**Tokare City Spaceport**

**Seraph**

**Caperion System**

The soft patter of rain was the only fanfare that marked the return of The Usurper to Imperial soil. There was no victory parade, no fly-over of the TIE Corps, and no display of Imperial might. Even the vessel that bore him back to terra firma lacked the splendor and magnificence fit for a return of a grand war campaign. Even as he took the last step off the carbon-stained loading ramp, he wondered what it was that he had accomplished on his junket to Hutt space. It was certainly no grand triumph. He felt hollow.

The searingly bright white fluorescent lights of the transport gave way to the darkness of night and the flickering neon lights of the spaceport. A sigh escaped his lips. He slipped a stack of credits from his pocket into the tri-digited hand of the piscine alien that served as the vessels First Officer.

*“Pleasure having you aboard, Mr. Kast.”* The spacer gurgled.

*“Thank you, Quish. Please tell the Captain that I appreciate the alacrity with which we’ve returned to Seraph. If you’re ever back in this sector, please send me a message.”* Thran said with a slight nod.

As the chilling drops of rain hit his face, he slipped the hood of his felted cloak over his head. He tossed a glance over his shoulder at the dilapidated Corellian YT model, slightly saddened to depart the company of his most recent cadre of fair-weather friends. Another deep sigh leapt from his lungs and he stepped out into the night.

**Dante Family Villa**

**Outside Caelestis City**

**Caperion System**

*“Yes. I agree. She has every right to be angry with him. Emily is such a sweet girl and he’d do well to treat her better. As long as this family has known that man, he has never been forthright. He bargains with lies and trades in deceit. Why your father gives his loyalty to a man that is so incapable of displaying a shred of himself is beyond comprehension.”* Leah said, setting her cup of tea upon a fine stained-glass saucer.

*“I would be lying if that very same question did not cross my mind.”* Kell said, tucking his hands casually into his pockets. *“I just don’t trust him. Father just picked up arms when he arrived, for what? A robbery? That type of brigandry is not what the Dante name stands for.”*

Silence fell over the veranda as the patriarch of the house made his presence known with a subtle clearing of his throat. Leah welcomed him with a soft smile, sliding over an inch to give him room to sit.

*“Please…Continue.”* Angelo said, stepping over to join his partner on the wicker lounger.

*“Father. I was just looking for some insight on what Thran’s motives might be. What was his motive in all of this?”* Kell said.

*“His motive? Beats me.”* Angelo said, with a chuckle as he poured himself a glass of the sweetened tea from the pot on the table.

*“He must have been after something.”* Kell replied hastily.

*“Oh, most certainly.”* Angelo replied.

*“The whole time we were with him, I could not read his intentions. I checked the vault manifests before we turned over the cargo to the pirates. There were some items missing. Relics, not petty gems. He is dangerous and he is up to something. I will not allow him to bring ruin to this family. I need to know why you were so ready to pick up arms and help him.”* The Dante son replied.

*“You are wise, boy. Thran certainly is dangerous. He is volatile and unpredictable. If you can could get inside his mind, you would be unable to tell what was true and what was a lie. I can assure you, if his intention were to cause us any harm, I would put him in the ground myself. And beside, if that were his plan he would have done so while I was away. He wouldn’t wait for there to be two of us. But you ask what his intention is? His motive? For that I have no answer.”* Angelo said with authority.

*“Then why? Why risk everything we have built to answer him when he calls?”* Kell inquired, expressing his displeasure with the vague response.

*“Loyalty, son. Of all the knives The Usurper has ordered at the backs and throats of the people around him, never once has a blade been pointed at me or this family. You may not see it as such, but for Thran, this is the only way he can express it. We are his brothers. Until you stand shoulder to shoulder with him in battle, you will never understand Occasus. You’d be wise not to question his loyalty to this family again.”* The elder Dante said, placing his hand firmly on the arm of the chaise.

The conversation ended there. All three turned their heads as a shuttle flew overhead with its wings folding up into landing configuration.

*“Were we expecting visitors?”* Leah asked.

*“No.”* the men said in harmony as they reached for their rifles.

**Kast-Coral Penthouse**

**Tokare City, Seraph**

**Caperion System**

She brushed an errant strand of hair from her face and tucked it behind her ear as she filed away a data-pad in her desk drawer. It had been another productive day of reviewing operational process charts and expense reports. The work was tedious at times, but her fastidious nature aided in her managerial excellence. She tried not to work from home, but for Emily reviewing the budgets of the Experimental Prototyping department of Sal-Mal Repulsor brought a sense of ease that had not been easily found in the home since her husband had returned from his Casino robbing adventures in Hutt Space.

She stood just as the door to her office opened. Five soldiers, clad in black armor, entered the room in single file.

The leader spoke *“Ma’am. The representatives from the Office of the Regent have arrived. They wish to speak with you and The Emp-Mr. Kast.”* He said correcting himself. *“ Lady Aran is overseeing the inspection as we speak.”*

*“Excellent, right on time. Thank you for the notification, Captain.”* She said with exasperation.

The soldiers stood silent for a moment, when one of them spoke.

*“Something wrong, ma’am?”* the young man’s voice chirped.

The others shook their heads. Pogo was at it again.

*“Pogo, you’re very sweet for asking, but now is not a great time.”* She said, squirreling away paperwork into the appropriately designated folders and drawers.

*“Marital problems? I get it. My girlfriend is still mad at me too. I don’t even know what I did!”* he said.

*“Shut it, Pogo.”* One of the others said as they stood up a little bit straighter.

Emily Coral, skilled sorceress of the Business world, let out a slight sigh and chuckle. She pushed in the chair and crossed the room. Her stature wasn’t intimidating, but her poise and presence in a room was able to leave people weak in the knees. She slipped a credit chip into the utility belt around the soldier’s waist.

*“Some advice…Take her out for a nice night on the town. Apologize for what you did and promise you’ll never do it again.”* She said with a smile, as if every ounce of stress had simply vanished.

She stood next to the soldier, placing her hand on his shoulder as she looked out from the office down over the balcony below. It was nearly sunset and the sky was ablaze with ribbons of orange and rose and violet. Thran sat on the stone balcony, in a cross-legged meditative position. He hadn’t spoken much since she erupted on him for his antics on Dandoran.

*“Look at him, Pogo.”* She said with a sigh.

*“Yes, He’s incredibly handsome. You’re very lucky… He told me to say that.”* The loose lipped soldier replied

 *“Of that, I am certain.”* She laughed.

*“Yes, ma’am. I see what you mean.”* Interjected another of the faceless soldiers.

*“Oh, you do? What do you see?”* Ms. Coral asked quizzically

*“Forgive me, ma’am. But, I see a man who is adrift. I see a man who lacks a solid goal. That is not to say he has no drive, but rather no direction to aim towards. He feels like a man forgotten. The Empire doesn’t have a place for him. Nor does the Caperion System. So instead, he’s chasing whatever comes up next.”* The soldier said sheepishly.

*“Hmmm. I am afraid you are correct, Wiz. He doesn’t have any friends here. Worse yet, he doesn’t have any enemies. Not a single one of the Brotherhood came for his head while on Dandoran. It was like he wasn’t even there. He didn’t even go after one of their kind. He has no grudges. He has no vendetta. He is lost. I am very worried about him. I don’t know how to help. What comes next? I don’t know.”* She said with a sigh.

The reflection on the status and perspectives of the enigmatic figure of Thran was cut short. A buzz came over the soldiers comlinks. They quickly shouldered their weapons and took up defensive positions in the office.

*“Inbound. Miss Coral, please come with us.”* The Captain said as they took up a defensive formation.

As the soldiers surrounded her, she looked over the balcony once again. In the distance, an Imperial style shuttle approached. It’s wing pivoted upward, indicating the intent to land. Thran, shirtless, rose from his meditative posture. The polished metal of his lightsaber reflected a glint of light as it manifested in his hand. She was ushered out of the room by the well-trained security retinue.

The shuttle took up a hovering position in front of the Sith and the landing ramp opened like the gaping maw of a beast. Two figures obscured by burgundy and obsidian robes marched towards him. They moved like wraiths, seemingly disconnected from the physical world. Their crimson blades erupted to life as they closed in on their quarry. He stood fast as they closed. Hafts of blood red and flame orange clashed. The battle against these unknown agents had begun.

Warlord Thran Occasus-Palpatine (Sith) / [Clan Scholae Palatinae](https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/units/scholae-palatinae) [SA: V] [GMRG: IV] [SYN: II] [INQ: IX]

SBx2 / GCx3 / SCx5 / ACx4 / DCx7 / GNx6 / SNx5 / BNx5 / Cr:3D-1R-6A-13S-21E-8T-9Q / CFx208 / CIx111 / CGx12 / SI / LSx10 / SoLx4 / S:5Al-3D-1Do-4Dk-7Rm-8P-17U-5B-18Dec-17Aff-3Cr-14En

{SA: MVHL - MVL - MVLD - MVLO - MVPH - DPCM - DPCP - DPE}