate steps while dodging their blaster fire with grace. She had almost expected at least one of the group being a Force-sensitive but only now she knew for sure.

When he reached the first Partisans, her men switched to close-quarter combat. Though from that point on the outcome of the skirmish was inevitable, she had to admire her men to not give up on their fate and continue to fight as if they could still win.

One after another the Partisans fell to the weapon of the Force-sensitive as he carved a path of destruction through their lines.

“Ma’am, we did it. They are no longer in control of the console.” one of the technicians on the bridge shouted in excitement.

Not turning from the screen Colleen knew it better when she saw the others running down the hangar towards the Force-sensitive. No, she was not going to lose this fight.

Turning toward the rest of the technicians on the bridge she was about to give the order she had avoided to give earlier when another technician burst out. “Proximity alert. Sensors picking up several pings straight ahead coming out of hyperspace.”

Turning to the viewscreen Colleen caught her breath. Just outside the forward viewport, an immense starship broke from hyperspace, immediately opening fire on them with its armament.

All other thoughts gone, her military experience was only able to give one order “Full stop, revert all power to the shields.”

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While Amara broke her attention from the display to look at Vrayth every few seconds, Soren didn’t need to, he had fought with the both the Consul and his brother before, knowing all too well how skilled they were.

Finally, the progress bar finished and all data queried with the term ‘Project Indigo’ had been copied to Vrayth’s ID-10 droid Divo. Soren quickly ran a program line to execute a fake cut out of the console once the droid had separated from it.

“We are done, let’s go,” Soren said to Amara.

“Right behind you.”

They were halfway back to the *Enkindler* when the ground beneath them shook heavily. There have been occasional rumbles all the time due to the Taldryan Decimators never having ceased their attacks on the Escort Carrier, but this one was different as not only the surface shook but the light started to flicker as well.

“What the hell was that.” Amara broke out when she grabbed Soren’s shoulder for support.

“I bet that was Rian and the rest of the fleet,” Soren explained while Vrayth could be seen entering the *Enkindler* to power the ship back up.

The ground shook again, though this time they were prepared.

“Come on, only twenty more meters,” Soren shouted seeing that the *Enkindler* was already hovering at a meter height.

They reached the ship just when another salvo hit the carrier hard, making the lights flare again. They jumped and at the same time they landed on the boarding platform, the force-field ahead of them flickered and went out along all lights within the hangar.

“No, no... no, no, no. no, no...” Amara shouted while she felt herself getting sucked from the rising platform.

At the last instant, Soren grabbed her ankle with one hand while holding tight to one of the pneumatic lifters.

Finally, the lift connected with the hull of the ship, sealing them in the *Enkindlers* own atmospheric containment.

“Glad you decided to leave with me.” Vrayth mocked them when they entered the cockpit.

“Glad you offered us a ride.” Soren countered, again taking the seat of the co-pilot while *A-cee* was working with the ID-10 droid.

“Master, incoming call from the *Resurgent*.” The KX-Series Security Droid said, tilting its head for a second.”

“Put him through.”

Again the holographic form of the Consul appeared in front of the Taldryanites.

“Thank you, Rian, you just came in time.” Vrayth went straight to the point, skipping official protocol. “I think I stumbled upon something. *A-cee*, transmit the data.”

“Well, that locator of yours did its job just fine.” The Consul replied. “But there is no time to relax, the AIN is bursting us with intelligence Reports about Collective activities within the system, are you able to take on another mission?”

The Taldryanites looked at each other for a second before turning their heads back to the Consul.

“Send us the details,” Vrayth said, offering Soren a fist to bump.