



Presents

Victory Quest

A Clone Wars Novella

By

[Supreme Chancellor Sidious](#)

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Victory Quest I:

Rain

Prologue

Holonet News Update-7 Weeks After The Battle of Geonosis (TBoG)

Palpatine addresses the Jedi

Yesterday, at a ceremony in the Jedi Temple, Supreme Chancellor Palpatine announced

that the Jedi are the best Protectors the Republic could have ever asked for in this time of great

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need. He then declared that all Jedi who fought in the Clone Wars would be placed in the Republic Archives.

Later that day the Supreme Chancellor awarded General Obi-Wan Kenobi and his Padawan Anakin Skywalker with medals for their bravery at several recent battles.

CLICK HERE FOR FULL STORY

No News on Dooku`s Whereabouts

In a recent Senate meeting The Supreme Chancellor stated that Republic Intelligence is working very hard to locate the Separatist Leader Dooku. Unfortunately he also reported that Dooku could be on any of the main Separatist planets.

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Republic States That Separatists Are moving in on Ylesia

In a news conference this morning General Cambini announced that Separatist forces have begun to invade Ylesia. He was able to provide no other information except that at the moment the Separatists forces have only begun their onslaught.

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Part 1: Assault

In Orbit of Ylesia-7 weeks after TBoG

“This is Red 5, I’m taking heavy damage by Droid Starfighters.”

“Understood, 5” piped in 6.

Jedi Knight Rince Vunian looked over at Red 5 and replied, “Coming in to help you 5, leader out.”

The Jedi Starfighter Vunian was at the controls of dived down towards Red 5 at a rapid rate. Vunian brought his fighter slightly to the right and fired several shots at the Droid Fighter. The Green energy lasers grazed the fighter’s right wing. The rather flat and brown fighter suddenly swung back around at Vunian, its wing ablaze, and opened fire. Vunian rolled to the right to avoid the sudden surprise attack and once again shot out. The lasers completely missed the enemy starfighter. It flew up and opened fire on Vunian yet again. The lasers peppered Vunian’s shields but did not break through them. The Jedi Knight reacted to this quicker than the Droid had expected by charging at the fighter causing the Droid fighter to barrel roll to the right. With this distraction Rince Vunian had that extra second to align himself at an

appropriate angle in which to fire at the ship. He pressed down hard on his fire button on his control stick. The lasers ripped the enemy craft apart.

This constant dog fighting had begun once the Separatists had arrived above Ylesia. Rince Vunian and his squad had been sent up to hold back the fighters while it gave the General at the Republic base below time to breath and act. Vunian, who was Red Squadrons leader, immediately decided to take on the Starfighters first, then take care of the larger ships next. Unfortunately the Separatist landing craft were approaching Ylesia`s surface faster than was calculated.

“We need to engage the landing craft immediately,” he spoke into his comm. “2,3 and 6 you`re with me. The rest of you take down those fighters and fast. Then come assist us.” With that he pushed his control stick forward and dived down through Ylesia`s atmosphere. “Let`s engage the Landing Craft closest to the base.”

All of the others gave an affirmative click to Vunian. They were ready.

“Take out the crafts engines first,” spoke Vunian. The landing craft had two wings on its top and had a rectangular shape to the rest of it. The ship was a light brown all over and had twin engines near the bottom aft. Vunian was already roaring towards them and opening fire at the rather large craft. In fact its size was many times greater than a Jedi Starfighter`s. Nevertheless its shields did not hold out against the combined power of four starfighters. One of the engines blew apart sending debris all over. At this point the landing craft opened fire upon the starfighters. Vunian quickly barrel rolled to avoid the barrage of fire yet some of it still tested his shield strength. Luckily Vunian did not panic and his shields kept sturdy. Without a moments

hesitation he locked onto one of the other engines with his missiles and let it loose. The missile did not miss. In a huge explosion the final engine was ripped off of the Separatist ship.

“Nice job folks let’s go to the next one!” As Vunian spoke the landing craft plummeted to the hazy ground of Ylesia. Yet the pilots paid little attention to that event which they knew was inevitable as the engines also held the thrusters to help keep the ship aloft. Without them the ship would plummet. And that it did.

“This is Red 7 to red leader! We can’t hold out these fighters. There are too many!!!!”

“Break off!!!!,” hollered Vunian.

“Attempting to brea.....Ahhhhhhhh!!!!!!!!!!!!”

“Red 7, do you copy? Red 8,5,4?”

“None of them survived,” moaned Red 2, a female Bothan.

Vunian felt tears forming in his eyes. “Break off and head to the base Red Flight. We have no cover.”

With that Vunian once again dived towards the surface of Ylesia. He slowly began to pull up and head towards the makeshift Republic base. Inside of him he felt guilty. He knew those deaths were his fault. He should have realized it sooner that they couldn’t hold out. Yet he was too tied up in his own attack to notice. *A Jedi should not feel guilty because of the pass. Guilt helps nothing.* Yet this old Jedi lesson did not help Vunian in the least. To take it off of his mind he contacted the base to report.

“General Kenobi, this is General Vunian, come in.”

“I copy you,” spoke the Jedi Knight.

“Red Flight is returning. We have heavy casualties.”

Coruscant-Palpatine’s Office

General Cambini passed around Supreme Chancellor Palpatine’s office. The office walls were a blood red and a huge window was behind Palpatine’s desk. Outside it revealed Coruscant and its huge cities. At the moment the Chancellor sat there at the very moment, thinking over about what he had just been revealed.

“Ylesia is a lost hope, then?” asked the Chancellor.

The General nodded. He was an older man but not yet balding, a human whose looks always said “importance”. “Our forces are being pushed back into the Republic base. Within a few hours Ylesia will fall.”

Palpatine rose and his long robes hit the floor. “Then order a full retreat. I will have no more loss of life.”

“Immediately, Chancellor.”

Ylesia

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Rince Vunian carefully landed his starfighter at the Republic port near the base. He hopped out and revealed himself as a young handsome male human with a ponytail that went just a little bit below his shoulders. His Jedi robes flew up in the wind as he jumped down. Rince jogged forward towards the base when he saw it explode in a huge ball of fire. Pieces of metal flew away from the base creating mass destruction near the outskirts of the base.

Rince grabbed his comlink and tried to contact General Kenobi. “Kenobi, do you read?”

“Yes. I survived the explosion easily. You know the tricks.”

“All to well, General. Should I get my folks to the Evac ships?”

“At once. May the Force be With You.”

“And you, General.”

Rince looked back at the Jedi Knights that were with him. “All right, let’s head to the Evac ships!” They didn’t argue. They would be insane to, Vunian thought. We have no chances here.

At that moment the ground in front of him exploded.

Ord Mantell

Jedi Knight Zair Dashin glanced around the downtrodden Cantina. Actually, it is rather “uptrodden” compared to the others, he thought. Zair was a Zabrak male, humanoid, with several blunt horns on top of his head. “Bartendddddd, “ he managed to slur out. “Another Corrrrrrellian Allllle. And makkkke ittt faster damn it!!!!”

The bartender gave him a weird look but got the drink anyhow. And he did it fast.

Zair glanced around the room again. He was dressed in a smugglers outfit as a disguise for his undercover mission, which was to seek out Separatist information on their new bases. One, which was rumored to be on Ord Mantell itself. The planet of Ord Mantell was beautiful in some areas and dirty in others. Unfortunately information was always in the dirty section.

“Get up.” Zair turned to look at the speaker. A female human stood behind him with a blaster pistol in hand.

“Cannnnnnnnnn I hhhelppp...p...p you,” he managed.

“Outside. NOW.”

Zair stood. “I don’t think so.” With that he removed his lightsaber and activated it. “Bad move assuming I was drunk, dear.” With that he cut the blaster neatly in two and gave the woman a hard shove in the stomach. He picked her up and dragged her out onto

the empty street just outside of the Cantina. “Now, what seems to be the problem?” The woman tried to struggle out of his grip and failed. “Who are you working for and how did they know who I was, huh? C’mon spill it.”

“Dooku. He is here. On Ord Mantell. I received an order to capture you and kill you only if necessary. That is all.”

“Great. People like you make my job so enjoyable. I appreciate it. Oh, and give Dooku my regards, Tell him I’ll call him up the next time I’m in the area.” With that he let her go and he stood back up. Now that he knew that there was indeed a base here it was time to inform the Jedi Council of it. He walked causally down the streets to his ship waiting in Docking Bay 12. Zair glanced back and saw that the Bounty Hunter had left. No doubt she would leave the plant as soon as possible fearing the wrath of the Separatist leader Dooku. Zair shook his head in disgust. Some people...

Ylesia

Rince went flying forward and prepared himself for the hard landing. He curled up into a ball and rolled once he hit the ground.

“A droid bomber,” said one of the Jedi, “Red 2” from behind him. She hurried up next to him. “The others are all dead.” A sick feeling grew in Vunian’s stomach.

“The Evac ships aren’t far. Let’s hurry!” he said as they both hurried off to the Escape Ships.

Ord Mantell

Jedi Master Yoda appeared in Zair Dashin’s cockpit, via a hologram. The squat, green Jedi Master looked grim in response to Dashin’s news that a Separatist base was on Ord Mantell.

“Getting closer to the core they are,” stated Yoda. “Dangerous this can be.”

“Without a doubt,” replied Dashin. “I will infiltrate it if you like but I will need help.”

Master Yoda nodded. “This I can give you.”

It was with great amusement that Rince Vunian walked down the streets of Ord Mantell to meet Zair Dashin. He had paired up with Zair not more than a year or so ago to arrest several pirates that were raiding ships on the Outer Rim. To stay the least it was non-stop fooling around on Zair's part. He had seen Zair quite often around the Jedi Temple after that mission. Zair was a definite example of a Jedi on the edge.

Ahead of Vunian stood Zair waving his hands to get his (or some woman's) attention. Vunian ran up to him and greeted him with a "hello" and a broad smile.

"Vunian!! How are you?" asked Zair loudly.

"You *know* that I prefer be called "Rince"."

"So Vunian it is!"

Vunian just rolled his eyes in response. "So what are we up against?"

"Well, to be quite truthful I don't really know. All that I know is that a Separatist base is here. Are mission is to infiltrate it and figure out the threat. Oh and aren't you supposed to be at Ylesia?"

Vunian frowned. "Well the Separatists attacked Ylesia. We lost. After we evacuated I was informed that I should meet you here. Master Yoda didn't want us to attack yet. He felt that we should get information on surrounding info on other Separatist bases in the area. Once we obtain this info the Republic will attack."

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“Well I’m excited,” replied Zair.

Vunian just sighed.

It was late in the evening when the two Jedi headed to their hotel rooms.

Vunian and Dashin had tried to get information on the Separatist outpost during the course of the day. Unfortunately they had discovered nothing.

Vunian sighed as he slid into bed later that night. “Well at least we know it is probably not around here.”

Zair nodded. “Without a doubt we have made some progress. I mean an entire outpost can’t go unnoticed unless it is really small. In that case it may not be much of a threat. Besides who can lie to a face like mine, eh?”

“I think your face would make them tell the truth but it wouldn’t be from good looks. More like sheer terror. Poor folks.”

“Perhaps. Or maybe you’re just jealous.”

Vunian rolled his eyes. “Oh, bang on. Now head to bed.”

“No goodnight kiss?” he chuckled.

“Errrrr...”

“I’ll take that as a no.”

“Good. Now I must SLEEP!!!!!!”

“Yes, sir.”

“Thank you. We will start our search a little later in the morning than usually.”

“Why?”

“For two reasons. Anyone with decent info will still be asleep and two, I’m tired.”

“That is not very Jedi like of you.”

“Many of my friends were murdered today. I am quite exhausted.”

“I’m quite sorry about that,” Zair said truthfully.

“Besides,” continued Vunian, “who are you to talk about being like a Jedi?”

Zair just laughed.

“Indeed.” And with that Vunian went to sleep.

Ylesia

Ezzan, a Dark Jedi Knight, surveyed the wreckage of the Republic base. He smiled. Sweet victory, he thought. With the amount of Jedi dead it would make his job much easier.

“This is Ezzan to Defera, do you copy?” He paced back and forth waiting for her reply. His short dark hair blew in the wind but his harsh face showed no emotion whatsoever.

“What is it, Ezzan?” Defera answered crisply.

“I count ten Jedi dead. Unfortunately Vunian is not among them.”

“Did you really expect him to be? He is too good to die easily.”

“You’d be surprised at how many well trained Jedi meet a swift end.”

“I didn’t say it wouldn’t be swift,” she retorted. “Just not...easy. Nevertheless Dooku will be happy at the progress we made. This is exactly what he wanted. We are set to dig, correct?”

“Yes. Send down the machines.” Ezzan clicked off the comlink and approached OHH-8, the commanding droid. OHH-8 was skinny looking and had a snouted

face plate. Only the gold markings on him distinguished him from the other Battle Droids. “The diggers are under your command OHH-8. Be careful.”

“Yes, sir,” his mechanical voice responded.

Ezzan just nodded in response and hurried back to his transport.

Part Two: Infiltration

Ord Mantell

Early the next morning (much to Vunian’s dissatisfaction) the two Jedi headed out once again to seek out information. They visited each of the Cantinas near their hotel yet found out little to no information. Just vague rumors and such. As they started to head out of the area though the information began to get a little more useful. At first just little things. Like “Yes, I am pretty sure there is a base in the Northern hemisphere, though the government has denied it.” Then later on: “I’ve seen strange things near Guhad City. Many strange things.” This rumor they heard many times.

“Take us to Guhad City, please,” Zair asked the Taxi driver after they stood waiting for one for a while.

“That is a long ways from here, sir,” said the Taxi Driver, a female Rodian.
“I cannot take you that far. You will need to take the hover train.”

The two Jedi stayed on the hover train for about three hours and they then got off and found themselves in Guhad City.

“I don’t see the city,” commented Zair. Nor was there much of a city to speak of. The “City” was rural and had large farms and mansions yet only a little of industry and business. About ten or so kilometers away loomed extraordinarily tall mountains. When the Jedi looked up at them he couldn’t even see the tops.

“Well, I rather like it,” stated Zair.

“As do I,” replied Vunian. “Yet it doesn’t seem as if the Separatists will be in the cities. It is likely we will have to head to the mountains.”

Zair nodded In agreement. “Fun, fun, fun hiking. Y’know this is where the adventure is. Straining our legs and such. It really doesn’t get...”

“Oh, do shut up.”

“By your command, my lord.”

Vunian nodded. “Just keep that up. I like that attitude.”

“Don’t get used to it.”

“Oh here we go.”

“You started it.”

“Now really, SHUT UP!!!”

Their bickering continued as they walked down the streets to find a store where they could get hiking gear. The streets were empty of people and up ahead was a small little store that looked as if it could supply them with there needs. They then turned to approach the store. As they walked in they were still bickering.

“Zair, there is no need for this! We are Jedi. We should be at peace.”

“Oh you know I’m only kidding,” responded Zair. With that he walked up to the cashier. “Hello I’m wondering if you have any excellent hiking gear.”

The cashier, a female Gran, looked up and noticed Zair’s lightsaber hanging from his belt. “Oh, your one of *them*. Why should I help *you*?”

Zair smiled. “Because I have a lightsaber and can cut off your head. I would then proceed to march around town with it and scream “Bring out ya heads!” good enough for you?”

The cashier mumbled a curse but brought them out the gear they requested. The two Jedi thanked the cashier and left.

“You always handle things so well,” chuckled Vunian to Zair as the two left.

“Thanks!”

Coruscant-Palpatine’s Office

It was nearing nightfall on Coruscant. Many of the cities skyscrapers had already turned on their lights. Most people were returning home. They did not include the Supreme Chancellor and his staff. They all sat in his red colored office in a briefing that would decide the course of actions that would decide what types of action would be taken over the next few days.

“Another strike? That I can understand. But this attack that you are proposing could take out civilians,” General Cambini was explaining to the Supreme Chancellor, himself. “I realize that you and the Senate want to strike back quickly but an attack on the factories on Garqi? The civilians of that planet are near the factories. Many of them can be harmed if we let an all out attack.”

Supreme Chancellor Palpatine turned away from looking out the window, his face neutral yet Cambini knew that he had to have been frustrated at the losses that the Republic had been taken. But rash action helped nothing.

Palpatine looked straight at the General. “Did innocent lives ever stop the Separatists before? Need I name the battles? General, we are not attacking Civilians. Some of them may get hurt but nevertheless that should not halt our progression into Separatist space.”

General Kit Fisto, a Jedi, unlike Cambini stood up his, green tentacles waving. “Sir,” he began, “should we not concentrate on defense? If the Separatists launch another assault it may be difficult to fend them off if our forces are elsewhere. Besides, the factories on Garqi are not the only ones the Separatists had. It would not make a difference overall.”

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“I disagree,” replied the Chancellor. “It would show that we are not afraid to take the battle right to them.”

Cambini shot back up. “Garqi is not *that* close to Zeneb, the Separatists HQ. It would hurt them but not badly enough that it would change the course of the war, as General Fisto has already said.”

The Chancellor turned back to look out the window. “Nevertheless, give the order to attack Garqi.”

“What of the Civilians,” asked Fisto, from his seat.

“We are not going out of our way to hurt them, General yet some maybe hurt or killed anyhow. This is war after all.”

Cambini shook his head. “Sir, we can face heavy losses there and if...”

“Give the order,” interrupted Palpatine.

“Sir, you have to understand that...”

“Do it.”

“With all do...”

“STAND DOWN, GENERAL!!! If I have to, I’ll give the order myself.

Is that understood, General Cambini?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then give the order.”

“No, sir.”

“Get out of my office, Cambini!” yelled the Chancellor. “You are henceforth to report to General Fisto. There is no longer any need for you to come here. Understood?”

“Yes, sir.”

Ord Mantell

The Jedi had been hiking up the mountain trail for several hours. The trail was often hard to navigate due to the immense amounts of plant life.

Nevertheless the two Jedi continued their hike even if they were forced to make a long detour.

“Y’know what is bothering me,” asked Vunian as he walked.

“You forgot to shave, *again* !?” Zair replied pretending to sound shocked.

“What do you mean “again”?”

“Never mind. So what is it?”

“Well the shopkeeper was back in the town. There seems to be hatred towards the Jedi or the Republic or both. It may be that the Separatists are sending false information around.” Vunian sighed. “It never ends, does it? These damn political ideas getting

sent around. And then from politics to war. It makes so little sense. I see little hope that the Confederacy will be eager to join back up at the end of the war. Join up with the Republic that is.”

Zair kept silent as they continued to walk, pondering what Vunian had said. Finally he spoke. “There is more to this than we think. There *has* to be. Even the Council knows. Something big is happening, Vunian. Something VERY big.”

Ylesia

The Following Day

Ezzan stood before the holographic figure of Defera. She was transmitting from Zeneb, the capitol of the Separatists.

Defera was, like Ezzan, a Jedi Padawan who had been turned to the dark side by Count Dooku either shortly before or after the before the Battle of Geonosis. Yet Defera was the more powerful of the two and Ezzan and Defera both knew it. She was, on top of that, a beautiful woman with long black hair. Her face was always neutral unless she was extremely angry. She wore a black cape around her clothes, which concealed her lightsaber.

Ezzan wore an almost identical outfit and it made him look like he was gliding when he walked.

“We have dug down twenty-five kilometers!” he was saying. “Does Dooku want us to go deeper still?”

“Yes,” replied Defera. “Another ten should be fine.”

Ezzan shook his head. “It will take a very long time to get down another ten kilometers. It gets harder to dig the farther we go down.”

Defera smiled. “But you *can* do it, can you not?”

“Yes.”

“Excellent.”

Ord Mantell

Rince Vunian reached the top of the mountains only a few seconds after Zair McDashin did.

“Ha! Beat ya!” bragged Zair.

“Yes you did. Your ego is quite bigger than mine. Congratulations.”

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“I take this award with great honor and would like to say that it was all ME. No one else.”

“Oh, here we go.”

“What?”

Vunian just ignored him and looked down the opposite side of the mountain that they had climbed up on. All that he could see was more green life. Nothing even remotely dangerous looking. Yet something still felt wrong.

“Something is definitely wrong here,” spoke Vunian. “Something dark is here Zair. Do you sense it too?”

“Yes. There is a disturbance in the Force. No doubt about that.”

Zair moved forward to look down. “Wait. A disturbance in the bushes. Right th...”

Zair was cut off by a blaster bolt that flew towards them. Then the shooter revealed it self: a Super Battle Droid. It was tall, about the size of a human male. On each arm was a repeating blaster. The Droid was green unlike most of the Super Battle Droids, which were usually blue. This one was green no doubt to camouflage itself. Nevertheless the Jedi reacted swiftly. The both ignited their green lightsabers, ready to deflect any bolts shot at them. As they ignited their blades they ran down towards the droid. It continued to fire rapidly at them as they approached. Both Jedi easily deflected the bolts that were sent towards them. With Vunian’s free hand he Force pushed the droid forward. The Droid landed on the ground with a thump and Vunian plunged his lightsaber right in the middle of it.

“No doubt they know we are hear now,” said Zair.

“Let’s move forward,” replied Vunian, “and hopefully get them off our tracks. At the same time let us see if we can locate the Separatist Base.” With that the two Jedi hurried forward.

Jork Hinnk was quite drunk when his aide, a Gran like himself, came in.

The aide, shocked at Jork’s state ran over too him. Like most Gran Jork had three eyes protruding from his face and his skin was a brownish color. The aide shook Jork. “Sir, we are at Ord Mantell we are scheduled to meet with the Separatist leader here! It wouldn’t look good if we were late!” The aide then gave Jork some water to drink. “Come sir we most hurry and go!” The aide grabbed Jork and began to help him up when Jork came out of his drunken stupor.

“To the Separatist Base!” Jork declared. “But first, one more drink.”

“But, sir!!!”

“A ship!” declared Zair. Over there.”

“Where,” asked Vunian as they descended the mountain.

“There!!”

“Where is there?!”

“There is over there!!!”

Vunian put a hand to his head and sighed. “Point to it,” he ordered. “And not vaguely.” Zair complied. “Oh,” responded Vunian. “That small craft down at the base of the mountain.”

“Well I don’t see another,” replied Zair.

“That is it! From now on you can’t talk!”

“What if it is an emergency?”

“Only then.” Vunian then began to jog down the mountain towards the craft. “Let’s approach it from the back. I’m sure there is a back entrance. At least I’m pretty sure.”

Zair shook his head mockingly.

“Oh be quiet, you,” Vunian mocked back.

A few minutes later the Jedi duo crawled behind the rather bland craft. Both Vunian and Zair ignited their lightsabers and sliced through the back of the ship.

The two climbed through the hole into a dimly lit room where two Gran stood.

“Who are you?” asked one of the Gran.

“A person with a lightsaber,” responded Zair. “Now who are you?”

The Gran laughed. “And why should I tell you?” Zair brought up his lightsaber and the Gran took two steps back. Vunian just smiled.

“I’d talk,” Vunian said after a moment of tense silence.

The Gran finally spoke. “I am Jork Hinnk, a representative of the Gran colony of Uhj IV.”

“Why are you here?” asked Vunian.

“To talk with the Separatist leader here about an alliance.”

Zair beamed. “Oh really? Perhaps, if you would just step into the bridge and activate your recording unit, we’ll let you live.”

The Commander of the Separatist forces on Ord Mantell was Fugh Wirs, a rather heavy Munn. Like all Munn he had a thin face compared to humans yet heavy to his own race. His skin was a dirty brown and he had little hair to speak of. Fugh Wirs had been assigned to Command Ord Mantell after leading a successful assault on Woik II. Count Dooku thought him good enough a commander to be able to lead the forces hidden on Ord Mantell.

Or at least that is what Fugh bragged. In fact Count Dooku, the leader of the Separatists thought Fugh incompetent and that the only reason he succeeded at Woik II was due to overwhelming forces on the side of the Separatists. He then placed Fugh on Ord Mantell, as it was a job any military Commander could do. Then once the forces of Ord Mantell were needed Dooku would assign another commander.

Yet there was something Fugh was good at: he was an excellent diplomat. Thus he had been asked to organize a treaty with the Gran from Uhj IV. Therefore when one of the guards stated that two men, one a human the other a Zabrak, were coming up, he was quite surprised. The Munn immediately started hollering that there was no report of any humans coming; just Gran and that this could be a breach of security. The guard then responded that the humans were the diplomats from Uhj IV as the Gran diplomats had become rather ill. They even had a recording to show that they were who they said they were. Fugh nodded to himself thinking he had done a fine job in a situation that had almost become a crisis.

A few seconds later two men dressed in Gran robes stepped out of the turbolift that brought them up to Fugh's chambers. His chambers were rather large with a huge table in the middle for feasting and several rather comfortable looking sofas. Fugh proceeded to invite the two men to take a seat at the table.

"A feast!" said the Zabrak in delight. "Oh, I'm so hungry, too! Thank you so much."

Fugh cleared his throat to call attention to himself (which was not unusual). "So I gather that you would like to feast. Excellent. I will call for the food at once." With that he hurried over to the comlink and asked his butler to bring up the main course at once.

"Nice place you have here," said the human.

"The only thing nice here is the food," responded the Zabrak rudely. "The place certainly needs some decorating. So why are we her Foo?"

"It's, Fugh," Fugh said.

"Uh huh. Sure."

"We are here so we don't alert ourselves to any Republic forces in the area. Once we are ready we can strike at some of the worlds closer to the core from here. The Republic would never suspect it. Hell, we can even hit Bimmial from here. The Republic has a nice stronghold there." Fugh leaned closer to the two "diplomats". "Actually rumor has it that we plant strike at Bimmial next!"

The Zabrak shrugged. “Old news really. The Republic has figured that out for awhile now.”

“Oh.”

The human leaned forward. “But let’s start bargaining.”

“But the food is just arriving,” complained Fugh as the butler came in and placed the food down. “Must we start so soon?”

“Yes.”

Fugh sighed. “If you insist. We, as in the Separatists, are willing to give you protection from the Republic by placing several fortresses on your Colony world. But not only that, you will receive all that you need from us unlike what you got from the Republic. All your needs will be supplied to you.”

The Zabrak laughed. “What a load of...”

The human cut him off with a glare and then returned his gaze back to Fugh. “And what is it that you want in return?”

Fugh leaned back in his chair. “Loyalty. Some of your resources. Here is the exact agreement,” he answered as he pushed several papers toward the human. The human then looked them over and pushed them back to Fugh.

“No deal,” said the human as he stood up. “Oh, and one more thing. You’re under arrest.” With that both of the Jedi stood and ignited their lightsabers.

Coruscant-Palpatine's Office

Master Yoda sat as he listened to Supreme Chancellor Palpatine speak about the planning of the defense of Bimmiel.

“Where,” the Chancellor was saying, “is Rince Vunian? I believe he could be of use to us. He is an excellent General. Unlike some Jedi Knights he knows how to Command.”

Master Yoda straightened. “Made to be Commanders, Jedi are not.”

The Chancellor nodded. “But may you call him back to Coruscant as soon as possible. In the mean time General Fisto will be on Bimmiel until Vunian arrives. Can you do that for me Master Yoda?”

“No.”

“What? What do you mean?” Palpatine was quite surprised but managed not to show it.

“On a more important mission he is.”

“But Bimmiel is more important.”

“Few live on Bimmiel. Evacuated they can be. The people of Ord Mantell, evacuated they cannot be.”

“Very well. But do not let him stay there longer than is necessary. We need him as soon as is possible.”

Ord Mantell

Rince Vunian could tell that Fugh had believed their lies with no suspicion. It was a wonder that he was still in command. Yet this was not the time to examine the Confederacy’s reasons for its actions. Vunian went forward and lifted Fugh from his seat.

“All right, Fugh, I need you to destroy this facility. Immediately. Then I need you to send out a false message to Zeneb saying that there was an overload in one of your larger war machines and that several chain reactions completely obliterated the entire facility. Then, of course I’m sure you will find the time to kiss up to them, I’ve no doubt of that. Unless of course you blow up this facility and come with us back to Coruscant and make it look like you were a traitor. Now before you decide just remember how much of a forgiving man Count Dooku is before you make your decision, all right?”

Fugh looked like he was ready to vomit. He eventually managed to gather up the strength to nod his head and say, “I’ll do as you say. But I will not return with you to Coruscant, I will stay here. None of you damn Force users we pull me away

from my duty. Count Dooku will have his revenge on the people of Ord Mantell. Mark my words on that.”

Vunian smiled. “I doubt that.” He turned to Zair. “Zair, issue a message to the Republic that we need a fleet to come to Ord Mantell to protect it from a Separatist attack. It doesn’t have to be a big one. There are plenty of other Republic planets near here that can come and help push back the Separatists.” He turned back to Fugh. “Now, go and issue the self destruct.” Fugh nodded and entered in a few codes on his computers.

“Done,” he muttered.

“Excellent,” smiled Vunian. “Now let’s wait for the boom.”

Zair, back from sending the message, slowly crept behind Fugh. “BOOM!” he screamed. Fugh jumped and Zair chuckled. Vunian just smiled and shook his head.

A few seconds later the ground shook. “That was it,” said Fugh in defeat. “Now please leave.”

Vunian smiled. “There is no escape. The Republic will be here soon. Oh, and if you don’t transmit that message I can’t promise you much hospitality when the Republic gets you.”

With that the two Jedi left.

Part Three: Error

Coruscant-Palpatine's Office-Night

General Kit Fisto hurried into the Chancellors office, something he did not usually do. "Sir, I have urgent news."

The Chancellor looked up. "What is it, General? A problem?"

Fisto took a seat and began his story. "Only a few minutes ago we received a transmission from Ord Mantell. It was from Jedi Knights McDashin and Vunian. They informed us to send a fleet to Ord Mantell as they had destroyed the base there but fear that retribution might come swiftly from the Separatists."

The Chancellor nodded. "Very well. Send two assault ships."

"That is the problem, sir. Before the message reached us. A Separatist fleet intercepted it. They are at Ord Mantell already. The Separatists have blocked it." Fisto sighed. "If we send a fleet there we can face heavy loses. The Separatists can face those loses yet we can't."

The Chancellor stood. “I see. Ord Mantell will receive no help I’m afraid. We cannot spare the resources. You may announce that to the public in the morning.”

Ord Mantell

The Jedi had reached the city that evening and were prepared to head back to Coruscant when several things went wrong.

“Oh, Sithspit!” yelled Vunian. Above the city loomed a huge Separatist spacecraft. It was donut shaped with a large Control Bridge in the middle forming a sphere. From the hangers on the craft the Jedi could see Droid Starfighters depart the ship. “We gotta get out of here and fast. If they find us here no telling what they will do to Ord Mantell.”

“Vunian.” Zair had stopped in the middle of the street.

“It’s too late.”

The lone Separatist craft was joined by many others like it. With those came landing crafts filled with droids ready to conquer Ord Mantell. Then came the Ion Cannons.

Giant blue energy shot down from the sky and destroyed the nearby mountains so to destroy any hidden Republic station that was not discovered by the incompetent Fugh. Then the energy hit the Separatist base. No doubt to kill Fugh and the others in league with him due to their failure. The base exploded in a huge fireball that seemed to engulf the entire mountain.

“By the Force,” muttered Vunian. “They are destroying everything near here. They hope to kill us and in doing so killing thousands of innocents.”

Zair was too horrified to respond.

“We have to turn ourselves in,” said Vunian. “It is the only way to stop this massacre.”

“I agree,” replied Zair. “Let’s contact them from our ship.” With that they hurried down the streets trying to get to their ships before the Ion blasts reached the city.

“Separatist Command Ship, this is Jedi Knight

Rince Vunian. Do you copy?” Rince leaned towards the comlink apprehensively. Giving himself

up to the Separatists was quite nerve-racking. Yet his thoughts traveled elsewhere a second later.

“Hello, Rince. What a pleasant, surprise,” replied a female voice.

“I know you. Who?”

“I was once a Jedi. You know me as Padawan Durin. But know I am Dark Lady Defera of the Separatists.”

Zair stepped forward. “You are not transmitting from the Command Ship. You have a separate craft. Why are you landing it here? A little risky isn’t it?”

Vunian sighed. “You’ve never seen her fight.”

Defera laughed. “Once we got word that you were on Ord Mantell, I didn’t waste a moment coming here. Now come greet me.”

Defera’s shuttle settled down only a few seconds later but the Jedi were already there, waiting for her. The ramp on her shuttle slowly descended onto the circular platform, which was seventy meters above ground with only a two-meter high railing to prevent one from falling off.

“We don’t want to fight you Defera,” spoke Vunian. “We are here to surrender.” The two Jedi placed their sabers on the ground. Defera smiled.

“I don’t want you as my prisoners. I want you dead.” With that she activated her double-sided lightsaber. Both sides shone red energy blades. She twirled it and charged at the Jedi.

Both Rince and Zair called upon the Force and their lightsabers came to them and they activated the blades. With no words they went into a defensive stance ready to take on Defera. Words were now useless. No words the two Jedi said could stop Defera.

The three met and both Jedi blocked her swing. As the blades hit a crackle filled the air. Rince jumped up and behind Defera but she swung one part of her blade behind her back to block his swings. There was no doubt that Defera was the one on the offensive. Rince tried to change this. He hit the ground rolling and swung at Defera’s legs as Zair swung at her head. Defera easily placed her blade in a position to block both strikes.

Soon the three were nearing the edge of the platform and Defera was still on the offensive. Rince swung at her head from above yet she easily blocked the attack. Then it began to rain. The rain caused the lightsabers to crackle even more yet the Jedi and Defera did not seem to notice. The fighting did not slow in the least bit. Both Zair and Rince had their backs to the railings as Defera kept pushing them forward. Her

attacks were swift and powerful. The Jedi blocked all of her attacks yet were not able to slash at her.

With a jump and a kick she sent Zair flying into the rail. Yet Zair hopped back up and regained his position. He slashed at her legs and caught her off balance. The Dark Jedi had to jump back and she suddenly found herself on the defensive. Then the rain came down harder. Soon visibility was terrible but yet again the Jedi and the Dark Jedi were not affected. The battle still raged on. A constant blocking and parrying as they crossed to the other side of the platform. Rince and Zair continued to push Defera farther back. Rince slid onto the ground and chopped at her legs. She blocked the attack, but only barely. A worried expression crossed her face, for only a moment. She was beginning to lose. She had to do something.

But Rince did something first. He launched himself at her and kicked her to the ground. She felt the Force and pushed him back and he stumbled. Defera quickly regained her balance but Zair kicked her in the face and she smashed into the railing. Zair ran forward but she kicked him and he went flying over the railing.

He grabbed onto part of it and jumped back onto the other side. Rince and her were already sparring when he regained his balance.

Rince feinted to the left and then slashed at Defera from the right. She quickly blocked but he was already attacking again. The lightsabers hit each other again and again in a beautiful display of green and red.

Suddenly Defera smiled and began to laugh. “You cannot win. Not with so many others on my side.” At that moment she put all of her strength into a slash that pushed Vunian to the ground. She smiled again and then slashed at him. He rolled but not before the blade sliced into his arm and blood poured out. Defera laughed yet again.

Star Wars

Victory Quest II:

Storm

Part One: Council

Place: Zeneb, the Separatist Capitol

7 1/2 weeks after TBoG

Count Dooku strode into the meeting chamber, his black cloak flowing behind him.

He was a man nearing a hundred but didn't look it. His face was long and his beard was white.

In front of him stood the leaders of the Separatists. Dooku sat down in a chair at the head of the table.

“Welcome to Zeneb, my friends. This is the capitol of the Confederacy!” Dooku smiled. “I have good news. Our forces have swept through the Republic base on Ylesia. A victory as I promised you,” he said in his elegant and reassuring voice. “Soon enough the Republic will realize that they are in over their heads.”

Viceroy Nute Gunray of the Trade Federation, a green Neimoidian with large red eyes, objected. “The Republic forces are strong enough to take us down soon! I for one sincerely doubt that we will be able to hold our own, let alone force the Republic to surrender.”

Dooku leaned forward. “You worry too much, Viceroy.”

“I concur with the Viceroy,” spoke Shu Mai a small narrow headed alien who was the leader of the Commerce Guild. “There are times when I wonder if I was conned into this. Would that be so, Lord Dooku?”

Dooku stood. “This is outrageous! We are on the edge of victory. In a matter of months the Republic will be brought down to their knees and we can have what we want: a galaxy free of Republic corruption. Even now members of the Senate wonder what to do. In due time more will join us. In every victory by us, Supreme Chancellor Palpatine loses more power.”

Shu Mai shook her head. “That is not so. The Chancellor is very well liked by citizens of the Republic. He is, in their minds at least, a strong leader.”

Dooku sat back down. He always hated the way Shu Mai never trusted his word. “Perhaps you are right. But I think that we can eliminate that problem soon enough. As I said before, the Jedi will be brought down in only a matter of time. And with that the Republic will fall soon after.”

“But how?” inquired Shu Mai.

Dooku just smiled.

Ord Mantell

Rince Vunian's arm hurt and looking at the blood coming from it didn't make matters any better. Yet he knew that he had to get himself together.

Defera slashed out at him again as Vunian called upon the Force and jumped backwards as he called his light saber to his left hand. The blade felt odd there but he knew that his right hand was in no condition to hold it.

Not far from him he could see Zair charging forward.

Defera turned and slashed out at the Zabrak, Zair McDashin. The Zabrak blocked the swing, his green lightsaber shining and sparkling as the rain hit it.

The battle had been going on for only a few minutes on top of a landing platform yet in those two minutes the skies of Ord Mantell went from cloudy to stormy. Nevertheless the three opponents did not notice.

Vunian ran at Defera's back but she blocked his swing with the right end of her blade and then swung at Zair with the left. Zair hopped back and Defera fell forward. Zair brought his knee up into her face and she stumbled backwards.

Vunian noticed something odd. A soft hum. He glanced up and saw that another transport was arriving. No doubt filled with droids to help Defera. "Zair! We have to take her ship," shouted Vunian. With Defera regaining her composure the two Jedi had a moment to take her ship. They jumped up onto the ramp and closed up the doors.

Vunian sank to the floor as he nursed his wounds. "I'm going to find some Bacta to heal this wound. See if you can pilot us out of here."

Zair grinned. “No problem.” He hurried into the cockpit and engaged his thrusters. The shuttle took off, leaving Defera behind.

“I was actually a little nervous back there,” Zair said to Vunian as the wounded Jedi came into the cockpit. On his hurt arm a Bacta patch was attached. “How’s that working?”

Vunian nodded. “It’s fine. I’ll meditate later on but I wanted to make sure everything was all right.”

Zair pointed out of the cockpit window. “Well as you can see we are in hyperspace. So go get some rest.”

Vunian stood and headed out. “Thanks for helping me out back there. I’d give you a hug but with the arm and all...”

Zair frowned mockingly. “Well I guess a couple of drinks later on will have to do.”

8 weeks after TBoG

Coruscant- The Jedi Temple

Obi-Wan Kenobi stood before the Jedi Council. Only a few minutes ago he was called to come to them to discuss an urgent matter. An hour ago the Jedi Council had

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received a message from the Supreme Chancellor of the Republic. His agents had found a safe passage for a single Jedi Knight to infiltrate the Confederacy homeworld of Zeneb. On Zeneb were many of the Confederacy's Droid factories. All of which were to be destroyed by the single Jedi Knight that was to enter the capitol. It was Obi-Wan's lucky day.

The human Jedi Master, Mace Windu outlined the plan for him. "You are going to go in as an aide to Senator Hyit. Hyit is planning to defect to the Confederacy but once we learned of this we decided that this might work to our advantage. The Republic has apprehended Hyit's current aide and you are going to be the replacement. As far as Hyit knows his aide was arrested for smuggling spice. Count Dooku has invited Hyit to Zeneb to discuss arrangements on how Hyit and his people are going to join the Confederacy. While this is happening we want you to sabotage the Droid Factories."

Obi-Wan stroked his orange beard and looked out of the windows that lined the circular chamber. Outside hundreds of airspeeders flew around through the cities of Coruscant. Some of the Skyscrapers were thousands of feet tall yet when one looked out of the windows from the Council chambers most of the buildings looked smaller. Yet at this time they looked beautiful as night fell and the buildings lit up.

"How am I to destroy or sabotage the factories?" Obi-Wan asked. Master Yoda chuckled in response and Mace leaned back in his chair.

"That is up to you Master Kenobi."

Zeneb

Right. Left. Right. Left. The two droids that accompanied Count Dooku walked in perfect harmony together. They were tall and skeletal. They were the Confederacy's Battle Droids. Count Dooku had them assigned to him as guards only to look as if he needed protection. There was no doubt in the old man's mind that he could take care of himself.

He harbored no fears as he walked into the Council of the Confederacy's Hall.

"Hello, my friends," Dooku spoke as he walked into the room. "I've just received conformation that Dantooine is ours. We only have Bimmiel left to secure and then we will have a firm grip on this section of the galaxy."

Shu Mai stood. "Well it is about time! My forces are getting massacred on Tobis Prime!!!"

Dooku grinned as he sat down at the chair at the head of the table. "If you recall, Shu Mai, I told you that Tobis Prime would not fall."

"And I said it would if I had the whole of the Confederacy's forces behind me," Shu Mai retorted. "You refused."

"It is not important that Tobis Prime fall. But I'm sure you are well aware of that Shu Mai. Perhaps because of an enemy of yours calls Tobis Prime his homeworld. Perhaps that swayed your...plans." Dooku let that sink in before he continued. "Now Viceroy Gunray, what news do you have for us of the assault on Bimmiel."

The nervous and bumbling Neimoidian, Nute Gunray, stood. “Our forces are well prepared for the assault. Our advantage is our overwhelming numbers. I believe...” He was cut off by Dooku who waved his hand.

“Overwhelming numbers are good, Viceroy, but I propose something else. The Republic has Bimmiel under its control for two reasons. One: They want a foothold in our space. Bimmiel supplies this as it is close to here. Two: There is a vast amount of ore on Bimmiel. The Republic is using this to benefit its war funds. But we can use this to our advantage. The ore is flammable. Therefore the Republic has it under heavy guard along with there mining tunnels. But I have a few agents who can change this.” He turned to San Hill. “What of our money supplies?”

The leader of the supposedly “neutral” Banking Clan leaned forward. “With Aargau’s resources under heavy suspicion it has been difficult to get many resources. But I’ve managed to gather a few.” San Hill grinned nastily.

Dooku nodded. “And what of our friends from The Coporate Alliance?”

Passel Argente raised his green head. “Unfortunately I haven’t been able to acquire what we need. But with a few more weeks we will be back on track.”

“I hope so,” put in Shu Mai. “We need everything we can get.”

“I realize that,” replied Argente coolly. “But not all of us have your resources at hand. Your resources that you *cheated* for, that is.”

Shu Mai raised an eyebrow. “I find your hypocrisy amusing.”

“That is enough,” stated Dooku. “I will hear no more of this bickering. With the Battle of Bimmiel approaching we will need those resources, though. Although I trust in Passel Argente.” He stood. “That will be all unless any of you have something to add.”

Nute Gunray raised his hand. “And what of these agents?”

“They do not concern you.”

Shuttle Craft-In route to Coruscant

Zair McDashin leaned back in the cockpit seat humming to himself quite loudly.

“Shut up, up there!” Vunian hollered.

“But it’s a good tune. Written by...oh what’s his face. Y’know.”

“DON’T know. DON’T care. I’m trying to rest.”

Zair smirked. “Oh yes. You hurt yourself.” He sighed. “We can’t take you anywhere. Hehe... What the Heck? Get up here!!”

Vunian jogged into the room. “What?” Then he saw it. Hundreds of Republic ships were in orbit around Coruscant. “Jeez, we must be planning for a big push.”

Zair nodded in agreement. “I wouldn’t be surprised. I’ve been expecting one.”

Part Two: Rehabilitation

Bimmiel-Republic HQ

Kit Fisto looked over the gray mountains of the planet Bimmiel. With Master Vunian still on a mission General Fisto was in charge of Bimmiel. Normally the Clone Commander 11-V-67 would be in command yet the Republic knew that Bimmiel was going to be under threat by Confederacy Forces soon. Fisto had made sure that Bimmiel was secured in every possible way. All of the mountains had several hundred Clone Troopers in each. Near the base dozens of AT-ST vehicles patrolled the area ready to lash out.

Yet Kit Fisto still knew something was wrong.

He had entered the mountain easily enough. Count Dooku's maps of the area and it's guards were perfect. It wouldn't be long now.

"11-V-67," called Fisto. "Something's wrong I can sense a disturbance through the Force."

He saw the Clone Troopers coming down at him and he activated his lightsaber.

“Sorry but I have no time to dawdle with you.”

Fisto leaned back against the wall as the Clone Commander spoke. “We are receiving no reports of any disturbances, sir. Are you sure that something is wrong?”

He saw them not far behind but he knew that the Clone Troopers would be dead in a matter of moments.

The Commander straightened. “Sir, we’ve lost contact with some of the mining squads.”

Fisto felt it. The ground shook. He looked out the window only to see a hellish mass of land.

“By the Force,” muttered Fisto. “Someone get me a communication with General Cambini.”

Coruscant

General Cambini was awoken when his doorbell rang. “Hello?”

“Captain Vernoff,” came a female voice.

“The General put on his robe. “Come in.”

“We have news, sir. I just...”

Cambini sighed. “Bimmie!”

Vernoff nodded, her braided hair bouncing. “The casualties are in the hundreds. A bomb went off and we have no clue how.”

Cambini took a seat. “What does General Fisto need?”

“You.”

Rince Vunian was in pain. The Medical Droid had informed him that the Bacta on the ship had a virus in it. Defera had apparently covered everything. The virus would bring a normal man to his knees but Vunian had the use of the Force and he was able to kill the virus within a day. It still hurt though. The new Bacta was helping but not enough.

“How are ya?” asked Zair from the chair he sat in.

“Just peachy,” replied Vunian from the bed. “I can’t believe that woman poisoned the Bacta. That witch.”

Zair leaned forward. “You knew her though. How?”

Vunian could never forget.

Vunian was almost in the clear to get to hyperspace but the Separatist craft was gaining. He turned hard starboard and instructed Gyan to do the same. Gyan was not far behind him yet the Separatist craft could hit Gyan before they could get the Jedi Knight. Laser fire ripped through space at the two Jedi. Vunian barrel rolled and prepared to jump to hyperspace. Then he saw Gyan break off and attack. In a few seconds him and his ship were ripped apart.

“When I was instructing several Padawan Learners on Namar there were two Students who betrayed me: Ezzan and Durin. But Durin changed her name to Defera I guess. Her and Ezzan were turned to the Dark Side by Dooku. Me and Gyan, the other Padawan made a getaway. But Defera and Ezzan killed Gyan in his craft before we escaped. Gyan was an excellent student. Kind and friendly.”

Zair smiled. “Kinda like me.”

“Not at all.” Vunian returned a smile. “Anyhow she’s an excellent duelist. And she did take us by surprise, though. I expect we will meet again before long.”

Zair frowned and leaned back. “And what of Ezzan?”

Ezzan shrugged. “Stupid Jedi. Insane? No. I have chosen the right path. The one where I can use my full talent!” Vunian shook his head. “You’re wrong. I’m sorry” With that Vunian sliced forward to knock Ezzan’s lightsaber away but Ezzan was too fast. He rolled to the side and sliced at Vunian’s thigh. Vunian twisted his saber around and easily blocked the attack. Ezzan stumbled back and Vunian took this chance to attack.

“Ezzan escaped before I could capture him.”

Ezzan snorted. It was the distraction Vunian had been waiting for. He jumped up and sliced through the traitor’s lightsaber hilt. Ezzan jumped back and ran. Vunian wanted to chase him down but he knew Gyan was running into trouble. Ezzan had known this too and had used this fact to escape without hassle once he began to lose.

“I would guess Ezzan is still out there. We may run into him, too.”

Zair stood and patted Vunian on the shoulder. “Get better my friend. May the Force be with you.”

“And you, my friend.”

Vunian rolled back onto his side and closed his eyes.

She smiled again and then slashed at him. He rolled but not before the blade sliced into his arm and blood poured out. Defera laughed yet again.

“Ah!” He shook his head. This is not happening now, he told himself. This is over. He closed his eyes and slept.

The Jedi Council met late that night. Master Yoda sat in the middle, Mace Windu to his left and Ki-Adi Mundi to his right. In the center of the room was a holographic image of Supreme Chancellor Palpatine via the Holonet.

“What has happened on Bimmiel?” asked Palpatine.

Mace Windu frowned. “Master Fisto has reported that about five hundred Clone Troopers were lost in a chain reaction of explosions in the mines. He and the rest of the Council, as well as I, believe that the Separatists are planning for an assault on Bimmiel within the week. Perhaps by tomorrow night the battle will have begun.”

Palpatine looked surprised. “I didn’t think that would attack so soon after the Battle of Ylesia. But I suppose that was foolish of me. Oh, how is Rince Vunian?”

Master Yoda smiled. “Doing well he is. A full recover is certain we feel, mmmmm.”

“But he will never be ready in time for Bimmiel. Yet I need Kit Fisto elsewhere. Oh, well. How about his partner, Zair McDashin? Is he well?”

Master Yoda nodded. “Fine he is.”

Palpatine smiled. “Quite excellent. I feared we were to lose yet another of our esteemed Jedi. Nevertheless we have many problems otherwise. Kit Fisto has just arrived at Bimmiel.

Only a few days before the attack, correct? He said of a problem at our cloning facilities on Kamino.”

“The problem has been eliminated,” replied Mace Windu. “It was a virus to which him and Aayla Secura found a cure for.”

The Supreme Chancellor nodded. “I never had time to discuss it with him, with the Battle of Ylesia and such. I am glad to hear that all is well. But no doubt another attack is imminent. Once Master Kenobi returns I shall post him there along with his Padawan Learner.”

“Excellent,” replied Mace Windu.

Zeneb

Everything had gone according to plan. Master Kenobi was inside the Separatist vase posing as an aide to the Senator.

Now night had fallen and he was in his room gathering his lightsaber and several explosives. The Droid Factories, he learned were easy enough to locate as one could hear them. Yet something still seemed wrong. It was all too easy.

He stepped out into the dark corridor and silently walked down to the elevator. Once inside he went as far down as it could go, but being an elevator opened to everyone it did

not go down to the Droid Factories. The doors opened to reveal a dark Lobby. The Jedi Knight stepped forwards and proceeded down another corridor.

Obi-Wan could tell something was definitely wrong. But then again he *was* on an enemy planet.

Down several flights of stairs and another elevator he found himself faced with an obstacle: a coded door. He stepped forward and took out his decoder and attached it onto the lock. No doubt this would take awhile, he thought to himself.

It didn't.

Obi-Wan stepped inside and activated his lightsaber, ready for any Droids that were guarding the area. There were none. He crept forward. The main control panel wasn't far.

And then the room exploded.

The room was a fake. Several Super Battle Droids came out of a back door and started firing at Obi-Wan who had been thrown across the room. He shot up and deflected a few shots back at one of the Droids with his glowing blue lightsaber.

It directly hit one of the Droids and the Droids dropped to the ground in a mess of circuits.

Two more were left.

Obi-Wan jumped up and sliced one of the droids in half as he came back down. Then he swung to the left and sliced the Droid's head clean off.

No doubt more are coming, he thought. I must get out of here.

Coruscant-The Jedi Temple

Rince Vunian sat before Jedi Master Mace Windu in the room of a thousand fountains.

“That moment has been in my dreams since I returned. I’ve meditated and tried calming techniques but I still have the nightmares.” Tears formed in Rince’s eyes. “And it wasn’t just some Dark Jedi. It was Durin. Or Defera. Some one I trusted sliced open my arm.”

Master Windu had listened in silence and finally spoke. “It is quite normal that you are depressed and, perhaps, even feeling responsible. It is not your fault, Master Vunian. Your depression will pass with time. It may not seem as if it will at the moment but it will be. The Force is with you Master Vunian. It will help you through this if you let it.”

“Indeed it will.” Master Shaak Ti placed her red hand onto Vunian’s shoulder. “I have lost many things in my time, my friend. One of them my Apprentice. I too felt responsible. But soon enough I learned that there was nothing I could have done.” Shaak Ti was a tall alien with several tentacles coming from her head and ending at half way down her back. Her face was red and always carried a happy expression.

Vunian nodded. “Yeah. But you caught your Apprentice’s killer. That witch, Defera, is still out there.”

Both of the Jedi nodded. “But there is nothing you can do,” replied Windu. “I’m sure her sudden appearance put you off guard. It would have done the same to me.

Vunian nodded and stood. “Thank you. Both of you. I’m gonna head back to my room.”

He walked down the stairs and back into the corridors. If I ever find her, he thought, I’d kill her. No matter what the cost.

“Don’t be stupid and vow vengeance,” spoke Zair who was leaning against the wall waiting for Vunian. “I can sense what you’re thinking. You are literally shouting it.”

Vunian twirled to face Zair. “And what would you know?! She didn’t slice your arm open!”

“No. But she sliced yours open. And that is reason enough for me to want to kill her.”

Vunian sighed. “I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be. I’d feel the same way if I were you. And I know you would say what I just did to me.”

Vunian frowned. “I still don’t think you understand. I knew her. Not well but still. She sliced my arm open. I can remember seeing the blood pour out.”

He rolled but not before the blade sliced into his arm and blood poured out.

Zair stepped forward. “What color was the blood?”

He rolled but not before the blade sliced into his arm and blood poured out.

“Red.”

“And what happened in your mind as this happened?”

Rince Vunian’s arm hurt and looking at the blood coming from it didn’t make matters any better. Yet he knew that he had to get himself together.

“I tried to get myself together. To face her.”

“And then?”

He rolled but not before the blade sliced into his arm and blood poured out.

“Zair you were there. You know what happened after that.”

“Tell me.”

He rolled but not before the blade sliced into his arm and blood poured out.

“It’s kinda foggy.”

“What color was the blood?”

He rolled but not before the blade sliced into his arm and blood poured out.

“Um...red.”

“What color?”

“My arm!!” Vunian was shouting. “It’s bleeding!”

“WHAT COLOR WAS THE BLOOD?”

“RED!!! Damn it! It was red!”

Then he realized it. “The blood was not red.”

“No.”

“Lightsabers don’t cause bleeding for a few seconds yet I saw it as she cut into my arm.”

“The shock. You saw what you expected to see. Your death by your failure.”

Tears were flowing down his face. “I should have known. When I tested her.”

“Tell me the whole story.”

“After the Battle the of Geonosis several Apprentices had no masters. I was instructed to test three of them to see if they were ready to become full Jedi Knights. Two of the three, Ezzan and Defera, were in fact on Dooku’s side. I suppose he spoke with them after Geonosis. They killed the other Padawan Learner, Gyan.”

“And you think you should have sensed it?”

“The betrayal? Yes.”

“The Jedi Council didn’t so why would you?”

Vunian finally smiled. “You should be a therapist.”

Zair grinned. “Well... y’know.”

General Ayer Cambini rang the doorbell and a few seconds later it opened to reveal Rince Vunian.

“Ayer! It’s great to see you.” He uncharacteristically hugged him. “How long has it been?”

Ayer smiled. “How are you feeling? I heard about the arm.”

“Much better. Thanks. How about you? I heard you were kicked out of Palpatine’s office. Never did like that guy too much.”

Cambini frowned. "It's a long story."

"I have the time. It'll be awhile before this arm heals."

Part Three: Outbreak

Zeneb

Obi-Wan Kenobi was opening the door to the Senator's shuttle when he noticed the machinery.

At first he thought it was connected to the wall but he realized it wasn't after a few seconds. The machines looked as if they would be used for digging. I'll have to remember to mention this to the Council. With that he took off.

Bimmiel

The ARC Clone Trooper, A-15, hit the ground and rolled. His white armor, which covered him completely, was stained with brown dirt. Only a minute ago he and the rest of his squad had been patrolling near the perimeter of General Fisto's base when they came under fire by Separatist Super Battle Droids.

A-15 had already tried to contact the Republic base but the communications were jammed. "Find cover and return fire," he yelled out to his squad. He rolled again and stopped

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behind a small boulder near the base of a mountain. The mountains surrounded the Republic base on one side and that was the side that General Fisto figured a Separatist attack group would sneak in from. He was right.

A-15 jumped up and opened fire, blue bolts shooting from his blaster rifle. He hit one droid right in the chest and it fell to the ground in a mess of bolts. A-15 was forced to duck down again when two droids began to fire right at him. The ARC trooper ran from his hiding spot and strafed to the left firing. Another droid went down but not before a bolt hit him in the shoulder. His armor protected him yet he knew it wouldn't hold out forever.

He headed back towards the Republic base and signaled his men to do the same.

Another droid came at him and shot red bolts at him. The bolts didn't breach his armor but it shoved him down. Aiming at a boulder he fired. The boulder shattered and pieces of rock flew everywhere, confusing the droids. A-15 continued his retreat.

He was farther away from the Separatists comm jamming devices, which were probably hidden in the mountains, to contact General Fisto.

“We're under heavy fire by droids!”

Fisto's voice crackled over. “Get out of there. We can't send any more troops. A Separatist fleet is in orbit around the plane!”

“I copy.” He shut off his comm. They would have to hurry if they wanted to live. He randomly shot out trying to cover their escape. It didn't help. The droids kept coming. A-15 pumped off a few more shots and then ran with all his might. He dropped a grenade as he ran. His final one. After a few seconds a giant explosion engulfed the area behind him. He didn't

doubt that three or four droids had been destroyed. But would that be enough? He hoped so and didn't let up his pace.

A sound came from above and he looked up. There was no mistaking what it was. Hundreds of brown, angular droid starfighters along with landing craft and Assault ships were landing. The Separatists had begun their attack.

One of the transports wasn't landing too far away and A-15 decided it was a good target to hit. He confirmed it with Command and then directed his men to it.

The transport was opening up to let out skeletal Battle Droids along with Super Battle Droids. And several tanks just for fun.

“Scatter and assault!”

The Clones took the Droids with surprise and many of them went down. A-15 allowed himself a small smile. He fired on two Super Battle Droids and they both exploded. He jumped and landed on top of a tank. He blasted open the hatch and shot the droid at the controls.

He turned to find himself face to face with a tank. He hit the ground and rolled but not before the tank fired. A-15 felt his arm burn off. And then he was shot in the back of the head.

General Kit Fisto sighed as he looked over the 3-D war board and sighed. The Droid army had begun to assault their shield generator. Soon the base would be open to attack and they would have to retreat. Unless the Republic Fleet came first.

Coruscant-The Supreme Chancellor's Office

“Don't send the fleet. Order them to retreat,” spoke Palpatine.

General Tiiver, a male human nearing middle age, gaped. “What?! We have been putting this fleet together just for Bimmieel. Once it arrives the odds won't be so favorable for the Separatists.”

Palpatine leaned back. “No doubt. But the Separatists are expecting our fleet to arrive. Let's put them off their footing. Alert General Fisto to retreat when he feels the need to. The Separatists will no longer be confident that they can predict our movements. This is, in many ways, a victory for us, General.”

Bimmieel-Republic HQ

General Fisto turned to the Clone Commander. “I just received news that we won't be getting reinforcements. That doesn't mean we can't win though. Let's be optimistic. Move Squadrons 4 and 5 to concentrate their fire on the right flank.”

Fisto looked back at the War board. “May the Force help us.”

Zeneb

Count Dooku smiled. “Well done Ezzan. How many Clone Troopers were lost?”

Ezzan was standing before Dooku’s desk at the heart of the Separatist capitol. “At least two hundred.”

“Excellent. But there is something else I ask of you. Someone I need dead.”

Ezzan raised an eyebrow. “Who?”

“A General Ayer Cambini.”

Coruscant- Cambini’s Office

The Following Day

Rince Vunian sat at on one side of Ayer Cambini’s desk and the good General on the other. They had been sitting for a few hours, discussing old times when they had met on Dantooine ten or so years back. Vunian had been sent there to disperse a riot that turned violent. Republic Security had to be sent in and Cambini was the commander of the squad. Rince had expected a typical military man who was full of himself but he was wrong. Together the two of them had managed to get a peaceful solution. Although an armed Republic task force backing them up had helped.

“The other day,” began Cambini, “General Fisto called me for some advice on Bimmiel. The damned Chancellor isn’t sending any reinforcements. Thinks it’ll send off the

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balance of something or another. We'll lose Bimmiel and a lot of Clone Troopers. But that seems to mean squat to Palpatine. I preferred Valorum before he was kicked out of office by Palpatine."

Rince recalled that well. Valorum, the previous Chancellor was kicked out when Palpatine put up a vote of no confidence. The other Senators believed the lies that had been spread about Valorum. He was ousted by an overwhelming majority and Palpatine was voted in by a landslide. Of course it helped that his planet was in a crisis and he was pitied. Personally Rince never liked him.

"Well I never trusted Palpatine," stated Rince. Cambini nodded in agreement.

"Well I must be going Ayer. I'll see you soon."

The two promised to talk again soon and Rince left. He had to get back to the temple and meditate which would hopefully improve his healing. He wanted to get back on the job again. And even though he felt wrong thinking it, he wanted to find Defera. But he refused to believe that he wanted to kill her. Although he was still worried as to how he would act when he found her.

Then he felt it. He sensed that something was wrong. He took out his comlink.

"Zair?"

"Hi. Need help?"

"Can you come over to Cambini's office?"

"No problem. Anything wrong?"

"I don't know."

He shut off the comlink and hurried back to the office. The door slid open to reveal Cambini with his head on the desk.

“General? Are you...”

He never finished his sentence. A red blur came at him and he jumped back and activated his lightsaber. He could fight with either arm but he liked to use both to hold his saber. Unfortunately he could only use one.

He turned and saw that the red blur was a lightsaber. The user was Ezzan. He stood behind the General’s body and in front of the huge window that showed a cloudy Coruscant city.

“Ezzan? What did you do to him?!?!?”

Ezzan smiled. “He is quite dead.”

Vunian jumped onto the desk and slashed out at Ezzan. Ezzan was not nearly a good a fighter as Defera. But he would be a little bit of a challenge since Vunian could only use one arm. But no doubt Rince could still win.

He jumped down and swung at Ezzan’s head. Ezzan ducked and jumped onto the other side of the desk. Vunian was about to slash at him again when Ezzan was beheaded by Zair McDashin.

“Rince! You all right?”

“Is he dead?”

“Yeah.”

“Pfft...I wanted to have the honor.”

Zair's eyes widened. "Don't say something like that. It was tough for me to kill him. He was a living being. Not some droid."

"He killed Ayer!"

"I saw."

"And you still regret killing him?"

"No, I never said I regretted it. I did it to save your life. That was reason enough. But it was tough."

A storm was beginning outside. Rain was flying down and lightening could be seen, far off. It suited Rince's mood.

"C'mon Rince let's go back to the temple."

"Fine. I'll call security first."

Zair nodded. "Good idea."

Rince walked over to the comlink and Zair could see a few tears coming from his eyes.

The man has certainly had a hand full lately, Zair thought.

Zeneb

Defera stood before Count Dooku. "It has been confirmed," she said.

"Ezzan is died. Killed by Zair McDashin or Rince Vunian."

Count Dooku stood. “Your failure brought this about. You had the chance to take them. Nevertheless I will give you another chance for revenge. But if you can’t do it THEN I’LL DO IT MYSELF!!!”

9 weeks after TBoG

Coruscant- the Jedi Temple

The Battle of Bimmiel had been raging on for a week now. Rince Vunian wished he were there. The reports were not good. The casualties were high on the Republic’s side.

Rince Vunian’s thoughts were interrupted by the arrival of Zair McDashin.

“Hi, Rince. I got some bad news. We believed that Ezzan choked Cambini to death since there were no saber slashes on his body. He wasn’t choked to death. He killed himself.”

Star Wars

Victory Quest III:

Tornado

Part One: Decree

Bimmiel

9 weeks after TBoG

Kit Fisto was on his speeder bike and on the retreat. The Republic Forces had fallen and the remainder of the Clone Army was heading towards the Evacuation Ships.

Kit looked back and saw the smoking remains of the Republic Base. What a waste, he thought. He stopped the speeder and joined one of the Clone Commanders. “Alert the Republic to what has happened.”

Coruscant- Intel Office

General Ofen Tiiver was getting old but was always ready for action. When he received the call to report to the Intelligence Department he didn't waste any time.

The doors opened automatically and he entered into a large room with 3-D maps, computer charts and a lot of Senior officers running around. Deputy Director of

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Intelligence Armand Isard, a male human, beckoned him to a small map of Bimmiel and its surrounding planets. Armand was in his mid thirties and had climbed the ladder of success rapidly. Although it helped to be respected by Palpatine, which he was.

Tiiver was human and in his late seventies and had a hard emotionless face. A typical military look.

He walked over to Isard. “Yes, deputy?”

Isard pointed at Bimmiel. “The Supreme Chancellor wanted you to know this before anyone else: Bimmiel has fallen. We’ve lost several thousand troops. They hit us hard. The Separatists wanted that planet desperately. We don’t know why.”

Tiiver’s eyes narrowed. “I see your intelligence network has been working extraordinarily well.”

Isard almost snapped but restrained himself from any more comment.

Tiiver continued. “What do plan to do next?”

Isard shrugged. “You’ll have to ask the Supreme Chancellor.”

“I intend to.”

The Senate Hall

10 weeks after TBoG

Senator Padme Amidala leaned back in her chair and sighed. The senate

meeting was going on for a lot longer than intended. She glanced around the room and found it amazing. Even though she had been in the room countless times she still found it magnificent. Thousands of Senators and their aides were stationed in the room. The Supreme Chancellor was on a platform at least two hundred meters high and directed the Senate meetings from there. The Senators were in rotundas attached to the walls of the circular room. The room was almost half a mile high. The rotundas that the Senators sat in could detach from the walls when they were asked to speak and they would float around the rooms.

Padme had done this countless times. Several Senators were floating around bickering over taxes to help fund the war effort. War disgusted Padme. She had been on Geonosis when the war broke out between the Republic and the Separatists. It had plagued her dreams for months.

Padme was twenty-two years old and represented the planet of Naboo in the Senate. Her assistant senator Jar Jar Binks represented the Gungan population of Naboo while she represented the human side. Her hair was black as night and shoulder length.

“This is ridiculous!,” Senator Grah of the planet Hig IV was shouting.

“My planet is not involved in this accursed war of yours! WE are neutral. Why should we have to pay this taxes for a war we are not involved in!”

Supreme Chancellor Palpatine leaned forward. “Thanks to our troops your planet is safe from the Confederacy of Independent Systems.”

“They are Separatists,” shouted someone. “Not a Confederacy of wacya macallit!”

“As I was saying,” Palpatine went on, “if it wasn’t for our troops the *Separatists* (“Ya!”) would have taken your planet as it is near there space.”

“Nonsense,” retorted Grah. “We have stated to them that we wish to remain neutral. They have respected our wishes but you aren’t.”

Padme had enough. “YOU are as much a part of this Senate as the rest of us Senator Grah!! I will gladly pay the taxes if it means the safety of my fellow people. You could care less about the taxes Senator. You are worried about Separatists retribution if you assist the war effort. Well Senator it’s time to chose sides.”

The Senator returned to the wall. Padme allowed herself a small smile.

“Senator Amidala is quite correct,” boomed Palpatine. “I can’t see how one can be neutral in a war like this. Join us and together we will destroy the Separatists.”

A large cheer filled the room.

Palpatine continued, “As of this day we will take no Separatist soldier prisoner. We’re going to wipe them out. All of them.”

All the shouting stopped. Such a decree had never before been given.

How far into war have we gone, thought Padme.

And how much further will we go? She didn’t want to know the answer.

The War Room

“A preemptive strike at their most outer planets. We can circle around and capture them,” spoke General Tiiver to the Supreme Chancellor and his other high ranking officers seated at the long table. Around them were 3-D maps showing planets, galaxies and battle routes.

Tiiver grinned. “I propose we strike at Dantooine. Take back the planet that the Separatists thought they could take from us!”

“What of Ylesia?” asked a General.

“No.” The Chancellor spoke for the first time. All eyes turned towards him.

“Why not?” inquired the same General.

“It would be a waste of our efforts. Dantooine is better but I prefer Selvaris.”

Tiiver raised an eyebrow. “Selvaris? It is lightly defended. We could send a small fleet there and...”

Palpatine cut him off. “No. I want the entire fleet to strike at it. We will destroy them swiftly and then move on. No doubt the Separatists will be surprised.”

“With all do respect,” spoke General Fisto. “I think moving all of our forces away from our area is ludicrous. We don’t want another Bimmiel.”

“There won’t be.”

“You don’t know that!”

“I do. We have been taking more precautions as of late. Even in the two weeks since the conclusion of Bimmiel our forces have learned. In many ways Bimmiel was a success.”

“That’s a load of bull!” Fisto was on his feet. “You screwed me and my troops on Bimmiel. I will not have you do the same thing again!”

Palpatine remained calm. “Be seated. I understand your anger, you have been under a lot of stress.”

Kit bit back a come back and sat.

“Selvaris,” said Palpatine reigniting the conversation. “Our target will be Selvaris. An air to ground bombardment. We don’t need to worry about setting up a base there. I just want the Separatists destroyed. That is all.” He stood and everyone else did in response. The Chancellor strode out and left the Generals to work out the details.

Palpatine’s Office

One month later

“This will never pass through the Senate,” spoke Senator Bail Organa, one of Palpatine’s loyal friends. He was a male human in his forties with a black goatee. He was light skinned and tall.

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Next to him was Senator Amidala another member of the loyalist committee. On the couch was Senator Orn Free Taa. He was a very fat Twi'lek with blue skin and two tentacles coming from his head. His razor like teeth just added to his "friendly" image.

"I concur," spoke Taa. "The species that you want to put restrictions on will never hear for it.

Palpatine was gazing out of his window. "The Republic has had spies in it since the Separatists were formed and probably even before that. Certain alien species have been known to side with the Separatists. It is only right to the citizens of the Republic that this aliens have restrictions placed upon them until the end of this war. It's for everyone's safety. If you say that you agree with me, Senator Taa, the Republic will see that it is not humans just trying to get more power."

Taa nodded. "I see your point. But getting it passed will be a difficult matter. But I'm sure I can get some of my 'allies' to help."

Bail Organa snorted. "I'll pretend I didn't hear that."

The Chancellor turned. "It will be awhile before anything is announced about this but prepare for it. I believe that this is inevitable. Which is quite unfortunate."

Padme sighed. "Isn't this just adding more ammo for the Separatists though."

"I don't doubt it. But we must use desperate action. If worse comes to worse I will enact my emergency powers that the Senate granted me at the beginning of

this war. But first I will try to get it passed by the Senate. Thank you my friends. Stay safe.” With that Palpatine left the room to head back to his private quarters.

Zeneb

The following day

Count Dooku read the reports in front of him. “Are you sure that these are legitimate?”

Defera nodded. “Absolutely. The Chancellor is planning to put restrictions on several different species.”

Dooku rose. “The Republic is playing right into our hands.”

Part Two: Mission

Coruscant-The Jedi Temple

Oppo Rancisis looked over the battle plans one more time. He was to lead the attack on the planet of Selvaris. He was confident that he could succeed. Rancisis was a member of the Jedi Council and he was the most military minded of them all.

His skin was a murky green and he was vaguely reptilian. He had two short legs and a long green tail. He sat in his quarters and meditated as he thought of the coming battle.

He knew that an orbital bombardment would be necessary to take the planet. Once that happened his troops could easily swoop in and take the base.

Yet things never seemed to go that easily.

Rince Vunian leaned back in his chair and sighed. It had been too long since I've been on a mission, he thought. My arm is almost healed why hasn't the Council sent me anywhere?

The answer was obvious to him though. They still thought he was too angry with what had happened back on Ord Mantell and he was. But he would never let that get in the way of a mission.

His doorbell sang. "Come in."

The door slid open to reveal Zair McDashin. "Howdy Big V. How's the arm?"

Rince looked down at it. "It's healing all right. How was your mission to Dathomir?"

Zair sat down on the brown couch. It sagged beneath him. "Uneventful. The Republic was worried about an invasion there but none happened. They're getting paranoid if you ask me?"

“Which I didn’t.”

“Well I just took it upon myself. Do you have any candy or something?”

Rince raised an eyebrow. “Not really.”

Zair’s face took on an eager expression. “Oh, c’mon. You have to have something! To quench my cravings you know?”

“I really don’t want to know about any of your cravings.”

Zair grinned. “Well to business I suppose. Master Yoda asked me to ask you if you feel ready to do something. So... do you?”

“Of course.”

“Are you sure? That arm isn’t healed all the way.”

“I wouldn’t worry about it.”

Zair frowned. “Okay then. Near one of the Separatists planets there is an asteroid field where they are mining for... Uh... stuff.”

“Ores and metals?”

“Yeah that’s it! Anyhow they want you to lead a squadron of Starfighters there and knock out the operation. Of course that will call for using your arm a lot.”

Rince stood and walked over to face Zair. “That won’t be a problem. When do I leave?”

“Tomorrow morning.”

“I can’t wait.” Rince’s face showed that his excitement was true.

Zair stood to leave. “I wish I was coming.”

Rince smiled. "Thank the Force your not."

Zair left and Vunian shouted for joy. His hopes had come true. He had something to do at last. Something that mattered and would help the Republic. Something that would make him stop thinking about General Ayer Cambini's suicide. Anything that did that *had* to be good. Right?

Belkadan- On the outskirts of known space

Three Days Later

The craft was sleek and noiseless as it flew through space towards the abandoned planet of Belkadan. The craft was gray and blended in with the darkness of space. The craft was a Sith Infiltrator. It belonged to Count Dooku.

The Infiltrator broke through the atmosphere and settled on a loan cliff. A plank slowly came down and Count Dooku walked out. He looked around and then walked forward. A cave stood nearby and he entered it. The walls of the cave had inscriptions on them but Count Dooku did not stop to look at them. He had a destination in mind.

"No time to look at our history, Lord Tyrannous?"

Dooku looked up and saw a cloaked figure in front of him. "Master Sidious."

He bowed. “It has been to long. Fortunately I bring good news. Word of the restrictions of the species has brought life back into the Separatists. The Republic will be forced to continue breeding new clones to fight the war. Victory is within our grasp.”

“Not quite yet,” replied Sidious dryly. “Everything is going as planned but there is still more to do. Has our operation on Ylesia gone according to plan?”

“Yes. And with Bimmiel in our grasp...”

“The Jedi won’t stand a chance,” finished Sidious. “The Ancient Sith have sure left us something that will undoubtedly lead to the Jedi’s fall. The Jedi purge is so close now.”

Dooku stepped in closer. “Why have we met here Lord Sidious? Why not on Coruscant?”

Sidious smiled from beneath his hood. His smile was all that could be seen as the cloak blocked his head almost completely. “Because this is where the final device is held, Tyrannous. Come I will show you.” Sidious turned and walked further into the cave.

Selvaris

The Republic fleet came flying out of hyperspace in orbit around the planet of Selvaris. The Republic Capital ships were triangular with the command center sticking up

out of the back. On each side of the ship were several turbolasers that, once fired could easily demolish a city. On it's belly was the docking bay. Out of it flew Jedi Starfighters and Clone Fighters.

From Selvaris came the Droid Starfighters. Winged and sleek they opened fire on the Jedi and Clone Fighters.

Oppo Rancisis watched from the Command Center of one of the Capital Ships. "Open up our turbolasers and begin bombarding the Separatist Base."

Directly below was the Separatist Base which was wide awake. Droids scurried around and got to their ships. Aliens of all different species set up small barricades so they would be ready for the ground assault.

Little did they know that no ground assault would come. Huge blue bolts came flying down from the sky and ripped apart the ground. First the Turbolaser bolts struck the Fighters still on the ground. Then the base was under siege. In an instant it's shields were knocked down and the base fell in on itself.

Then the Republic Gunships came down from the sky. They were winged with lasers on each wing and laser cannons at the front. The gunships held missiles on the top and Clone Troopers were inside of it. The Troopers used their own rifles to pick off any remaining Separatist troopers on the ground. The laser cannons meanwhile fired on the tanks that were on the ground.

Heavy reinforcements soon came for the Separatists though. Nearby from the forested area came Hailfire Droids. They were huge and rolled on wheels with massive missile cannons

at the middle. The first group of them shot off several rockets and three Gunships fell down to the ground in a smoking ruin.

On the other side of the base a few Gunships managed to make it to the ground and unload their troops. The troopers white armor deflected any stray laserbolts but couldn't hold out against several ones at a time. The troopers ran forward guns firing blue blasts. Across the way Battle Droids fell hundreds at a time as the Clone Troopers swarmed forward. The droids were no longer off guard though and returned fire. Troopers hit the ground and crawled forward. The Commanding Trooper was a special one. He was an ARC Trooper who were trained specially for action. He removed his two sidearms and strafed to the left while firing and took several skeletal like Battle Droids down. With a quick hand motion he signaled his troops forward and they mauled down the remaining Droids. The ARC Trooper allowed himself a smile.

Back on the other side the Gunships held their own against the Hailfire Droids. Before long the Republic had the remaining Separatist forces pinned down. Large dog like walkers were brought down in Republic Transports. They walked on four legs and were controlled by a Trooper inside a small cockpit. The Dog like AT-TE's had laser cannons all over them and they easily knocked droids down with their front legs.

In the midst of the Battle no one noticed a lone figure lurking on the sidelines. Defera. She struck out fast. Calling upon her Force powers she pushed several Clone Troopers down with the flick of a finger. The ARC Commander took notice of her and pointed. A hundred troopers turned to fire at her. She allowed herself a smile and jumped. She kicked out and

connected with a troopers face. With another finger movement ten troopers were thrown across the battle ground. Then the Troopers opened fire. Calling upon the Force she jumped higher than any trooper could have ever thought and she landed behind a trooper. She activated her double bladed lightsaber and easily decapitated two troopers. She flipped her saber into her other hand and stabbed another trooper. Any shots fired at her were easily deflected back at the troopers. With so many troopers only a few could fire at a time otherwise they could hit their comrades. A definite advantage for Defera. From the tip of her finger came lightning the ultimate Force Power that only the ruthless used regularly. A Jedi Knight was seldom seen using such an obscene power. Naturally this did not stop Defera.

The lightning hit a trooper and then spread to several other troopers. Using this as a distraction Defera beheaded several other troopers. She smiled again. Her work here was done. She had sent her message. The Jedi had a true nemesis to beat. Count Dooku wasn't the only Force User who wasn't afraid to use his power for his own needs. She was just as willing.

But the Arc Commander wasn't as willing to let her go.

He shot forward both of his sidearms firing rapidly. Defera turned and blocked the shots as he came running. He was fast enough that one of his bolts singed Defera's arm. Not that this stopped her. She slashed out and cut right through the Arc troopers armor. His body was split in two.

She deactivated her lightsaber and walked away leaving over a hundred dead troopers behind her. Although she knew the remaining thousand troopers would eventually get the better of her so she decided to leave before they noticed her. She glanced at the sky and saw the

battle overhead. The Separatists were losing in the air too. Not really too surprising. The Republic had an overwhelming number of troops compared to the small base here on Selvaris.

Defera sighed and walked towards the smoking remains of the base. Her ship was hidden under ground and well protected. She had no fear that she could get off of the planet. But one thing still bothered her. Rince Vunian had not been here. She would have sensed his presence through the Force.

“Our rematch will have to wait for another day Rince Vunian.” She looked up again. The sky was still filled with firing ships. “Perhaps it is better this way. It will give us both something to look forward to.”

Even though he was no where near, she knew he had heard.

Asteroid Field- Near Helska

Rince Vunian looked out of his cockpit window. Not far away was the asteroid belt where the Separatists were mining. Yet he didn't see it. He saw a mission and he was mighty glad he did.

Rince had done lightsaber exercises everyday just to make sure his arm was okay and yet he still felt like he was doing nothing. Now he was defiantly doing something.

“Separatist Command approaching,” came a voice in his ear. It was one of his twenty squad mates in his flight. Rince was once again in command of Red Flight. Another twenty ships flew near to him. It was Green flight Commanded by Shaak Ti. She was one of the best

pilots he knew and he was happy to have her with him. Of course he was happy to have the other forty ships with him too.

“All right,” he spoke. “Let’s get into attack formation. Prepare for Separatist resistance. They entered the asteroid field. Rince beautifully flew around the flying rocks and kept his eyes peeled for any enemy craft.

He looked down at his sensors, which said that the mining facility was on one of the larger asteroids near the edge of the field. He breathed deeply and put his hand through his hair.

“Here we go!”

Part Three: Revelations of Murder, Agendas and Sith

Belkadan

The ship slowly landed. The Sith Infiltrator had returned to Belkadan.

The cliff, the cave and the cloaked man.

“Lord Sidious. I bring great news. One of our targets is dead.”

5 months earlier (present time)

Asteroid Belt near Helska

Rince Vunian grasped the control stick hard. “Incoming fighters!” he screamed to his comrades. Droid Starfighters had launched out of a hanger bay on one of the asteroids.

“I copy,” Shaak Ti replied. “You guys go after the bas while my squad takes care of the fighters.”

“Roger.”

Zeneb

Count Dooku strode through the halls and entered his chambers. Defera sat their waiting for him.

“What is it, Defera?”

She frowned. “Selvaris has fallen.”

But Dooku smiled. “Excellent.”

“That’s one of our planets!”

“I know.”

Coruscant

Zair looked through the files in silence. It had been awhile since General Ayer Cambini’s suicide yet nothing had been revealed as to why. Finally the authorities had shown a file that was encoded and Zair told them to keep it quiet. Since that incident Zair had taken it

upon himself to crack the code. His brother could have done it but the only problem was that his brother was on a mission elsewhere. Nothing ever worked out right.

Then his computer beeped. Words appeared on the screen. *File open.* He looked at it. It read:

To Rince Vunian,

I have lost ten thousand troops since the beginning of this war. I confronted Palpatine about this but he brushed it away. After our disagreement I confronted him again and told him that I would denounce this damned war. He replied "That wouldn't be advisable." Naturally I told him where he could go. That night a good friend of mine was killed. I never thought that it was homicide until a few days later. A warning perhaps. I did some research. Got some names. The Elite. They are an organization. Fanatical I dare say. If you have found this than some disaster has probably befallen me.

Asteroid Field

Rince let a few shots fire off as a warning shot. Then he saw the base.

It was on top of an asteroid and it was massive. He could see harvesting facilities and laser cannons on the outskirts of the base. "Let's go in."

This Republic is decaying Rince. I can't say any clearer than that. Corruption is flying through the Senators. Only a few remain true to the ideals of the Republic. Don't go in too deep. Just look from the outside. I know who is responsible for this war Rince. I know

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who the real tra itor is. The insane person. But I cannot say outright for fear this falls into the hands of a non Jedi.

Perhaps the Jedi were right to distance themselves slightly from the Republic.

At this though I must leave.

Live in gr eatness my friend. Not in fear.

Peace always be with you.

Anger is your enemy.

The Jedi are not fully aware yet of the destructive powers of the Senate.

In this letter is revealed the traitor. If you think.

Now think, Rince.

Everyone is suspect.

May the Force be with you. Always.

Rince readied his missiles. He spoke into his comm unit. "Target their harvesters with your missiles. With their harvesters down they will be out of business for awhile."

He glanced around no enemy fighters in sight. Just those laser cannons.

The lasers opened fire.

"Fire!" screamed Rince. The Republic fighters shot off their missiles but not before several of them were ripped apart by laser blasts.

“Mission accomplished!” The harvesters exploded sending debris everywhere. “We’re outta here!”

And one other thing. Don’t ever let them intimidate you. Ever.

“What the hell was that all about?” mumbled Zair. And then he saw it.

Perhaps the Jedi were right to distance themselves slightly from the Republic.

At this though I must leave.

Live in greatness my friend. Not in fear.

Peace always be with you.

Anger is your ene my.

The Jedi are not fully aware yet of the destructive powers of the Senate.

In this letter is revealed the traitor. If you think.

Now think, Rince.

Everyone is suspect.

General Cambini wasn’t murdered, thought Zair. He was killed. By Palpatine!!!

Star Wars:

Victory Quest IV:

In the Shadow of the Sith

Part One: The Cathedral

Coruscant

5 months after Victory Quest III (8 months after the start of the Clone Wars)

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“And let us hope for peace in the coming weeks. An end to the war that has already took over two hundred million lives from us. Half of those innocents and the other half soldiers that fight for our freedom. Why I ask you does the Senate allow this to go on? Why have they not stopped this? And to this I can give you no answer. Our last hope is fading. The Jedi are becoming extinct.”

The Jedi Council sat and watched this speech via hologram.

Master Windu was the first to speak. “When was this recorded?”

The Jedi Council chamber was circular and had windows all around except for the entranceway. In a circle formation, to match the room, the Jedi Council sat in their chairs. In the middle of the room stood Rince Vunian who was addressing the Council.

Rince spoke, “This was aired only two days ago.”

Mace nodded. He was dark skinned and considerably older than Rince. His physical abilities matched the younger Jedi’s though. “I’m afraid the man who spoke this did not realize what would happen. He was a priest from the religious caste of the Twi’lek’s, correct?”

Rince nodded.

Mace continued, “He is telling the public that we are a dying group when we are in fact not.”

The small green alien that sat next Mace frowned. He was Master Yoda, the head of the Council.

“Not the only priest who speaks like this he is,” said Yoda in his awkward way of speaking. “Many other religious figures believe that a dark time is coming. Agree with them I do.”

Ki-Adi Mundi another member of the Council spoke. “We all believe that but we do not want public panic.”

Adi Gallia, a female human sighed. “The Supreme Chancellor has not responded to these messages. I don’t really think he cares.”

Mace leaned back in his chair. “Very well. Then we will have to speak out. The holiday of Life is approaching. Perhaps then would be a good time to speak out.”

Yoda nodded happily. “Agree with you I do.”

Mace looked to Rince Vunian. “Thank you for this information, Rince. May the Force be with you.”

“And with you, Masters.”

The transport ship landed with no problem whatsoever. Rince Vunian was standing and waiting for his friend Zair McDashin to come off of the ship.

Rince hadn’t seen Zair since Rince had been at the Battle of Helska where he had to destroy a Confederacy Ore facility. Zair had been recalled to his homeworld because his half brother, who was also a Jedi, had died. When Zair arrived he was soon under attack and had

to defend his homeworld for a month or so. When Zair returned Rince was away. Then Zair had to go away and Rince was returning. Now Zair was returning and Rince was staying.

There was no missing Zair as he walked off of the ship. Rince smiled and waved. Zair returned the wave and walked up to him.

“How have you been? It’s been awhile since I’ve had the displeasure of seeing you,” Zair asked cheerfully.

“I’ve been quite fine. As a matter of fact the other day...”

“Honestly I don’t really give a hoot and a holler.”

“Well you haven’t changed.”

Zair was beaming. “Did you really expect to him?”

“One can always hope.”

Zair laughed. “I have missed you Rince. Would you like to accompany me on my quest to find Aayla Secura?”

Rince raised an eyebrow. Aayla Secura was a Jedi Knight. Why Zair would want to see her? He asked as much.

A gloomy look came over Zair. “She was the last person to see my brother alive. I want to know exactly what happened to him. I’m sure she will have the answers. But there is another reason. Aayla will be accompanying me on my next mission. I asked the Council if we could have another Jedi along just to bug. They denied me.”

Rince shook his head. “I wonder why? The funny thing is I can see you asking the Council if you can have someone along as your scapegoat.”

Zair just smiled.

Zair couldn't tell Rince about what he found out about Cambini's murder. After all it didn't actually say Palpatine killed him. For all he knew Cambini had it in for Palpatine. Plus he didn't want Rince going on a rampage. No. He had to look into this a bit more.

Zeneb-the capitol of the Confederacy

The Separatist Council was meeting in the grand hall on Zeneb. At the head of the table sat Count Dooku. He spoke, "It has been too long since we have had a victory sufficient enough to halt the Republic."

The Council was a mixing of different species from the Outer Rims of the galaxy. Shu Mai spoke out first. "This is not our fault Count Dooku. You are the one that is supposed to be commanding our forces."

Count Dooku sighed. "That is not true. I have been commanding the Forces of the Confederacy due to your stupidity, Shu Mai. Many of the others at this table have helped in planning assaults. But you have been doing little, Shu Mai. Almost nothing."

"How dare you! I have funded the Confederacy. I have given the Confederacy half of my money. I've sacrificed quite a bit."

“THEN WHY ARE YOU LIVING IN A TEN KILOMETER WIDE

MANSION!!!”

Shu Mai was silent.

Count Dooku moved on. “Our reports are telling me that the Supreme Chancellor is planning on passing a law that would restrict the movement and freedom of them. This new law will no doubt work to our advantage.”

Viceroy Nute Gunray of the Trade Federation gasped. “They would dare? The Chancellor is more foolish than we thought.”

San Hill of the Banking Clan nodded in agreement. “But we should still be cautious.”

Dooku stood. “I agree. For now this concludes our meeting. We will meet again in one week and discuss our next strike against the Republic.”

The Council members walked out. All of them except for Dooku.

“That meeting went well Lord Tyrannous.”

Dooku turned to face a hooded man: Darth Sidious.

Dooku smiled. “I’m glad you thin so Lord Sidious. I was quite impressed that you hid in the shadows this entire time.”

Sidious chuckled. “That is no test of my abilities. But there is something I ask of your assistant, Defera. I know one of her assignments is to kill Rince Vunian. I don’t want Rince dead. I want his friend Zair dead.”

Dooku was surprised. “As you wish. May I ask why?”

“You will see once the time is right. Soon everything will become clear.”

“All right, my Master.”

Sidious smiled from beneath his hood. “You will find it all very hard to believe once it begins. I have planned this for too long for there to be any mistakes. Nevertheless we must still tread carefully.”

“As you wish, Master Sidious. Is there anything else?”

“Oh yes, my friend. Let us discuss the Cathedral.”

Coruscant- the Cathedral

The Cathedral was gigantic. Its ceiling was a huge dome with religious paintings symbolizing “Who knows!” as Zair put it.

Nevertheless Rince Vunian was very impressed. He was accompanied by Mace Windu and Adi Gallia. The Jedi Council had come to a decision and decided to confront the Priest that was spreading rumors of the extinction of the Jedi.

The Priest was reading in his quarters at the back of the Cathedral and he answered the door with friendly “Hello!”.

Mace Windu nodded his head in acknowledgment. “Priest Hurtek, I am Master Mace Windu of the Jedi Council and this is Mistress Adi Gallia of the Jedi Council. These two,” he stated, gesturing towards Rince and Zair, “are Jedi Knight Rince Vunian and Jedi Knight Zair McDashin.” The two Jedi smiled.

“It’s nice to meet you,” said Zair.

“The pleasure’s mine,” replied Priest Hurtek.

“Yeah, you’re right it is.”

The Priest chuckled as did Zair but Mace silenced the Jedi Knight with a glare. Mace turned back towards the priest. “You are a Priest of Ghyrulgh, correct?”

Hurtek nodded. “Indeed. I serve Fikes with all of my heart.”

Mace nodded again. “Then I have found the right man. We have come to ask you why you have been saying that the Jedi are almost extinct. You are lowering these peoples spirits. A war is going on, they need all of the hope that they can get.

The Priest raised an eyebrow. “Jedi are indeed dying in this war, Master Windu.”

“Yet we are no where near extinct.”

“You are nearing it. Did you know that someone put a bounty on all Jedi Knights. The price on your heads is enormous. Now if you’ll excuse me I have a ceremony to perform.”

Mace glanced down the hall and saw several hundred people settling down for the evening services.

“One more thing Priest Hurtek, You are new here, correct?”

“Yes. I came from the planet of...”

Rince stepped in. “From where? Ylesia if I’m not mistaken. And Ylesia is a Confederacy occupied world.”

Hurtek grinned. “I suggest you leave. NOW! I won’t be here by tomorrow so don’t bother to look for me. I’ll complete this service and then I’ll leave.”

Rince grinned, “You are not a Priest. You are a bounty hunter. You’ve been put up to this. To spread word propaganda. Do you really think we didn’t already know this when we arrived?”

Hurtek frowned and then smiled again. “I suggest you leave. Other wise the people out there...”

Mace didn’t give him time to finish. “Lets move! There’s a bomb!”

Hurtek called out. “consider this a warning from enemies you don’t know you have.”

Rince’s eyes widened. “A bomb?,” he asked as they ran.

“Mace nodded. Everybody get out of...”

Part Two: Veerya

Bimmiel

Defera spun her double bladed lightsaber above her and brought it down to strike at the young Jedi.

The Confederacy had taken Bimmiel not long ago in an epic battle. Since then there had been no trouble on Bimmiel. Until now. A young Jedi and several Clone Troopers slipped through the defenses and destroyed one of the hanger bays. Defera chased them into the mountains along with a platoon of Droids that had been destroyed awhile ago. In return Defera killed all of the Clone Troopers in a messy battle. It was just her and the young Jedi left. They

had fought for awhile and were slowly making their way up the foggy mountain paths. To the young Jedi it was easy to see that Defera was toying with him.

But no longer.

The young Jedi brought his own green lightsaber up to block her attack. HE rolled onto the ground and slashed at Defera's feet. She laughed and jumped up. As she jumped she stuck the lightsaber into the Jedi's back. He fell down dead.

The Ex- Jedi smiled. Her job was done.

Teet. Teet.

Her communicator was chirping. She reached down and took it out of her pocket.

"Defera here."

"This is Count Dooku. There is an upcoming event that you should be aware of..."

Coruscant-The Cathedral

The bomb exploded and Veerya went flying. She stuck her arms out to brace her fall and wound breaking one of them once she hit the ground. Veerya moaned and turned to her right and immediately wished she didn't. Next her was half a body. She swallowed hard and turned the other way. *What the heck just happened,* she thought.

Veerya was young, only twenty-six. She was tall with dark black hair and a kind face. She had just recently gotten a job on Coruscant at the Intelligence department, her first job to investigate a mysterious priest. She had no idea that the Jedi were doing their own searching.

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She managed to lift her head and glanced around looking for help. About twenty meters away she saw a young Jedi tending to an old man. She climbed to her feet and staggered over to him.

“Excuse me, I’m with Republic Intelligence. What in God’s name just happened here?”

The young Jedi looked up and she noticed he was quite good-looking. “I’m Rince Vunian,” he said. “Can you give me a hand with this man.”

Veerya looked down to see the old man bleeding all over. There was no way that this man could hope to live. She leaned closer to the Jedi. “He won’t make it.”

“We can try. Here,” he said giving her a Bacta patch. “Put that on your arm and then place these on the man’s wounds.”

Veerya placed the Bacta on her arm and immediately felt better. She leaned down and began placing Bacta on the dying man. Next to her the Jedi crouched down to talk to him.

“You’ll be OK,” he said to the man.

“Wha...t happ...ened?” he managed.

Rince frowned. “A bomb went off and you are one of the few survivors. I’m afraid there is little more that we can do for you except hope.”

“Can you...talk...to me?”

Rince smiled. “Sure anything in particular?”

Veerya leaned down again and whispered to Rince, “What about the rest of the survivors?”

“There are only a few ones that are critically injured and Zair and Mace can take care of them. The rest have minimal injuries and Adi Gallia can tend to them. This fellow is the worst one that is still living. The rest are dead.”

Veerya gasped. “How many dead?”

“Close to one hundred.”

The old man glanced up. “Tell me...about...the Force.”

Rince grinned. “With pleasure. The Force is in all living things. Certain beings can communicate with it and are able to do incredible things. With a push of my hand I can push someone down who is ten meters away. I can jump ten times more of a normal person. Pretty nifty, huh?”

The old man smiled and chuckled. Then his eyes closed and he died. Rince sighed and stood. From across the room strode a tall Jedi with a bald head and dark skin. Looking at Rince he said, “Is the old man dead?”

“Yes, Mace. He was what you suspected. He had the potential to become a Jedi Knight.”

Veerya’s eyes widened. “Than why wasn’t he?”

Rince looked at her. “Because his parents didn’t want him to grow up at the Jedi Temple. They wanted him to grow up with them.”

The other Jedi, Mace, nodded. “But even so we still keep an eye on him .His heart was in the right place so we mourn his passing.”

Rince walked over to Mace. “What of the others?”

“Most were either only slightly wounded or dead. Very few were critically wounded.”

Rince had watery eyes. “What was the total death count.”

“Sixty-five.”

Veerya frowned. That was a lot of people. Suddenly she felt dizzy. Something was wrong. “Rince !”

Then she blacked out.

Veerya opened her eyes to see Rince Vunian looking at her. “Your head has been bumped very badly,” he stated. “You’ll need to go to a hospital.”

Veerya tried to nod but couldn’t.

“Don’t try to move. The ambulance crew will be here in a second.”

At that moment it dawned upon her that she would never see Rince Vunian again.

“Wait!,” she gasped. “Can I ever see you again?”

Rince grinned. “Would you like me to visit you in the hospital?”

She smiled. “I would like that very much.”

Palpatine’s Office

The Following Day

Senator Padme Amidala sat on one of the chairs facing the Supreme Chancellor.

Seated next to her was Senator Bail Organa.

Chancellor Palpatine's face was filled with sorrow. "I'm afraid to tell you that late last night there was an attack at a church."

Bail groaned. "How many dead?"

"Sixty-five."

Padme leaned back and took it all in for a second. "Who did it?" she finally asked.

Palpatine's face became neutral. "The Separatists. No doubt the Senate will now realize just how badly these times have come and how we need to clone more troops."

Bail stood. "So you're going to use a massacre to help you're politics?"

"These are quite desperate times."

To break the tension Padme pondered, "Will you still be making your speech at the end of the month?"

"Oh, yes."

Padme stood and joined Bail. "I'm afraid I need to leave but we can talk more later."

"Indeed," replied Palpatine. "One more thing. Do you know what this means?"

"Yes," stated Padme. "The war has come to Coruscant."

"The war has come home," added Bail.

Padme shook her head in response. "The war has always been at home for some of us."

Veerya opened her eyes to see Rince Vunian standing over her. Again.

“Why, hello there,” he said.

She squinted as her eyes were adjusting to the light. “Um. What happened?”

Rince grinned. “You had a concussion.”

Veerya glanced around the room to see that she was in a hospital room with several monitors watching her vital signs. She glanced back at Rince. “You sound awfully happy about that.”

Rince shrugged and stood. “Well you are fine now. So why did you want to see me?”

Veerya’s vision cleared and she could see him clearly now. He was in a large brown cloak, which was typically what most Jedi wore. His hair had been cut since she had last seen him and he no longer had a ponytail. “How long have I been out?” she asked.

“Two months.”

“Holy...”

“I’m kidding,” he laughed as he saw her relief. “It’s been a day. So back to my question.”

Veerya suddenly felt herself blushing.

“Hey your Rince’s girlfriend!” Veerya twisted to see her newcomer. He was a young Zabrak man who was carrying a large smile. Rince turned to face this fellow who was obviously a Jedi.

“What are you two years old,” shot back Rince.

“Noooooooooooo,” the other Jedi replied. “I’m three.”

Rince sighed and faced Veerya. “This is Zair McDashin.”

It dawned on her that she knew this man. “You were at the Cathedral!”

Zair raised an eyebrow. “We’re very excited about that aren’t we.”

Waving away Zair’s comments Rince spun back to face Veerya. He began to smile again. “So why did you want to see me?”

A thousand things went through Veerya’s head and she blurted out one of them. “I want to be your friend.”

Zair sniggered. “Friend. Sure. Humph.”

Rince ignored Zair and crouched next to Veerya. “Jedi are not supposed to have relationships as it interferes with our work. Friendships are fine but I can’t be your boyfriend.”

Oh God, she thought. I’m so stupid.

“No your not.”

Veerya’s eyes widened. “How did you...?”

“The Force can do some amazing things. Normally I can’t read minds nor can most Jedi. But when you are screaming those thoughts...”

Veerya nodded but it hurt her head. “Oh. I see. So would you like to meet for...lunch?”

“Sure.”

Veerya suddenly felt a lot better.

Zeneb

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Count Dooku looked at the holographic map of Thyferra. “This is where we will have to strike next,” he said to Defera who stood next to him. “Yet its’ defenses are too strong. We need somewhere else to place the third Atupk.”

Defera looked at the holographic display and began looking at other planets in the system. “Atupk? Is that its’ proper name?”

“Yes. Did you read the file on it?”

“Indeed I did,” she replied. “Yet there was nothing about its’ actually name.”

“That is true.”

Defera faced Dooku. “Are you sure the Jedi know nothing about this Atupk?”

Dooku smiled. “Of course, my friend. I have tortured several Jedi to death to make sure.”

“Speaking of that. You interrogated Zair McDashin’s brother. He will want revenge.”

Dooku turned away from the holographic display. “Which is precisely what I intend. His brothers death was one that I recall very well. He was captured during a surprise attack on the Dantooine.”

McDashin felt the pain of the torture needles ten times more than he would normally due to an electric device placed on his (rather short) legs. The pain droids had been going at him for several hours now. They seemed intent on making him answer one question: did he see the attack and contact Coruscant?

As McDashin flied around on the table again he noticed the droids had stopped.

They went stiff as if they were deactivated yet lights still shone in their eyes.

Then he saw why they had stopped. Dooku had arrived.

“Hello McDashin. I am so sorry about these droids. Nute is always sooo... violent. But let’s put that behind us shall we?”

“Tra..itor,” McDashin managed to get out.

“ Oh no,” replied Dooku. “You have been lied to my friend.”

“I’ll tell you nothing,” spat McDashin in reply.

“I’m sure you won’t. Now get up.”

Suddenly the droids were active again and they picked him up and out of the room. They carried him down boring hallways. McDashin closed his eyes and tried to regain peace in his body. He was a Jedi after all.

He began to meditate and was then thrown to the floor. He crawled up a little and managed to look around the room. It was dark and had a large staircase that led up to a balcony that overlooked part of the city. How, he thought, did the Separatists build this so fast? Unless...the people of Dantooine had turned a blind eye to it. But why? And how? The Senate would have figured it out. Or perhaps he wasn’t on Dantooine. Then he noticed a figure at the top of the balcony. The figure seemed to know that he noticed him. McDashin could feel Dooku’s presence behind him. Dooku then gently pushed the Jedi forward.

“Welcome to Zeneb,” said the figure. “The capital of the Confederacy. You, my friend, are lucky to be blessed with my presence. It is not usual that I come here. Yet I know the Droids would not make you speak. Not even the good Count. But do not worry. I can easily sense your lies. Plus I have many uses for a live broken Jedi.”

“I’ll never reveal anything!!!!”

“Oh, don’t be so sure.” And with that Darth Sidious stepped forward.

Defera raised an eyebrow. “Lord Sidious spoke with him himself.”

Dooku smiled again which was an odd occurrence. “Oh yes.”

Darth Sidious raised one of his fingers very slowly and pointed it at McDashin.

“Now my friend what do they Jedi know of the Sith?”

“Nooothinnng,” hissed McDashin in reply.

“Liar,” replied Sidious calmly. With that he shot lightening out of his finger. It hit McDashin right in his face. The Jedi collapsed to the floor shaking. Yet Sidious stopped once he fell to the floor and began pacing around McDashin. “I ask you again. What do the Jedi know about the Sith?”

“Nothing more than that you have returned.”

“I sense you are not lying this time. Good. Now what does the Jedi Council think of the Senate?”

McDashin raised his head slightly. "The Senate? The Jedi do not interfere with the Senate."

"That was not the question," replied Sidious evenly. He then let loose another bolt of lightening. McDashin screamed in pain.

"Stop!!!! The... Council and other Jedi know that the... Senate is corrupt...yet that they are better than chaos."

"I can stop the chaos," replied Sidious. "The Galaxy is ready for a new order."

"The separatists? They are just as bad as the... Republic. Much worse, really.

"Oh, not the Separatists young fool. Not at all. Something new. Something that is so powerful it will rival all known governments."

"The bigger it is, the harder it will fall," spat McDashin.

Sidious stepped over to McDashin. "Thank you for your help. Yet you have told me nothing more that I haven't already known.

"Precisely," shot back McDashin as he slowly got back to his feet. He called upon all of his Force powers and Force Pushed Sidious. The Sith Master blocked it with ease.

"You challenge a Sith? A deadly mistake." And with that he let loose lightening until McDashin fell to the ground, dead.

"Clean this up," hissed Sidious. "It knew nothing. Bring me the other one."

Dooku continued. "Aayla Secura was up next for interrogation but she escaped before we cracked her."

Aayla Secura was thrown onto the floor before Count Dooku.

"How are you Aayla? It has been awhile hasn't it?"

Aayla said nothing.

"You do not need to be so rude Aayla."

" You killed McDashin," she spat. "I sensed his torture and then his death.

You are an animal Dooku. A heartless animal."

"Oh, no Aayla. Not heartless at all. I care for the people in our galaxy.

That is why I am with the Separatists. We know how to run the galaxy. Would you like to help us?"

"Oh, I don't think so."

"Very well then," replied Dooku. And with that he unleashed his Force lightning.

"I met with Master Sidious shortly afterward. While we spoke Aayla escaped. Not that it hindered us."

Count Dooku stepped into the Balcony with no fear at all. “Lord Sidious Aayla is unconscious for the time being. No doubt she will crack from the pain soon,” spoke Dooku.

“Excellent,” replied Sidious. “The problem with Magren and his new order is almost done. It appears that our plans are proceeding with almost no flaws. Victory is almost upon us.”

Defera said, “How interesting. Is this all part of your plan?”

“Oh yes. Master Sidious has schemed something that cannot fail.”

“What of the incident on Coruscant with the Cathedral?”

Dooku turned to look directly at her. “The Jedi have been sent a message among other things”

“And the priest?”

“I killed him.”

Defera shook her head. “Will it really look good that we killed a hundred or so people.”

“It really doesn’t matter.” Dooku began to exit the room and spoke, “But I have something else planned. A surprise for our Jedi friends.”

Part Three: The Loss of Freedom

Coruscant

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Supreme Chancellor Palpatine sighed as he explained the situation to Senator Padme Amidala, Senator Orn Free Taa and Bail Organa. “Our forces have been constantly disrupted on planets all over. We can’t keep order!”

Padme lowered her head in shame. “But you can’t do what you are suggesting. It is insane.”

“But quite necessary. Let us speak no more of the subject”

Taa protested, “Wait! What *are* you suggesting?”

Palpatine waved the subject away. “You we see in due time. But now we must discuss restricting the rights of certain alien species so they cannot spy on us...”

The restaurant was quiet but Rince Vunian preferred it that way. He had lived up to his word and he was having Lunch with Veerya.

“So,” he asked, “what do you do in the Intelligence department?”

She smiled at him and replied, “I work with General Tiiver and the Supreme Chancellor. Technically I can’t say anything else.”

Rince nodded. “I know what you mean. So where did you grow up.”

“Corellia. My Dad was a millionaire and had a huge mansion there. Only a short while ago he moved to here. I bought my own apartment here. It is massive. It’s not far from the Senate Hall.”

Rince took a bite of his food. “Pretty impressive. I came from Thyferra but I don’t remember it at all. My parents allowed me to be trained to become a Jedi Knight. But I have never seen them again as a Jedi should not have very close attachments. It disrupts their way of life and their willingness to give themselves totally to the cause. Friends are a different thing as you see.”

Veerya smirked. “You said ‘their’ not ‘ours’.”

“Opps.”

Still smirking she asked, “Do you not believe in all of those ideas.”

Rince shook his head. “Of course I do.”

“You don’t have to agree with everything the Jedi say. Have your own ideas on relationships and your willingness to give yourself to the Force.”

Rince raised an eyebrow. “Why are you so interested in me?”

“I really don’t know why. I just am. Can’t explain it. You are very handsome and sweet. I liked you right away.”

“What? I can’t see how you can like someone right away.”

She nodded. “Apparently you can. Do you like me?”

“Well this is a little awkward. I don’t know if we should be...”

Veerya leaned across the table and kissed him.

Rince stood and hurried away from the table.

Zair McDashin knocked on Aayla Secura's door. A moment later she opened it. Aayla was a Twi'lek. She had two tentacle like objects called lekku at the back of her head. They twisted around in what looked like a weird hairdo. She was very pretty but the subject that Zair was about to bring up made him not even notice that.

“Aayla, I want to know what happened to my brother. Who killed him?”

Belkadan

The Following Day

Count Dooku greeted Darth Sidious. “I have news my Master. Veerya did indeed meet Vunian just as you set up and he indeed did save her. She fell for him just as you planned.”

The cloaked Sith Lord turned to face Dooku. “At last everything is in place.”

Coruscant-The Jedi Temple

“She what?!?!”

“She kissed me,” repeated Rince Vunian to Zair McDashin. “Right on the lips. I’ve never had that happen to me before. I don’t know what to do.”

The two of them sat in Rince’s quarters and had been discussing Rince’s problem.

Zair shrugged. “Just tell her to stay the hell away from you. Or get a restraining order. That could be fun.”

Rince shrugged. “Maybe I should call her.” He walked over to his comlink and researched her name. “Here we go.” He hit it and a face appeared on his screen. It was not Veerya. “Hello. I’m Rince Vunian. Is Veerya there?”

The other face was a woman about the same age as Veerya. “Did you know her well?”

Rince thought for a moment. “What do you mean ‘did’?”

“There was an accident.”

“By the Force, no”

“A taxiship went out of control and crashed into her apartment. She died.”

“How long ago?”

Tears were streaming down the woman’s face. “Maybe ten minutes ago. They just got her out of here.”

Belkadan

Darth Sidious smiled from beneath his hood. Dooku asked, “What is it Master Sidious?”

“He knows,” replied Sidious.

Coruscant-The Jedi Temple

“How could this have happened?” asked Rince to no one in particular.

Zair shook his head. “I don’t know. I just...don’t know. First your arm then Cambini and now Veerya. I’m sorry, my friend.”

At that moment his doorbell chimed.

“Yes?” croaked Rince. The door opened to reveal Master Mace Windu.

“You must come to the Room of a Thousand Fountains immediately.”

Zair raised an eyebrow. “Is it really important as we have a bit of a problem already.”

Mace answered, “I would say it is a major problem. Supreme Chancellor Palpatine just declared Martial Law.”

Star Wars

Victory Quest V:

Three Fronts, Two Sith and One Impending Disaster

Part One: Martial Law

One week after the previous stories events.

Coruscant

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Senator Padme Amidala was planning on returning home. The Senate meetings had been doing little lately and the Celebration of Life was closing in. She had packed her bags and was planning to leave tomorrow when she got a message from Supreme Chancellor Palpatine. He had asked her to meet him in his office at her earliest convenience. Which meant now.

The Chancellor's two red robed guards opened the door for her and she walked into the Chancellor's office. "Good evening Chancellor."

"Ah. Senator Amidala. Please have a seat."

She did. "Is there something I can do for you?"

"Actually there is. I would like you to postpone your vacation by just one day. Tomorrow I will be announcing the new restrictions being placed on certain species. First in the morning I will make the yearly speech and wish everyone a good Life Day. I'll tell them about our upcoming plans for this war. This speech will be in the Theater just across from the Senate Hall. I will then walk from there to the Senate Hall and announce the new restrictions on the species. No doubt this will create quite an uproar. Both positive and negative. Therefore I asked the Jedi if they could lend me Zair McDashin and Shaak Ti as escorts. They agreed of course. I hate to think that there may be an assassination attempt on anybody at the upcoming speeches but one can never be too careful."

Padme leaned back in her comfy chair. "Is this really necessary? At the start of this war you had the Senate give you emergency powers. Only a few weeks ago you issued out a Martial Law. Granted you still have complete control, but you have given the military a lot of

flexibility. You've allowed them to kill whenever they deem needed unless it goes against your strict orders. Have you heard the complaints?"

Palpatine chuckled. "It was to be expected. Padme, all that I want is your support. You are both my colleague and my friend."

Padme smiled. "Of course you have my support."

The Chancellor nodded gratefully. "There is also other news. The Separatists have been quite quiet lately. My spies have told me that something big is being planned. In the meantime I have ordered an assault on Zeneb, one of the Confederacy's main planets. We will be commencing the attack in only a few short hours. By now I'm sure Count Dooku has already seen our incoming ships and is fleeing the planet along with the rest of the Confederacy Council. I will also announce what happens in this battle tomorrow."

"I see," replied Padme. "You have to be careful, Chancellor. You are a military and political target. If anything would happen to you the Republic would not only lose a leader but a friend. It would be horrific."

The old man nodded. "It would be a tragedy, wouldn't it?"

Rince Vunian enjoyed looking at the fountains in the Jedi Temple. It always seemed to calm his ever running mind. There had been a lot to deal with lately. Whenever he left the Jedi Temple it was hectic. Clone Troopers now reigned free on the streets. Rince had found it a scary sight. Then there was Veerya. She had loved him and he had to tell her that she could

no longer see him. Then she died. Even earlier on was the death of Ayer Cambini. Rince's thought's always seemed to go back to him. Ayer had been his friend for a long time. Even though there meetings were only a few times a year they still managed to be close. Before that it had been his arm. What was next?

“Howdy Vunian!”

Rince Vunian looked up and so Zair McDashin walking towards him.

“How are you Zair?”

Zair had a smile on his face. There always seemed to be one there. “I'm quite fine. And you?”

Sighing Rince replied, “Don't you have anyone else to bother?”

“Of course. I need a back up in case you were sick or something. Anyhow I just wanted to say that you won't see me tomorrow. I'll be escorting our esteemed Chancellor to his speech and Senate meetings. Some sort of threats going around. It's always something, isn't it?”

Rince nodded. “Yes there always is something else. Oh! Who else will be with you?”

“Jedi Master Shaak Ti.”

“Tell her I said hi.”

“Sure will. Have you heard the news about the surprise attack on Zeneb?”

Rince nodded. “Yeah. It's going to be a bloody battle. One of the worst so far, I'll bet. I don't know. I have a bad feeling about this. Well, be careful.”

Zair turned to walk away. “I will. I'll see you the day after tomorrow.”

“Don’t remind me.”

Spreading his arms Zair replied, “I won’t have to. I always make my presence known.”

Intel HQ

General Tiiver approached the Supreme Chancellor with a grin. “Sir, we have everything in place. We are ready for the surprise attack on Zeneb.”

Palpatine nodded. “Commence the attack on the Confederacy Headquarters.”

Zeneb

Several gigantic donut shaped Trade Federation ships orbited the planet of Zeneb. The Trade Federation leader, Nute Gunray, had already fled the planet along with the rest of the Separatist Council. Nevertheless the Council’s warships remained in orbit around Zeneb awaiting the imminent Republic attack. On board the bridge of one of the Trade Federation ships sat General Rittark. The bridge was circular and Rittark sat in the middle of it. In front of

him and to the sides were the pilots and engineers. Near the entrance to the bridge were several Battle Droids standing guard. Rittark was a Neimoidian like most of the Trade Federation leaders. He had green skin and big red eyes, like many of his species. He also looked rather coward like. At the moment Rittark was sweating. He was not looking forward to the upcoming battle. After all should he die... *No*, he thought, *I won't think about this. I have to concentrate on the upcoming battle.* Aloud he asked, "Lieutenant Duffer, are the Droid Starfighters ready and prepped for battle?"

"Yes, sir."

After a second Rittark asked, "What about the fighters on the other ship. Make sure Commander Gunred is ready. I don't want any mishaps."

Duffer nodded. "I will, sir."

Rittark nodded. It would only be a little bit longer before the Republic arrived. If everything went right this would be one of the biggest losses for the Republic yet.

All of a sudden Duffer shouted out, "Republic Assault Ships coming out of Hyperspace."

On the viewscreen came the gray triangular Assault ships. "Prepare the Laser and Ion Cannons. Launch all Droid Starfighters!!," screamed Rittark. "Shields! Put up the shields!" Rittark was shaking madly. "Once the ships are within firing range open fire!"

Duffer looked up at Rittark. "The Assault Ships are launching Jedi Starfighters."

From the Assault ship came small red fighters manned by Jedi Knights, Behind them launched the Clone Fighters. They were rectangular with two wings that curled under them

with a laser cannon on each wing. The Republic starfighters began firing at the newly launched Droid fighters. Before long the Republic ships would attack Rittark's ship. He was dreading that attack.

Duffer was waving his hands around like a maniac. "The Republic Fighters are in range! They're firing!"

Rittark whirled around to face Duffer. "Arm our lasers. Have them lock onto the fighters and open fire." Looking on the viewscreen Rittark saw his own ship firing red laser beams and destroying several fighters. His own ship was massive compared to the little ships. His own ship was big enough to challenge the Assault ships. Rittark commanded, "Bring the ship 25° starboard. One of the Assault ships will soon be close enough for us to attack it!"

Duffer announced, "We have already lost two of our squadrons. Another one is almost down."

"We have more," growled Rittark. "That assault ship is almost in range. Once it is target its' shield generator on top of its' bridge. They are the sphere thingys on top. The bridge is the large structure at the aft! Get ready to fire. Wait. Move forward. Full thrusters. That's it...stop and... fire!"

One of the two shield generators exploded as the Trade Federation ship concentrated its' fire on it. The assault ship returned fire, aiming right for Rittark's bridge. Rittark was thrown out of his chair.

Duffer called out, "We're losing shields. They're down to 20%!"

Rittark moaned. “Get Commander Gunred’s ship to fire on that Assault ship and give us some cover!!!” The bridge rocked again.

“Sir,” replied Duffer, “the Commander says that they can’t come just yet. They are being heavily bombarded.”

Rittark was fuming. *“I don’t care! Tell that damn fool to get over here. I don’t care if his ship is falling apart!”*

“Yes, sir.”

Climbing back into his chair Rittark let out a sigh. “How are we holding up.

“Not well,” called one of the engineers. “We have no shields left.”

Rittark put up a hand to stop him from speaking. “Wait. They’ve stopped firing. Why?”

Another of the engineers gasped. “General! We have a Republic ship in our docking bay. They got through our gunners because they were transmitting a signal that was the same as ours.”

“Damn. They want to capture us. Send down two Destroyer Droids to handle them.

Duffer looked up, terrified. “General, they are Jedi Knights.”

Rittark moaned. “Lock down the bridge. Get a squad of Super Battle Droids down there. Kill all of the Jedi.”

Duffer shock his head. “They’re just a floor below us! We’ll never get help here in time. We only of the two Battle Droid guards. It’ll take a minute for the Super Battle Droids and Destroyer Droids to get up here.”

Rittark leaned back and smiled. “With the bridge locked down it will take a minute for the Jedi to cut through. That will give the Droids time to arrive. Even the Jedi can’t take on a squad of Droids.”

Duffer shock his head. “I wouldn’t be so sure about that, sir.”

Rittark shot him a glare. “We will survive this to see Jedi die. With the Jedi on board the Assault ships won’t fire on us. Let’s take advantage of this and...”

A huge force pushed Rittark to the ground. When he opened his eyes a Jedi Knight was standing over him. The Knight was in his late thirties and had a red beard. Rittark recognized him immediately. “Obi-Wan Kenobi,” he hissed. Looking around Rittark saw destroyed Droids everywhere. He had definitely underestimated the Jedi. To his right Duffer was being handcuffed. “I don’t know anything,” said Rittark.

“Master, do we have to waste our time here. We took the bridge. Can we leave now?” moaned, what Rittark guessed, was Kenobi’s apprentice.

Kenobi turned to face his apprentice. “Anakin we have a Confederacy ship in our hands. Imagine what we could do with this. Besides the Chancellor ordered us specifically for this mission.”

The handsome young man smile. “I never thought of that.”

Rittark just moaned.

Kenobi helped him up and handcuffed him. “I don’t suppose you know where Count Dooku is?,” he asked.

“No.”

Count Dooku looked upon the Separatist Council. Each member was on their own ship, as was Dooku, and were speaking to Dooku via a holographic projection. They were all in hyperspace heading to the new Separatist Base. The members of the Separatist Council formed a circle around him.

“My friends, I have good news,” spoke Dooku. “The Republic has just landed on our base. I’m sure you all know what comes next.”

Part Two: A Shallow Victory

Zeneb

General Plo Koon surveyed the landscape of Zeneb. The planet of Zeneb was mostly desert except for the Confederacy structures.

Plo Koon turned to the Clone Troopers behind him “There doesn’t seem to be any Droids in the area. “Take five squads and move in. I’m going to check in with General Kenobi.”

Plo Koon had a breathing mask over his wrinkled face as his species couldn’t breath air. Therefore his speech was awkward. He walked back onto his shuttle craft and opened up a holographic communication to General Kenobi aboard one of the two Trade Federation Command Ships. “Hello Obi-Wan.”

Obi-Wan smiled. “Hello Plo. How is it down there?”

“There is little opposition down here. It appears that the *all* of the Separatists left this base once they saw we were coming.”

Obi-Wan nodded. “We have heavily damaged the other Trade Federation ship. It’s Commander is dead. The Banking Clan ships have been completely wiped out. It appears, as you already said, that the Separatists just left. I guess they weren’t ready for an attack. But still...something seems wrong.”

Plo nodded. “I sense a disturbance in the Force, too.”

“Be careful, my friend.”

“I...”

An explosion ripped through the shuttle craft and Plo Koon went flying. The last thing he saw was the floor coming towards him.

Rittark knew the plan had gone perfectly when Obi-Wan's message got cut off. General Rittark chuckled from his command chair where he sat chained.

Obi-Wan looked at his apprentice and then at Rittark. "What happened down there?"

Rittark grinned as much as a Neimoidian could. "Many of your troops down there are dead. This planet is booby trapped. Fifteen atomic explosives were buried beneath the Separatist Command. They just exploded."

To Rittark's horror it looked like fifteen atomic explosives had just exploded inside Obi-Wan's head. For a second he thought the Jedi was going to lash out at him. A second later Obi-Wan composed himself. He turned to his apprentice, Anakin, and said, "Get a shuttle ready. I'm going down to the planet. After that contact General Fisto and tell him about the trap. Then ask him to send down emergency relief troops." With that Obi-Wan turned on his heel and strode out. Surprisingly his Padawan *means apprentice, for those of you who don't know* complied without complaining.

Rittark looked at the young man. "What are you going to do with me."

Anakin said nothing but the General could see he was angry. Rittark continued, "I'm sure many Jedi died on that planet Good riddance if you ask me."

Yet again the young man did not reply.

"C'mon boy. Not a conversation person?"

Finally he spoke directly to Rittark. "Not with the likes of you."

Rittark smiled. He had broken through the boy's mental barrier. "Ha! It is Jedi like you that have spoiled the Republic."

Anakin whirled. "No! It is greedy profit-hungry people like you! You have no respect for life! How can you do so much destruction without remorse. You've just ended hundreds of lives."

Rittark craned his neck to look out the viewscreen, then back at Anakin. "How many troops were on that planet?"

"Two hundred Clone Troopers and sixteen Jedi. If even one Jedi dies...I'll..."

"You'll what? Jedi are forbidden to kill in anger. If you do, it seems as if some dark side of the Force engulfs you if you continue." He paused. "Or so I hear."

With a grin that made Rittark cower Anakin replied, "Yes. But if I only kill one lonely General. I mean what if you slip out of those chains and attack me?"

Rittark decided to keep his mouth shut. After a moment the young man turned back to the control panel and Rittark saw a holographic image appear but he couldn't make it out.

"General Fisto," said Anakin. "I have bad news. There was a trap on the planet."

"We picked up the explosion on our sensors. Do we know if there were any casualties?"

Anakin shock his head. “Master Obi-Wan just went down to check it out. He should be contacting me back soon. Hopefully with good news.”

It was at that point that Rittark heard a beeping.

Apparently Anakin did, too. Hitting a switch a holographic image of Obi-Wan Kenobi appeared.

“Hello Obi-Wan,” Anakin said happily. “How are things down there? I have Kit Fisto on a comm channel here, too”

Obi-Wan asked, “Kit Fisto? Kit can you hear me?”

“Yes.”

“Well, I have bad news. Only six of the original sixteen Jedi survived. Master Plo Koon is with me here. He just became conscious and is telling me what he remembers.” After a pause Obi-Wan continued. “It’s terrible down here General. So many friends gone.”

Kit Fisto was silent for a moment before saying, “I’ll contact Coruscant and give them an update. May the Force be with you Master Obi-Wan and Padawan Anakin. May the Force be with us all. We’ll need it”

Coruscant-The Jedi Temple

Jedi Master Ki-Adi Mundi was visibly nervous. His friend Plo Koon had been leading the ground assault on Zeneb and he was afraid for him. Not that he would admit it, though.

He, along with Master Yoda, Master Windu, Master Vunian and Master Secura were sitting in the communication room of the Jedi Temple. They had been sitting there during the length of the battle awaiting news from the battle front.

Mundi was a Cerean. Like all of his species he looked human except for his cone head. “Master Windu,” he spoke, “we have a message coming through from General Fisto.”

“Put it through.”

The voice of Kit Fisto came through. “Zeneb was a trap. The place had been evacuated before we arrived. They booby trapped the entire planet. Apparently the planet’s surface is now unstable. Unfortunately those down on the planet have no way of getting off as of yet. The smoke has made any landing impossible. Only one ship got through: Obi-Wan’s. What should we do?”

Master Windu asked, “How unstable is the surface.”

“We have earthquakes all over the place. I have no clue how to save these people.”

The Jedi looked at each other. Finally Rince Vunian spoke up, “Can you land the ships on the other side of the planet and then have them fly low. It’ll take awhile but they will get to the area where our people are soon.”

Kit sounded weak as he said, “We tried. They have anti air missiles on the other side of the planet. The Separatists had to have been for warned about this.”

Mundi looked to Master Windu. “It appears we have a leak,” he stated.

Windu nodded in reply. He then turned his attention back to Kit. “Try to navigate using sensors only. It will take at least a day for their to be enough ships down there but it is the best chance we have.”

“Roger that.”

Ki-Adi Mundi asked, “What of the Jedi?”

“Six died. Master Plo Koon survived, though.”

Mundi sighed in relief.

Windu shut off the communication saying, “May the Force be with you,” to Kit. Turning to everyone else he said, “I’m going to inform the Chancellor.”

The Chancellor gasped when he heard the casualty list from Mace Windu.

“I cannot believe that six more Jedi are dead. And on top of that we have a leak.”

Mace replied, “It is true. These are dark times, Chancellor. I trust you will investigate this leak?”

“Oh, yes. Now you must excuse me, Mace.”

Mace nodded and turned. "Very well, Chancellor."

Palpatine then quickly added, "I'm sorry for all of the friends you lost. Every time a Jedi dies, I feel as if a little bit of me dies as well."

Zeneb

Rittark looked out of the viewscreen and saw something that relieved him and terrified him a second later. The Separatist reinforcements had arrived. No doubt they would try to take this ship. But Rittark also had no doubt that Dooku would have no remorse for destroying the ship along with Rittark himself.

"Anakin," Rittark shouted out, "look!"

"I know. I know.," Anakin replied. After a second a holographic image of General Fisto appeared.

"Anakin, did you see the ships?"

"How could I miss them. They are between you and me. They are doing the old divide and conquer trick."

Fisto frowned. "There are two other ships in orbit around Zeneb. They are going to bomb our landed ships."

Anakin's eyes widened. "But...Master Obi-Wan!"

The exploding bomb sent Plo Koon flying. Again.

This time he braced himself before he hit the ground. “Obi-Wan are you all right?” he called out.

“Yes. And you?,” replied a dust covered Obi-Wan. The two of them were standing outside of Obi-Wan’s shuttle when the first bomb was dropped.

“I’m fine,” answered Plo Koon. “But what are the odds of getting thrown into the air twice *and* surviving?”

“Before today I would have said not good.”

Plo grinned. “Damn right. But if anyone were to defy the odds it would...” Another explosion cut Plo off. Luckily for the two Jedi this bomb was farther away.

Obi-Wan turned to Plo. We have to go. Now. Are all the Jedi in the shuttle?”

“Yes.”

The two boarded the ship with Obi-Wan taking the pilot seat and Plo Koon took command of the lone laser cannon. Smiling Plo Koon said, “Let’s take off and get off this depressing rock.”

One of the Jedi in the back yelled out, “I couldn’t agree with you more.

Obi-Wan looked down at the controls. “I have ten seconds to take off.” Turning to Plo he asked, “Can you alert Anakin that we are coming.”

“No problem.” Plo activated the holographic communicator and Anakin’s image appeared. “We’re taking off. Prepare to receive us.”

Anakin asked, “Is Obi-Wan all right?”

“He’s fine.”

“Are you sure?”

“Well he is cracking jokes,” replied Plo.

Relief washed over Anakin’s face.

“Bring the ship 50 degrees to port. Lock all of the lasers on the Techno Union ship closest to us,” spoke General Fisto. “All we have to do is get Obi-Wan and the rest of the Jedi off of Zeneb and then we can fall back and await our own reinforcements.”

The bridge was quiet as the officers went around doing their work. Kit smiled. He had such fine officers under his command.

“Sir,” spoke one of the Lieutenants, “we have incoming Droid Starfighters.”

Kit turned to face the lieutenant. “Launch our fighters. Every single one of them.” Kit looked up at the view screen. “And I want that Techno Union ship destroyed!!”

At that moment the Techno Union ship erupted in flames.

A cheer went up. Even Kit smiled. Then he added, “Turn to starboard fifteen degrees and knock out those incoming fighters.” Kit watched as the enemy fighters came into firing range. “Fire.” The ships were shredded to pieces.

The Lieutenant spoke up. “Sir! We have a priority one message from Coruscant. The Chancellor was attacked along with his two Jedi escorts: Shaak Ti and Zair McDashin.”

Coruscant

Half an Hour earlier

Zair was amazed at the amount of people in the auditorium. He had arrived only a few minutes ago with the Chancellor and Shaak Ti. They were escorts for Palpatine. Once they got there they just waited behind the curtains as Palpatine made his speech.

Bored, Zair popped a piece of candy into his mouth. “Mmmmm.”

“Excuse me?”

Zair turned to face an old man. “Hello. How can I help you?”

The old man beamed. “Are you a Jedi Knight?”

“No, but I play one in the movies.”

The old man looked confused and then asked, “Well in that case, can I have your autograph?”

Zair gave it to him, chuckling. Then he felt it. Turning he saw Shaak Ti on the ground unconscious. Palpatine turned and fled the stage, which led the audience to scream in terror.

He was grabbed from behind and forced to kneel on the ground. Looking up he saw her. Defera.

Zair managed a grin. “It’s been awhile. You haven’t written. You haven’t called.”

Defera smiled in response. “Zair, I have been waiting for a rematch. Didn’t think it would be this easy. You looked so much stronger.”

“I get that a lot.”

“I’m sure.” With that she chopped off his head.

Rince Vunian grabbed his chest.

Zair had died.

Belkadan

“He is dead,” stated Darth Sidious.

Count Dooku nodded. “This will no doubt anger Rince. Then Defera will leave and Rince will eventually try to hunt her down after one final death. The Jedi Council will forbid him to go after her but he will anyway. His anger will corrupt him and then...”

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“...he will be ours,” finished Sidious. “Yes. Everything is proceeding *exactly* as planned.”

Victory Quest VI:

One of Those Days

Part One: System by System, Star by Star

One Month after the previous Story

Agamar

The Jedi Knight turned to face his friend. “I’m afraid this is our last stand.”

His friend nodded in response. The two Jedi stood back to back surrounded by Super Battle Droids. Only a few days before the Confederacy had launched a surprise attack on Agamar in retribution for the fall of their Capital, Zeneb. The Republic forces were wiped out within a few hours. Then slowly the Jedi were, too. Now only Shever Ylulen and his friend Anaror were left.

The Battle Droids raised their built in laser guns and targeted Shever as he brought his lightsaber up to his face. They fired.

Shever brought his saber down to his stomach to deflect the first few shots back at the Droids. The next laser blasts came for his head. He put all of his weight on his left foot and kicked out while he deflected more laser blasts. His kick connected with one of his enemies and sent it flying. The Battle Droids were suddenly in a bad position as Shever slashed out in a circle. This attack cut at least seven Droids in half and Shever yelled out to Anaror to see if she was all right. She called back that she was.

The Battle Droids did not stop though. They continuously fired deadly lasers out at the two Jedi. Shever soon found himself on the defensive.

From across the way Anaror yelled out in pain and fell to the ground.

Shever turned to see if she was all right. A fatal mistake. He never saw the blast coming.

Dubrillion- One of the Separatists Main Planets

Count Dooku entered the Command Chamber followed by several Generals, Nute Gunray, Shu Mai and San Hill. All but Dooku looked depressed.

Dooku turned to face them as he activated a holographic projection of the many planets of the galaxy. “Do not fear, my friends. The tragedy of Zeneb is long past us and we move on to conquest. I have just received word that the Agamar Star System has just fallen along with Garqi, which as you know held our facilities until a few months ago when the Republic attacked it. I trust you all know of the casualties we faced their. It was unfortunate that most of them were civilian.

The Republic is once again retreating on all fronts. Even their forces at Zeneb have retreated although our base was already demolished by the time we arrived with reinforcements. Meanwhile on our other fronts Zhar and Alzoc III have fallen to us. On Ison the Republic lead a successful counter attack. Yet this is only a small setback. Before long Republic space will be caught in the middle of a circle and then we need only to tighten the noose.”

One of the Generals snorted. “You make it sound simple. While we may be having victories our forces are being stretched thin! We barely have enough troops to defend us, here let alone on our smaller planets.”

Dooku nodded, conceding the point. “But we do have an advantage. The Republic is also stretched thin. Although most importantly is our friend here.” He snapped his fingers and two Super Battle Droids entered carrying a young Twi’lek woman. Her skin was blue and she had two tentacles coming from the back of her head. Dooku continued. “This is Anaror, a Jedi Knight. She will tell us of the Republic’s plans.” He took his curved lightsaber hilt off of his belt

and activated it. The long red blade hissed loudly in the silent room. “I have no doubt she will take some convincing. Shall we see how many fingers she will lose before she talks?”

Coruscant-The Jedi Temple

Rince Vunian swallowed as he looked at all of the Jedi Knights that sat before him. “Today,” he began, “I will be sharing some very sad news. Y’know with this war we seem to never get time to speak of those we have lost. We never seem to talk about those that give their lives to help us live. We never talk about our friends that have left us. We never talk with each other anymore. We just fight this war. The Jedi haven’t been involved in a war like this for several millennia’s. And by the Force I hope this is the last one.

I often get depressed when I sit alone in my room and wonder how many Jedi are dying at this very moment? If it is just one than it is one too many.

Yesterday we received a full casualties list of those Jedi that have died. I begin with Anaror, missing, presumed dead. Shever Ylulen, dead. Guuuruk, dead. Juvalin Hurun, dead. Durin. Oh, Durin.” He paused for a moment and brought himself together.

“Durin was a Padawan I knew along time ago. She is dead in a way. You may not know her as Durin but I am sure you know her by Defera. She was a promising young and pretty student who was turned into a Dark Jedi by Count Dooku. I hope none of you will make that choice. But to continue. Corrva Genlen, dead. Feler Tinfer, dead.” Then he came to it. He closed his closed his eyed for a moment and then said, “Zair McDashin, dead.”

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He stepped down and took his own seat as Master Yoda spoke. The short figure began speaking but Rince didn't hear him. Two people were on his mind: Zair and Defera. Once word had come of Zair's death he automatically knew who had killed him.

She had finally returned after many months. Rince had originally thought she would hunt him down. Apparently she intended to break him down first. He wouldn't let her though. No matter what he would kill her. Even if it meant throwing aside everything the Jedi had taught. Defera *would* be brought to justice.

Such thoughts filled his mind for the remainder of the funerals and the walk back to his quarters. He sat silently in his quarters and decided to nap. Naturally the doorbell rung a few moments later. "Come in."

The door slid open to reveal Jedi Knight Obi-Wan Kenobi. "Good afternoon, Rince. I guess the funeral took a toll on you."

Rince chuckled. "I'd think so. But I don't even want to talk about it. So how can I help you?"

Obi-Wan took a seat. "I returned from Zeneb a month ago. I'm sure you've heard everything about that. The Confederacy has struck out desperately but hard in retaliation. Many of our key worlds have fallen and now the Confederacy plans on hitting Varonet. It's in the Outer Rim and is one of our last bases out there. The Council has asked us to take command of the base there and defend it from the onslaught of the Confederacy. Our base there is a fortress therefore the Confederacy is throwing everything they can at us. It'll be bloody."

"I think I can hold out."

“That’s not what I was worried about. *She* will be in charge of the Separatist forces. She’s a devil in a fight but I don’t know how she commands.” Obi-Wan leaned forward. “Will you be all right seeing her again? After all she has done to you? The Council doesn’t want you to be uncomfortable.”

Rince smiled. “You mean the Council doesn’t want me to wonder off with my own little agenda.”

“Something like that.”

“No problem.”

“Good. We leave tomorrow on the East Platform. My apprentice, Anakin Skywalker, will be coming too.” Obi-Wan stood to leave.

Rince spoke for the first time about Zair. “Did you know Zair well?”

“Not really.”

“Okay. Just curious.”

“Goodbye.”

“Uh huh.”

Obi-Wan left and the door slid shut leaving Rince to himself again. Rince laid down and slept. He had no dreams that night. Only nightmares. Everyone involved Defera killing Zair. Everyone involved a cloaked figure laughing. For some reason Rince felt that he knew that cloaked man. Knew him very well.

When he woke up in the morning he was drenched in sweat.

“Master,” spoke Anakin Skywalker, “do I know Rince Vunian? His name sounds familiar yet I can’t place a face.”

Obi-Wan stood next to Anakin as they walked the halls of the Jedi Temple. “You may have met him once, Anakin. He is a kind man but sad at the moment. Try not to annoy him.”

Anakin rolled his eyes. “Master I’m quite old enough to know what to do in these kind of situations. I’m twenty for crying out loud.”

Obi-Wan smiled. “Well you did roll your eyes as if you were fourteen.”

“How did you...?!”

“Nothing escapes my sight my young apprentice.”

Anakin raised his head in defiance. “Well I have to go somewhere. I’ll meet you on the landing platform in a couple of hours. An don’t worry, I’ll make sure I’m there.”

Obi-Wan’s smile turned into a grin as his apprentice left. Who knows what trouble Anakin was going to get himself into.

Senator Padme Amidala looked into her husband’s eyes which were filled with sadness.

“I’ll be careful,” her husband, Anakin Skywalker, promised. “I’ll return safe as always.”

Padme frowned. “We’ve been married for about six months now and our marriage is still secret. I can’t pretend that I’m not married for much longer.”

Anakin nodded in response. “We will tell others soon. But you know how the Jedi frown on marriage.”

She nodded. “Just be careful, okay?”

“I promise.”

Part Two: The Fortress of Varonet

Varonet

Rince Vunian looked at the walls of the fortress and grinned. The walls were made of durasteel and had built in laser cannons every few meters or so. Outside of the walls were laser turrets and trenches where the first line of Clone Troopers were stationed. Inside the walls were the rest of the Clone Troopers and the Jedi Knights who included: Obi-Wan Kenobi, Anakin Skywalker, Agen Kolor, Goror and Kaylya Jorhin. Also inside were two large towers that rose higher than the walls. On top of the towers were several snipers and a laser cannon.

Rince knew that the Separatist force would be huge but with all of these defenses he could definitely see how they had a good chance of winning.

He entered back into the base through the large blast doors and greeted the two new Jedi, Agen Kolor and Goror. Agen was a Zabrak, the same species as the late Zair

McDashin (which bothered Rince slightly) and Goror was a huge, strong human who stood well over two meters. “Hello, my friends.”

Agen and Goror returned his greeting. “This base looks well defended,” said Agen.

“I was quite happy to see that when I arrived,” replied Rince.

“It doesn’t matter,” stated Goror. “This place will fall and it will be up to troops to defend it. Not walls.”

“Agreed.”

Agen elbowed Rince. “Quite the optimist isn’t he?”

Smiling the Jedi entered the Command Building.

In there Obi-Wan spoke with Kaylya about plans for the defense of the fortress.

“Welcome, Agen! Goror!,” greeted Kaylya happily. She was a young human woman with shoulder length hair.

Obi-Wan merely nodded in there direction and continued mumbling battle plans.

Rince wondered over to Anakin who stood in the corner. “Hey, Anakin.”

Anakin smiled. “Hi, Master Vunian!” The young man was usually withdrawn unless he was angry but Rince had always took a liking to him. Something in the young man reminded him of himself.

“How does it go, Anakin?”

Anakin snorted. “With Obi-Wan making battle plans we can’t decide on anything!”

“Why am I not surprised?”

Separatist Battleship *Arnakor* - In route to Varonet

Defera stared into the eyes of Count Dooku. His image was being broadcast from Dubrillion and she was able to view him holographically.

“Count Dooku, we’ve picked up a lot of troop movements to Varonet. The planet will be more heavily defended than we thought.”

“It doesn’t matter. I have equipped you with an army of a hundred thousand Super Battle Droids.”

Varonet

“Our sensors are picking something up,” spoke Agen Kolor. “It’s the Separatist fleet.”

The Jedi were in the Command and Control planning the defense of Varonet.

“Are our troops in position?” asked Obi-Wan.

“All of them,” snarled Goror.

Rince glanced at Obi-Wan. “I guess we just wait for them to attack. I don’t believe we have another option.”

“We can meet them head on!” Anakin said excitedly.

Kaylya shook her head. “That would be futile.”

Agen announced, “Their first wave has landed and is advancing!”

The Separatist Transport ships landed and opened their doors. Massive Hailfire Droids wheeled out firing at the Clone Troopers in the trenches. The Clones stood erect and fired. Their blue blasts smacked the Hailfire Droids but did not stop them. The Hailfire Droids fired their missiles and slaughtered a hundred Clone Troopers a shot.

The Commanding Republic officer realized that the laser rifles would take too long to wear down the onslaught and so he told the Clones to throw grenades.

Clone Trooper 15244432 heard the order and took one of his three grenades. He was on the front lines so the Hailfire Droids were near him. The Clone jumped up and out of the trench firing his laser rifle as he did so. He threw himself to the ground and chucked his grenade under the wheel of a Hailfire Droid. The machine’s wheel flew up and came crashing down on a group of Super Battle Droids. The rest of the machine veered out of control and smashed into another Hailfire droid and the two exploded in a second.

The Clone chuckled and glanced over to see a group of Clones massacring Super Battle Droids.

The Clone smiled and ran to help them. He began pumping burst after burst of laser fire into the Droids and took at least three down. Before he could celebrate a missile shredded him apart.

Meanwhile Republic Gunships were taking off and began taking pot shots at approaching Separatist tanks. A few Gunships were destroyed by a missile but those instances were few. The Republic were holding their own ground.

A group of about a hundred Clones banded together and made a desperate push forward. A Clone Trooper grabbed onto the wheel of a Hailfire Droid and got himself stop of the Droid. Instead of destroying the Droid he fired burst after burst of lasers into the Droids around him. The Droids seemed to fall like dominos. When there were no more Droids around him he dropped a grenade onto the Droid and ran as it exploded.

The fortress doors opened and Republic AT-TE's came out. The dog like machines walked forward and wiped out Hailfire Droids as of they were flies. Atop of them Clone Troopers added their fire to the insanity.

Finally a few Hailfire Droids came together and targeted one AT-TE and shot every single missile at it.

The huge machine swayed and fell to the ground and killed some unlucky Clones.

Then the Separatists unleashed their most dangerous weapon: Dark Jedi.

Part Three: The Betrayal

Varonet

Red lightsabers lit up as the Dark Jedi flew towards the Clone Troopers. The

Clones took aim and pumped out shot after shot. The Dark Jedi deflected the shots back at the Clones and the Clones went down in pain.

On board one of the Gunships came a call from Rince Vunian. "This is General Vunian. Target the Dark Jedi with your missiles."

The Gunships went down and let off several missiles. A few of the Dark Jedi were thrown across the field but the majority of them escaped.

The AT-TE's began raining fire down on the Dark Jedi and even more fell. Obviously these weren't well trained Jedi.

"We've been holding out on all fronts," stated Goror. "The Dark Jedi seem to be just a last ditch attempt to take our base."

Rince smiled. "Perhaps we should attack." Every head turned towards him as if he'd just suggested that they go shoot themselves.

"Are you insane?" hissed Goror.

"Yes, but that's not the point. The Separatists will not be expecting an attack on their Control Ship. I say we launch a group of Jedi Starfighters and damage their ship. With their ship damaged we can board it and take control. We could end the battle in a few hours with a lot less bloodshed."

Obi-Wan stroked his chin. "This could work. But we need them to be totally occupied. I say me, Kaylya and Goror strike at the Dark Jedi. Meanwhile you and Anakin can take down the Droid Control Ship with several other squadrons. Agen can stay here and

continue issuing commands."

Kaylya shook her head. "Anakin and Rince will certainly die."

"No they won't" replied Obi-Wan as he walked over to her. "They are both excellent pilots. We can do this."

Anakin smiled. "I'm in."

With a growl Goror said, "Well as long as I'm not the one throwing my life away in space, I'm in."

"I'm not." Kaylya stated firmly.

Rince turned to her. "It could give us a quick victory. I don't see another choice."

Kaylya shook her head in disgust. "We'd be throwing away two Jedi Knights' lives as well as a few squadrons of Clones. There is no way this can happen. I'm out."

Obi-Wan began to speak but Rince cut him off. "Me and Anakin now how to destroy the Droid Control Ship. We can do it. Trust us. We will get Defera and her ship."

Kaylya was stubborn. "No. If this fails we could lose. I am not willing to take that chance."

Agen Kolor finally spoke. "Kaylya you are out numbered I'm afraid. We have to do this."

She banged her hand on the table and she finally raised her voice. "No! I am a General too. We all have to agree."

Rince groaned. "We're wasting time."

Kaylya looked him straight in the eye. "Rince, don't be foolish. This cannot happen."

Rince Vunian's anger came out all at once. "You stupid bitch!! Are you blind to what is going on around you?! With or without your permission I'm striking at that ship. Alone if I have to. Defera must die."

Agen put a hand on Rince's shoulder. "Relax, my friend. We are going through with this.

Rince was still angry but nodded and began the trek to the Jedi Starfighters.

Once he left Agen turned to the others. "There is something bothering Rince. Anakin could you keep an eye on him while you are up there? Make sure that he doesn't act foolishly. I have a feeling he means to have revenge on Defera."

Anakin nodded. "I'll make sure he is all right." With that he hurried off after Rince.

Goror cleared his throat. "How do you want to go about the attack on the ground?"

Obi-Wan replied, "A charge. A dead charge and we can wipe out all of the Droids near us. Eventually they will realize that they need to retreat."

"Hopefully they will retreat though," Agen said. "They can be stubborn at times."

Obi-Wan grinned humorlessly. "Let us hope that the Force is with us on this day, then."

Dubrillion- One of the Main Separatist Planets

The screams could probably be heard for a mile.

"Your information has been most useful Anaror," spoke Count Dooku. "Varonet will

soon fall thanks to you." He brought his lightsaber down onto another one of her fingers. She screamed again.

Dooku leaned forward and looked right into her eyes. "Where in the Jedi Temple is Rince Vunian's quarters?"

Varonet

The Jedi Fighters lifted up and off the ground. They aimed toward the sky and shot off. The fighters formed a triangle formation with Rince Vunian at the point and Anakin to his left.

"Anakin, I want you to take half of the squad and destroy the shield generator. I'm going to take on the gun turrets near the docking bays so we can land."

The ground battle was going well for the Republic. The Clone Troopers had been able to spread out and form a half circle around the Separatists. The Dark Jedi were either dead or wounded. The Super Battle Droids were almost all destroyed. Only the tanks, Hailfire and Destroyer droids remained. Although they were losing, the Separatists continued to fire down on the Clones and AT-TEs. Unfortunately for them they did not foresee Jedi joining the battle.

The Jedi came out on low flying speeder bikes, their lightsabers activated. Goror was at the head of the pack. He headed straight for a tank and sliced off its main gun with a swift move. Smiling he jumped off his bike and let it crash into the tank. He ran across the battlefield

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and joined a group of Clones who were pinned down by Destroyer Droids.

Meanwhile Obi-Wan was leading the Assault against the missile firing Hailfire Droids. "Create a circle around them and then will cut the circle in half. They won't be able to stick together that way," he shouted into his communication pad. A call of "Roger" returned. Obi-Wan frowned as something caught his eye. A Hailfire Droid was hidden under a tree and was taking shots at the Gunships. Obi-Wan turned his speeder bike right for it and let go off the controls. Standing he pointed his lightsaber straight at the missile firing system. He hit it head on and jumped off his bike at the same time. The missiles exploded taking the whole Droid with it. Obi-Wan allowed himself a smile as he safely landed back on his bike.

As the Clone Troopers formed a circle the Droids soon were forced to group together which made them easy targets for the Gunships. After a few minutes the battle ended with a charge from the Clone Troopers.

The Jedi gathered together.

"It is nice to have a victory," stated Obi-Wan happily.

"I agree," huffed Goror. "But it is not over yet. If the Control Ship is not destroyed more troops may still land."

"Rince the shield generators are down. You can land on the ship," Anakin hollered through his communications system inside his ship.

Rince turned his left to the port and landed gracefully in the Docking Bay. Only a few Battle Droids were on guard and they were dealt with within moments. In a flash

Rince was on his way to the Command Center, followed by ARC Clone Troopers.

Once he reached the doors to the Command Center he easily sliced them open and stepped onto the bridge. There was only one person in there: Defera.

Rince charged forward and swung his lightsaber at her head. Activating her own she brought it up to block Rince's attack.

Without delay the Jedi Knight went for her left leg and was able to nick it before she batted it away. He began to push her backwards with attack after attack, his anger fueling his thrusts. Defera was clearly surprised by the force of his attack yet she knew that he would also be most vulnerable in this state as he was concentrating on offense, not defense. With no warning she dived to the floor and shot for his ankle. The Jedi jumped up and over her.

She prepared to renew her attacks but before she could she hit the ground.

When Defera opened her eyes she saw the face of Obi-Wan Kenobi. Instinctively she reached for her lightsaber but found that her hands were bound and her lightsaber was no where to be seen. She tried to speak but nothing came out.

Smiling grimly Obi-Wan said, "One of the Clone Troopers shot you with a stun blast as you tried to attack Rince. You are going to feel numb for quite awhile."

"I still can't believe they stunned her," said another voice. She glanced to where the voice came from and saw Rince Vunian. "They should have killed her while they had the chance."

Obi-Wan looked over at him. "Rince, all life is sacred. Besides wouldn't you think she's more valuable alive?"

Rince didn't speak.

Continuing Obi-Wan said, "I'll let her rest for tonight and when can question her in the morning."

A feeling of dread woke Obi-Wan Kenobi up and he knew it had to do with Defera. He alerted the other Jedi and told them to meet him in the prison area of the base.

When they arrived he noticed that Rince Vunian was not with them.

Without a word Agen Kolor opened the door. On the other side was one of the most gruesome sights Obi-Wan had ever seen. From the get go it was quite obvious Defera was dead. The cause of death was blood loss as the floor was filled with it. Her legs and arms had slashes all over them. She had been tortured. But by whom?

Then it hit him. Only one person had the means and reasons: Rince Vunian.

"He tortured her," he mumbled. "He got his revenge."

The other Jedi said nothing in return.

"He probably tortured her and, if I'm not mistaken, she told him where Count Dooku was. He's going to get his revenge on him. Revenge is the most dangerous feeling for a Jedi. There is no doubt in my mind that Rince Vunian has gone to the Dark Side. Even if he is still fighting for us, Rince Vunian has turned his back on the Jedi way." Obi-Wan turned to face the other Jedi.
"This just keeps getting better and better, doesn't it?"

Star Wars

Victory Quest VII:

Enemies

Previously...

Rince smiled. "Perhaps we should attack." Every head turned towards him as if he'd just suggested that they go shoot themselves.

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To Rince Vunian,

I have lost ten thousand troops since the beginning of this war. I confronted

Palpatine about this but he brushed it away. After our disagreement I confronted him

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again and told him that I would denounce this damned war. He replied "That wouldn't be advisable." Naturally I told him where he could go. That night a good friend of mine was killed. I never thought that it was homicide until a few days later. A warning perhaps. I did some research. Got some names. The Elite. They are an organization. Fanatical I dare say. If you have found this than some disaster has probably befallen me.

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"This just keeps getting better and better, doesn't it?"

Part One: The Fall's Going to Kill Him

Varonet

“Are you saying Rince Vunian killed her?” Anakin asked as if it was impossible.

“Yes, I am.” Obi-Wan kneeled onto the ground and studied Defera's body.

“I find it unbelievable also my young, Padawan but it did indeed happen.”

Goror stepped forward. “Rince did seem like an angry one.”

Kayla nodded. “I can vouch for that.”

Agen Kolor said nothing. Silence soon brought about an uncertain feeling.

Hopeless, even.

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Breaking the tension Obi-Wan said, "I think we should tell the Jedi Temple.

Coruscant- The Chancellor's Office

The Following Day

Supreme Chancellor Palpatine looked at the faces of Padme Amidala, Bail Organa and Orn Free Taa. All esteemed Senators of the Republic.

"I'm sure," began the Chancellor, "that you've all heard of Rince Vunian's acts on Varonet. The Jedi have informed me that he is going to face Dooku. They also said that in the state he is in he could be seduced into joining them."

Padme sighed and put a finger to her temple. "I thought he was one of the more commendable Jedi Knights."

Bail replied, "That means nothing. The Force can be dangerous and powerful. One can't know what it could do if it is used in the wrong way. Poor Rince seems to have fallen into the trap of using the Force in a selfish way. The Jedi call it the Dark Side."

Padme could have sworn that there was a faint smile on the Chancellor's lips but it quickly went away. The Chancellor said, "Tomorrow a set of new laws are going in affect. This set of laws will ban several species from certain activities as their species has been

known to collaborate with the Separatists. These species are: Quarrens, Neimoidians, Genosians, Aqualish and several other species.”

Orn Free Taa spoke up and said, “You know that you will be called racist and the Separatists will use this as propaganda.”

The Chancellor nodded. “Indeed I do. But it is for the security of this planet. I can see no other way.”

Orn nodded. “I also must congratulate you on the victory on Varonet. This will no doubt raise the public’s moral. And that can’t possible be a bad thing.”

“No, not usually.”

Padme asked, “What of our next move? With this victory perhaps the Separatists might be more willing to have a peace treaty.”

“Senator Amidala,” began the Chancellor coolly. “I would love to have peace but don’t be naïve. The Separatists have no intention of giving up anytime soon. Which is precisely why I have asked Master Windu to join us.”

In the corner of the room stood Jedi Master Mace Windu. Every head except for Palpatine’s turned toward him. None of them had noticed him.

Palpatine continued, “We intend to wipe out the Separatists, or at least hurt them, by killing Count Dooku. The Jedi are going to Morishim to lead a massive assault on the rather large Separatist base their.”

Cutting him off Padme said, “But they’d never win!”

“They don’t have to. Once our attack commences a large army from the Separatist headquarters will come to help them.”

Padme sighed. “That may leave the Separatist base open to attack but we don’t even know where it is.”

“One person does.” Mace Windu spoke for the first time. “Rince Vunian.”

Padme shook her head. “We don’t even know where he is.” Then she realized what they were planning.

Palpatine smiled as he saw that she understood. “With the majority of the Separatists gone Rince Vunian can easily get into the base. Then he can slay Count Dooku.”

Padme let out a breath. “But when this war started Obi-Wan and Anakin face off against the Count and both of them were defeated. Only because Master Yoda was there were they saved.”

“You have to remember. Anakin and Obi-Wan had been prisoners off the Count and then fought in one of the most violent battles in this war. It was amazing they could even speak to the Count let alone face him. Besides, this is the only chance we got at ending this war quickly.”

“You’re using him as a pawn,” Padme whispered. “How can you do that?”

Master Windu shook his head. “I don’t like it anymore than any of you do.”

“I think it is necessary.” All eyes turned to Palpatine. “This is could be a great victory.”

The doors to the Chancellor’s office opened and a Clone Trooper came running in interrupting the Chancellor.

“Chancellor, we have a situation. A group of Super Battle Droids have just entered the building. We must get you to safety!”

Padme jerked her head up. “Where are these Droids?”

The Clone pointed out the door. “Near section 25.”

Padme hurried out the door. “My aides are down there. I need to make sure they are safe.”

Bail objected, “They’ll be fine. You have to come with us.”

It was too late though. Padme hurried down flights of stairs not wasting anytime to take the lift. She opened the door and entered into a battle. Clone Troopers were fending off a group of Battle Droids and civilians crouched down in the corner. Her aides were among them.

“Dorme! Come over here I have a safe exit.” Padme gestured to the door. She glanced back at the Droids and saw there was no way Dorme could get through. Then two Droids fell to the ground as a green lightsaber activated. A Jedi Knight! She thought happily. Unfortunately the Knight was outnumbered and received a shot to the chest. He gasped and fell to the floor. Meanwhile the Droids were advancing on the Clones. Behind the Clones came the Senate guards who joined the fight against the Battle Droids. Padme realized that they

would win but the Super Battle Droids might reach the civilians and Dorme first. Taking action she crawled over to the fallen Jedi who was still breathing. She grabbed the Jedi's lightsaber and activated it. She swung the green blade into the surprised Battle Droids. With her help the Droids were soon mopped up. She hugged Dorme and brought her over to the staircase. "You, OK?" she asked.

Dorme nodded and replied, "They were after you. They came right for us. They thought you were with us."

"Me?" Then she realized what was going on. Nute Gunray, the leader of the Trade Federation had once blockaded her planet in protest to the new taxes on the Trade Routes. Along with Jedi Knights Obi-Wan Kenobi, Qui-Gon Jinn and Anakin Skywalker they were able to destroy the blockade. That was about eleven years ago. Now Nute Gunray and the rest of the Trade Federation were part of the Separatists and he had no doubt convinced Count Dooku that she must die. Probably to shut Gunray up Dooku smuggled a group of Battle Droids to Coruscant. There was no way the Battle Droids could get even close to the Chancellor but there was a chance they could get to her. She'd have to be more careful from now on.

Jedi Knight Anakin Skywalker, her husband, was at her side a moment later. "Padme are you all right?"

She nodded. She could tell Anakin wanted to kiss her right there but he knew he couldn't as their marriage was a secret. Jedi didn't often marry but it was forbidden

for an apprentice to do so as it distracted them from their studies. Naturally this did not stop Anakin.

Padme stood. "Let's get out of here."

Anakin nodded in agreement. The two left together.

Mace Windu entered the room and saw the fallen Jedi Knight. He sighed and thought to himself, another one.

Dubrillion- One of The Confederacy's Main Planets

Droid 458 was programmed to do one specific job and he like to think he did it well. His job was to go to several different planets and deliver food and other supplies to the Separatist bases their. Dubrillion was 458's favorite stop as Count Dooku was often stationed their. 458 had always hoped to meet the Count one day. Hopefully that day would be today he thought.

458 left the cockpit of his ship and entered into the back room. He looked over all of the boxes and everything looked in order. Any minute now the docking authorities of Dubrillion would arrive and help him unload everything. 458 rather liked the docking authorities. They were very nice people and treated him as if he was a human being and 458 liked that. Secretly 458 hoped to lead a squadron of Battle Droids into battle. After all he had had fighting experience. Once he defended his ship from a group of pirates. That was something he often boasted about to...well basically everyone.

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A noise from one of the containers brought 458 to attention. He walked over to it and lifted the lid. He looked inside and a green blade ignited and stabbed him through the head. 458 crumpled to the ground. A shadow lifted itself from the box and walked over to the doorway. Silently Rince Vunian left the ship and began his trek to face Count Dooku.

On the other side of the planet Count Dooku was addressing the Separatist Council. He stood before the massive circular table. At the table were seated a representative from all of the Separatists.

“Some of you,” began Count Dooku, “have already met the person I am about to introduce but most of you haven’t.”

A clanking sound came from far down the hallway. Footsteps.

“May I introduce...”

The footsteps got louder and many of the representatives got a chill. Something evil was coming down the hall.

“...General...”

The footsteps were so near now that several representatives glance hurriedly around at each other. Nute Gunray looked particularly nervous even though he had already met General...

“...Grevious.”

Through the doorway stood a creature that looked like it had just stepped out of Lucifer’s dungeons. Its body was hidden inside of a gray cloak. Only its robot like head could be clearly seen. Two slits in the robot head revealed two yellow eyes filled with hatred. The being, if one could call it that, stood still and watched the representatives. No one doubted that this being was pure evil. General Grevious was a thing straight out of Hell.

Count Dooku continued, “The General has been assisting me lately in planning our latest conquests.”

The representatives were in a state of shock.

“The General will be leading the defense of the planet Morishim. The Republic is launching a massive assault there. We intend to repel it. The General is quite capable of doing this. But for now there are other matters that need our attention.”

His appearance no longer needed General Grevious left the room.

Part Two: The Elite

Dubrillion- The Following Day

The cloaked figure approached Count Dooku swiftly. The two were on a balcony looking out at the mountains. Far off a storm was approaching and already the sky was dark.

“Lord Sidious,” spoke Count Dooku to the cloaked man, “it is good to see you. What is it that you need?”

“Do not hurry me Lord Tyrannous.”

Dooku sighed. “I suggest you not call me by my Sith name while we are hear.”

“Suggest all you want, Dooku but remember that *I* make the decisions.”

“I wouldn’t dare forget it, Darth Sidious.”

Sidious was silent before saying, “What of our devices? Are they all in place?”

Dooku looked outward toward the mountains. “Yes. We placed the first one on Ylesia just as you ordered.”

“Yes. Send down the machines.” Ezzan clicked off the comlink and approached OHH -8, the commanding droid. OHH -8 was skinny looking and had a snouted face plate. Only the gold markings on him distinguished him from the other Battle Droids. “The diggers are under your command OHH -8. Be careful.”

“Yes, sir,” his mechanical voice responded.

Ezzan just nodded in response and hurried back to his transport.

“We placed the next one on Bimmiel.”

“Don’t send the fleet. Order them to retreat,” spoke Palpatine.

General Tiiver, a male human nearing middle age, gaped. “What?! We have been putting this fleet together just for Bimmiel. Once it arrives the odds won’t be so favorable for the Separatists.”

Palpatine leaned back. “No doubt. But the Separatists are expecting our fleet to arrive. Let’s put them off their footing. Alert General Fisto to retreat when he feels the need to. The Separatists will no longer be confident that they can predict our movements. This is, in many ways, a victory for us, General.”

“Once the Republic fled we were able to place the second device there. The third was slightly tougher.”

A huge force pushed Rittark to the ground. When he opened his eyes a Jedi Knight was standing over him. The Knight was in his late thirties and had a red beard. Rittark recognized him immediately. “Obi-Wan Kenobi,” he hissed. Looking around Rittark saw destroyed Droids everywhere. He had definitely underestimated the Jedi. To his right Duffer was being handcuffed. “I don’t know anything,” said Rittark.

“Master, do we have to waste our time here. We took the bridge. Can we leave now?” moaned, what Rittark guessed, was Kenobi’s apprentice.

Kenobi turned to face his apprentice. “Anakin we have a Confederacy ship in our hands. Imagine what we could do with this. Besides the Chancellor ordered us specifically for this mission.”

“Surprisingly the Jedi were able to take Zeneb. We were forced to flee along with the device. But do not worry. It has been planted where it needs to be.” Dooku turned back to look at Sidious. “Well this really prove a test for Master Vunian?”

Sidious turned. “Yes. It most certainly will.

Just one more thing Dooku. Does anyone else know of this?”

Dooku sighed. “One person knew but she is now dead.”

Count Dooku looked at the holographic map of Thyferra. “This is where we will have to strike next,” he said to Defera who stood next to him. “Yet its’ defenses are too strong. We need somewhere else to place the third Atupk.”

Defera looked at the holographic display and began looking at other planets in the system. “Atupk? Is that its’ proper name?”

“Yes. Did you read the file on it?”

“Indeed I did,” she replied.

“There is one other person I worry about. One other who may know of our device.”

Obi-Wan Kenobi was opening the door to the Senator’s shuttle when he noticed the machinery.

At first he thought it was connected to the wall but he realized it wasn't after a few seconds. The machines looked as if they would be used for digging. I'll have to remember to mention this to the Council. With that he took off.

“Master Kenobi now knows that we were digging for something. He is the only one I worry about.”

Rince Vunian took the super battle Droid by surprise and sliced its head off with a swift move. Smiling he began moving down the corridor.

Darth Sidious sensed a tremor in the Force. “Master Vunian is near. I never thought he would reach us this fast.”

Dooku looked slightly worried. “Do you think he will be able to track us to our temple. If he can't then all will be lost.”

“Oh he will be able to. He is rather resourceful. Need I remind you of the events on Ord Mantell?”

Both Rince and Zair called upon the Force and their lightsabers came to them and they activated the blades. With no words they went into a defensive stance ready to take on Defera. Words were now useless. No words the two Jedi said could stop Defera.

The three meet and both Jedi blocked her swing. As the blades hit a crackle filled the air. Rince jumped up and behind Defera but she swung one part of her blade behind her back to block his swings. There was no doubt that Defera was the one on the offensive. Rince tried to change this. He hit the ground rolling and swung at Defera's legs as Zair swung at her head. Defera easily placed her blade in a position to block both strikes.

Soon the three were nearing the edge of the platform and Defera was still on the offensive. Rince swung at her head from above yet she easily blocked the attack. Then it began to rain. The rain caused the lightsabers to crackle even more yet the Jedi and Defera did not seem to notice. The fighting did not slow in the least bit. Both Zair and Rince had their backs to the railings as Defera kept pushing them forward. Her attacks were swift and powerful. The Jedi blocked all of her attacks yet were not able to slash at her.

With a jump and a kick she sent Zair flying into the rail. Yet Zair hopped back up and regained his position. He slashed at her legs and caught her offbalance. The Dark Jedi had to jump back and she suddenly found herself on the defensive. Then the rain came down harder. Soon visibility was terrible but yet again the Jedi and the Dark Jedi were not affected. The battle still raged on. A constant blocking and parrying as they crossed to the other side of the platform. Rince and Zair continued to push Defera farther back. Rince slid onto the ground and chopped at her legs. She blocked the attack, but only

barely. A worried expression crossed her face, for only a moment. She was beginning to lose. She had to do something.

But Rince did something first. He launched himself at her and kicked her to the ground.

“I can assure you that you don’t have to Master Sidious. I believe that it is time for us to depart, though.”

Coruscant- The War Room

“General Tiiver. Welcome,” Supreme Chancellor Palpatine said as the aging General stepped into the room. The entire Defense Council was seated at a long table. Several Jedi Knights including: Master Windu, Obi-Wan Kenobi and Yoda were there, also. At the end of the table sat the Chancellor. “Let us get to business. General Tiiver, I would like to hear your views on the attack on Morishim.”

“I’m afraid I haven’t been briefed on that yet.”

“Oh,” replied Palpatine. “Well I’m sure you’ve heard of the tragic betrayal of Rince Vunian.” Palpatine continued giving Tiiver no time to answer. “Rince Vunian has become quite powerful. Almost as powerful as Master Kenobi or Anakin Skywalker I dare say. But time will tell. To get to the point Vunian wants to kill Dooku. His reasons are unimportant. The Jedi are

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going to lead an assault on Morishim to distract the Separatist army. Dooku will be forced to take a good section of the Separatist army and put it on Morishim. This will make it easy for Vunian to get into the base of Dooku. Once he is in I'm sure he will do a tremendous amount of damage. Eventually he will take on Dooku. If all goes well Dooku will die. Even if he doesn't Vunian will have taken down half the base by then."

Tiiver thought all of this over and then replied, "You are betting on one man taking on an entire base. This is quite ridiculous. There must be some other reason you are doing this!"

Palpatine just leaned back in his chair. After awhile Mace Windu broke the silence. "If Rince does destroy part of the Separatist base it will be a major victory for us. And there is a chance that we might even win at Morishim."

"A slim chance," shot back Tiiver. "Why don't we just fly our fleet into a sun instead? We'll get the same results! Whose plan was this anyway?"

"Mine," spoke the Chancellor. "It is fruitless to argue. All that I want, General is your advice on how to take the base."

"Don't attack. There is my advice."

"General..."

Tiiver finally gave in. "Fine. Let me review the battle maps." An aide handed him a datapad and the maps came up. After a few minutes the General spoke up. "The planet has two moons. Both have bases on them. If we knock out one base we can land on Morishim a bit easier. The rest of our fleet can make sure the other base doesn't do anything... foolish."

Palpatine smiled slightly. “Thank you for your insight, General. Our fleet will be leaving tomorrow.”

Obi-Wan Kenobi breathed in deeply. He had known for sometime that he would be leading the assault on Morishim. Yet never before had this task looked so difficult.

He was in the Command Ship and on the bridge along with his apprentice Anakin Skywalker. Kenobi turned to Anakin and said, “You better get down to your ships. I’ll download the information on your attack vector once Tiiver gives it to me. We’ll be pulling out of hyperspace in less than an hour. Be careful and may the Force be with you.”

“And with you, master.”

Coruscant- Palpatine’s office

Senator Padme Amidala sat in the Supreme Chancellor’s office surrounded by a group of other Senators.

For the first time the Chancellor spoke. “Senator Amidala, I have been thinking of your safety as of late. With the recent attempt on your life I’ve decided that you may need extra protection.”

“I can assure you that that is not needed, Chancellor.”

“I insist.”

Into the room walked two Royal guards. They wore long cloaks that went down to their feet. The cloaks were blood red as were the face plates that they wore to protect their faces and perhaps their identity.

“These are my Royal Guards. Sometimes known as the Elite,” said the Chancellor as he leaned back in his chair. “I have assigned two of them to protect you for a little while at the least.”

Padme stood as the guards made her slightly nervous. “I can assure you that this is not needed.” Before Palpatine replied one of his aides whispered something in his right ear.

The Chancellor stood up. “Our fleet has just pulled out of hyperspace and is about to begin the attack on Morishim.”

Part Three: The First Charge

Morishim- Separatist Territory

“All starfighters launch!” hollered General Kenobi. Hundred of Starfighters were bullets as they flew out of the hanger bays of the Republic capital ships to meet with the Droid Starfighters. They glided through space with ease and precision.

Farther off was the first moon that held a Confederacy base. This was the Republic Starfighter's target.

The Republic Starfighters all flew in triangle formation. There were twelve triangle formations in all and twenty ships per formation. Anakin Skywalker was at the point of one triangle. The young man was calm and relaxed. In fact he was enjoying himself. He loved being in the cockpit of a fighter and now he was leading a whole squadron of them. He was in a great mood. The cockpit was small yet Anakin didn't feel cramped. He glanced down at his radar and saw a squadron of Droid fighters heading for a capital ship. General Tiiver's capital ship.

General Kenobi's voice crackled in through Anakin's communication panel. "Take down those ships that are harassing Tiiver's ship. Once those are down he'll be able to move forward and assault the base."

"I copy," replied Anakin. He readjusted his communication unit and set it so that he could speak to his whole squadron, "Two Suns", at once. "All right guys listen up. I want Two Suns One through seven to attack that enemy squadron near Tiiver's ship. As soon as you fire at them pull off and make it look as if you're retreating. We'll be coming in behind them in the mean time."

Two Suns One through Seven obeyed.

Anakin twisted his ship one-hundred degrees and flew towards Tiiver's ship. The rest of his squad followed him. As they came over the bow of the ship they turned hard to the port and began firing at the Droid fighters.

Anakin gripped his control stick and placed his finger on the firing button but didn't push it down. He got a lock on one of the ships and dived down and shot at the top of the ship. The ship was too fast and turned starboard as the laser bolts flew harmlessly past.

Not giving up Anakin followed it and just barely missed colliding with another enemy ship as he did so. The young man was not fazed. His target was almost in his sights. He moved slightly starboard and let loose several laser bolts. The bolts shredded the fighter to pieces.

Another enemy fighter took advantage of Anakin being distracted. It was a fatal mistake.

Once Anakin realized that there was another ship behind him he completely stopped his ship and flew down and then came back up. The fighter was in his sights for a moment but not long enough for him to get a clear shot at it. The fighter turned back towards Tiiver's capital ship and fired several missiles at it. The massive ship did not seem to be affected by this. Yet Anakin knew it eventually would once its shields failed due to too many enemy ships firing too many missiles.

Anakin gave extra power to his engines and shot forward firing his lasers. The enemy ship managed to dodge the shots as it flew back and forth. Since a Droid was flying the ship Anakin knew there had to be a pattern and he soon saw it. Anticipating the ship's move towards the right Anakin let loose several blasts of laser fire. The blasts hit the enemy's engine and it blew apart. The Jedi apprentice smiled.

"We've cleared Tiiver's ship," Anakin said to his squad. "Farther out is a small warship. It's literally a box with laser cannons and a shield generator. Let's go for the shields."

The shield generator was a large sphere on top of the deadly warship. It was easy to target but the ships many laser cannons made it hard for small ships to get at. Yet Anakin knew he could do it. “Once I knock out the shields you guys let loose your missiles. Then we’ll head back home and get our missile tubes reloaded.”

Anakin flew forward swerving and jerking so the enemies lasers couldn’t get a lock on him. He was hit a few times but it was nothing serious. The sphere came into view and Anakin shot off a missile. The sphere exploded and the ships shields went down. Anakin broke off and headed back to the squadron. Behind him the warship crumbled apart as missiles hit it. “Let’s get some more missiles and head back out,” Anakin ordered. The weary pilots happily complied.

When they were only a few kilometers away from their capital ship they were ambushed by another warship. It fired down on the small fighters and managed to take down one of Anakin’s squad mates. Anakin ordered, “Diverge and head back to the capital ship.” Anakin’s orders proved to be smart ones as Obi-Wan’s capital ship annihilated the warship with large blasts from the ships turbolasers. Anakin grinned triumphantly.

He landed his ship like a pro and watched as the mechanics quickly looked over his ship and refilled his missile tubes. A moment later Anakin took off again along with the rest of his squadron. “Okay, we’re gonna strike at one of the Trade Federation Droid Control Ships.”

The fighters quickly turned toward on of the Droid Control Ships that was about three thousand meters in diameter and was shaped like a donut with a break in the circle

at the front which was where the Droid Fighters took off. In the middle was a huge sphere that held the bridge. Behind the bridge section was the shield generator. That would be the first target. Unfortunately the shield generator was surrounded with turbolasers and ion cannons as was most of the ship.

“Get into formation. When we’re within the enemies targeting range everyone scatter and take shots at their sensors. While you’re doing that me and Two Suns five through eight will try to hit the shield generator. Break off...now!” The fighters veered away from each other and unloaded their missiles into the enemies sensor relays. One of them blew apart and Anakin smiled. They just might make it out alive.

He flew back and forth to avoid enemy fire. The shield generator was just ahead. Red laser fire hit his wing and his ship banked to the port side. “Ah! Seven cover my run. I’ll loop around once I get back on course.”

“Complying.” Seven unloaded a missile into the shield generator. The generator was powerful and easily withstood the attack. Five, Six and Eight flew in behind Seven and continued to lash out at the generator.

Anakin got back on course and let off a missile. A direct hit. The generator exploded in a second. “All right, the shields are down. Did we lose anyone?”

“Yes,” Two replied, “Six, Four, Nine, Fifteen and Nineteen. Sixteen is extravehicular. I doubt he’ll make it. The bridge is still too well defended. We won’t be able to destroy it.”

Anakin was stubborn. “We can do it. Trust me.” His sensors started to beep. “Wait I’m picking something up: Droid Fighters. Break off and engage except for Two, Five and Fourteen. We’ll hit the bridge.” Anakin knew that they wouldn’t be able to destroy the bridge but perhaps they could damage it.

As soon as the enemy commander noticed that ships were heading toward the bridge he ordered the Droid Fighters to attack the rogue ships.

Anakin saw them but it was too late: Two was shredded.

“Break off,” Anakin ordered. As he turned to break off he saw the bridge erupt in flames. “What the...?”

“Evening, Anakin,” said a very familiar voice.

“Goror? I didn’t know you were here!” Anakin was delighted to hear the Jedi’s voice. He glanced back and saw Goror’s squadron coming in. Or at least what remained of it. The attack on the bridge may have been successful but it had cost them many lives and ships. Yet Anakin was happy. They had a break in the action. He looked outwards towards the other fights being raged. It was one of the bigger battles Anakin had seen. Capital Ship versus Capital Ship. Starfighters versus Capital Ships. Starfighters versus. It didn’t seem like it would end.

Obi-Wan’s Command Ship

Obi-Wan looked at the current reports and breathed a sigh of relief. They had an opening in the battlefield. They had a place where they could land. Obi-Wan turned to a Clone Commander. “Tell the troopships to land. Also tell them that I’m coming down with them. In the end we’ll ALL be on the battlefield.”

Victory Quest VIII:

Heroes

Part One: The Insane Assault

Morishim

The Gunships screeched as they flew through the air raining terror on the Super battle Droids below. The Gunships descended out of the sky and landed on the ground to let off troops. The Clone Troopers banded together and ran towards the battle.

Chaos was the only way to describe the battle that was taking place. There were no bases in site. Just two massive armies on the rocky plains. Each army came at the other full force and when they met no one could see anything but dust and laser fire. But one could easily hear what was going on. Explosions were everywhere along with screams of pain as Clones fell down, dying.

At the rear of the Republic battle lines was General Obi-Wan Kenobi. He stood with his Padawan, Anakin, who had just landed. Next to Anakin was General Tiiver and they were discussing the situation in the makeshift barrack.

“We’re gettin’ slaughtered,” growled Tiiver. “We can’t hold out against forces of this size. Most of our capital ships are in ruins and Separatist reinforcements haven’t stopped arriving. Dooku sure has it in for us. On top ‘o that the Separatist general is insanely smart. I’ve never seen Battle Droids move like that. He’s using tactics that we would never dare try. And their working.”

“I know,” replied Kenobi. “We’ll have to pull back and regroup. Get some of the Jedi onto the front lines. We’ll push forward again in an hour.”

The Clone Troopers slowly moved back, still firing, and began to group back together. The Battle Droids backed off for reasons unknown.

At the barracks Anakin looked surprised. “Master, the Droids are moving back.”

Kenobi nodded. “A smart tactic. The Separatists want to regroup while we do the same, so when we’re ready they’re just as ready.”

The young Jedi sighed, “Master Obi-Wan I don’t see a way out of this.”

“Nor do I.”

At that very second an explosion ripped through the barrack. “Droids are behind us!” hollered Tiiver. “We’re surrounded.”

That was an understatement. The Republic forces were like a small dot compared to the Droids.

“I guess we can forget about regrouping,” Obi-Wan said dryly as he turned on his lightsaber.

He turned to face where the barrack had fallen. Droids flooded in through the gaping hole. Obi-Wan called upon the Force and manipulated the air to push back the first few Battle Droids. As they fell he ran forward and began hacking away at the enemy. Even though he was outnumbered Obi-Wan did not flinch. His saber was flying elegantly through the air as he destroyed Droid after Droid. They fired relentlessly at him yet the Jedi Knight either swerved

easily out of the way or deflected the shots back at him with his saber. Kenobi seemed unstoppable.

Obi-Wan lashed out at two droids with his leg and stabbed another through it's "eyes". Without missing a beat he pulled the saber back towards him and throw it at the new Droids that were entering. The saber lobbed off all of their heads. The Force brought the saber back to Obi-Wan's hand and he smiled. So many Droids down and he hadn't even begun to sweat.

Clone Trooper 546 ran up to the General. "We've been able to secure the area around the barracks but we still can't escape."

The General looked at the Clone evenly. "Take a squad and blast a small hole through their lines. My forces and I'll be right behind you. This may be our last hope."

"Yes, sir," saluted 546. He ran out of the barrack and signaled for his squad. "Let's move!"

The group moved as one and they all fired as one. Soon a small hole was in the Separatist force and Kenobi was right behind them giving them fire.

The group fired and rolled and fired again as the forced their way through. Some of them fell yet they continued. Unfortunately the hole began to shrink.

Belkadan

Rince Vunian had left Dantooine, one of the main Separatist bases, and followed Count Dooku's ship to Morishim where he saw a battle happening. He didn't bother to stop. His mind was set on doing one thing: killing Dooku.

From Morishim Dooku went to Belkadan. Rince felt like he was being tested. Perhaps he was.

Once on Belkadan Dooku's ship had entered a small cave and landed there. Rince landed farther away so he could scout the area before striking.

As he was about to leave his ship his holocommunicator beeped for the thirtieth time. He didn't know why he hadn't thrown it away earlier. Something was telling him no to. After sighing he decided to activate it to see who wanted to speak with him so desperately. He wasn't surprised when the image of Yoda appeared.

"Master Vunian! Return to the Jedi Temple immediately, you must. In danger you are."

Rince shook his head. "Not until I finish what I set out to do. Then I'll return and you can do what you want."

Yoda frowned. "Know what your plan is I do. To kill Dooku it is. Sensed it through the Force I could. Once you've killed Dooku in cold blood, go to the Dark Side you will. Once down the Dark path forever will it dominate your destiny."

"To Hell with that and to Hell with you!" He smashed the holocommunicator into the wall and departed the ship.

The landscape was rocky and a storm was far off yet Rince Vunian noticed none of this.

“Master Rince Vunian. May I have a word with you?”

Rince whirled around, his lightsaber ignited and came face to face with a tall man who seemed vaguely familiar.

“I’m sure you don’t recognize me,” said the figure. “But believe me when I say that I am Anakin Skywalker.”

Rince snorted. “Is this the best you can do, Dooku,” he shouted. “A rather pathetic attempt!” He turned back to the figure. “Anakin Skywalker is about twenty years old and you’re in your forties!”

The figure shook his head. “I am from the future.”

“Really? So tell me who wins the next galactic championship as I got fifty credits on...”

“Sarcasm doesn’t suit you, Rince. Perhaps Zair but not you. I *am* from the future.”

“Time travel is impossible.”

“Nothing’s imposs...”

“Cut the crap. I have no time for this.” He began to walk away when the figure spoke again.

“You’re not from this time either.”

“I beg your pardon?” Rince said as if he were talking to a three year old.

“Allow me to explain. It will seem complicated at first but bear with me.”

“This outta be good.”

The figure ignored Vunian’s jests and began his tale. “I’m, as I said before, Anakin Skywalker. My coming to the Jedi was foretold long ago. They called me “The Chosen One”. The one who would bring balance to the Force. I was found on a planet called Tatooine by Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn who told me that I could become a wonderful Jedi Knight.” The figure stopped for a moment and sighed. “Unfortunate circumstances caused me to have to be trained by Obi-Wan Kenobi. But other people had different plans. Namely the Supreme Chancellor. He knew that I could become the most powerful Jedi and he slowly gained my trust and began to tell me half truths about the corruption in the Jedi Order and how they weren’t dealing with the coming crisis of the Sith. Little did I know that he was a Sith Lord. He was Darth Sidious.”

Rince’s head popped up. “You’re telling me that the leader of the Republic is a Sith Lord?”

“Yes. As a matter of fact he was plying both sides. His apprentice, Darth Tyranous, or as you know him, Count Dooku, lead the Separatists after he convinced them to part ways from the Republic. The only reason Palpatine wanted this was so he could have a reason to create an army and so he could have a reason to take full control of the Republic. He became a dictator. That is where we are now. He’s using this war as a reason to create a large army that he, as the leader of the Republic, can have full control over. A few years from now the Republic no longer exists and a new order is established: The Empire. The Sith Lords killed

all of the Jedi with my help. I never realized it but Palpatine was slowly turning me to the Darkside and he used me to kill all of the Jedi. I couldn't turn back. I was completely under his control.”

“Well, I have no idea where this is going,” moaned Rince.

Anakin hushed Rince and continued. “Some still believed in Palpatine after he died and decades after his rule a group of heretics thought they found a way to bring him back. I'm hoping they fail. Weather they fail is up to you.”

“How so?”

“The heretics found a piece of ancient technology that could transport things into the past. Using DNA from the dead Palpatine they created a clone in it's zygote state of life. They managed to change the phenotype of the clone so it wouldn't look the same as Palpatine. They then used the time device to send that Clone back in time to a planet called Kamino where they left instructions for who found the Clone. As you should know Kamino is a cloning facility so they had the technology to care for it. The one billion credits that they sent back to the Kaminoans convinced them to take care of the Clone. With the Clone were instructions to give it to the Jedi saying that they thought it had Jedi potential. And it did. The heretics knew that Palpatine would be drawn to this Jedi as he was so powerful. If Palpatine managed to turn this Jedi to his side he could be invincible.”

“Where's this Jedi?” asked Rince.

Anakin looked at Rince. “You are that Jedi.”

Part Two: Greivous Problems

Morishim- Day 5

Obi-Wan Kenobi, along with Anakin, Tiiver and 546, had made it out of the battle alive and had regrouped with their army. The battle was at a standstill for the moment.

“We’ll need to construct more trenches so we can give ourselves cover when the Separatists decide to attack again,” Obi-Wan stated to 546. “These plains offer us no cover at all. We’re lucky that the clouds make it harder for the enemy to see us.”

And it indeed was cloudy. Small droplets of rain had begun to come down an hour before. The plains’ soil had turned to mud and it was becoming difficult to travel. Luckily the Republic Troops weren’t the ones that had to travel.

“Yes, sir,” responded 546. The clone then turned and barked out orders to the others. Obi-Wan meanwhile approached Anakin.

“Anakin, have you had any luck in connecting our ships above?”

The young apprentice shook his head. “Non at all. The Separatists are jamming our communications. We just have to hope that the battle is going well up there.”

Goror was leading Dragon Squadron in attacks against the Trade Federation Battleships. He had been doing so the last six days with only a few hours for sleep.

He squadron had just destroyed a gunship when he announced, “Let’s move away from here. There are some other Battleships about fifteen thousand kilometers starboard of us. Adjust your course so we can intercept them. We’ll arrive within firing range in about thirteen minutes.” The Jedi Knight leaned back in his seat. It had been a hard few days for him. Goror had lost some close friends.

Yet one friend was still with him: his droid counterpart R5-K5.

R5-K5 was on his starboard wing. R5 was an astromech droid with a cylinder body and two small legs. R5 was designed to help Goror in his hyperspace calculations along with warning him of in-coming ships and adjusting the shields. R5 units were in a Jedi Starfighters and some Jedi used them more than others. Goror had become attached to R5 over the years yet it wouldn’t seem that way to an outsider as the two often bickered yet it was a friendly bickering in a way. The Droid communicated to Goror with shrill whistles and beeps. The translations of what the Droid was saying appeared on a computer screen in Goror’s cockpit.

Goror turned and looked out of his cockpit and gave the little droid a wave. “How are we?”

On the computer screen the Droids’ words appeared.

I am fine. How are you?

“As good as ever, I suppose. How are our shields?”

Shields are at 37%. Not good, if you ask me.

“37%? That’s not good at all.

I’m glad you’re here to tell me that.

“Quiet, you,” grunted Goror as he looked down at his sensors.

The Separatist ships were approaching. “We’re going to be seeing some action. Are you ready?”

I am quite ready. I’ll try to see if we can get more shield power before we attack. Is that okay with, you?

“Yeah, it’s quite okay with me. But let me tell you, we’re going to need help and soon. The republic won’t be able to hold out for much longer.”

Belkadan

In the gloomy caves of Belkadan Darth Sidious and Count Dooku waited for Rince Vunian’s arrival.

“He should already be here,” mumbled Dooku.

Sidious chuckled. “No. Not yet.”

“What do you mean?”

“There is one part of this that I have not mentioned to you yet, Lord Tyrannous. Rince Vunian is my clone. He’s finding that out now.”

Dooku took a step back. It took a lot to surprise the Sith Lord but Darth Sidious had managed it.

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“Do not look so surprised,” Sidious stated dryly. “The clues were all there. Why else would I take so much interest in him? At this moment he speaking to a hologram of the ‘ghost of Anakin Skywalker’. This ghost hologram is spinning out a tale that is extraordinarily far-fetched. There are truths in it, though. I programmed the hologram to state the following false things: he’s from the future, heretics that are loyal to me have captured a time machine and I also told him that I died and my empire fell with me some time in the future. Rince will believe this as the hologram will tell him things that only Rince would know.”

Dooku took a couple of steps back. “But why do you want him? And how do you know these things about his past? And what else is Rince Vunian being told.”

The cloaked man raised a hand to stop Dooku. “All in due time. Now let us await the arrival of Rince Vunian.”

Morishim

The Separatist Command Center on Morishim was deep below ground. About forty feet beneath the rain soaked soil.

In the center of Command and Control stood General Greivous along with Nute Gunray and Shu Mai.

“Our forces are holding out well,” stated Shu Mai with almost no enthusiasm.

Nute Gunray was visible nervous. “There is something going on her that does not fit. This seems almost desperate.”

Shu Mai nodded but the General said nothing. He stood there taller than the rest of them. Even the droids and technicians that scurried around the room were much shorter than the General. He was wearing a dark gray cloak that hid his entire body except for his face which was hidden by a mask. Yet some wondered if there was even a face under there.

Shu Mai turned to the General. “Do you know what the Republic is trying to do?”

The General turned and left the room.

Nute Gunray asked, “What is he doing?”

Shu Mai left the question unanswered.

Coruscant- Bail Organa’s Office

Senator Padme Amidala was growing angrier by the minute. “The Supreme Chancellor is no where to be found and the Republic is losing on Morishim. We have to do something.”

Bail Organa of Alderaan turned to Amidala and frowned. “We don’t have the authorization to do anything. The Chancellor is ‘elsewhere’ according to his aide Kinman Dorian. What do you intend for us to do, Padme?”

“What no one would expect us to do.” Her smile seemed to take up her whole face.

Morishim’s Atmosphere

Goror could sense something was wrong immediately. The Force was telling him something. He couldn’t put it to words but at that moment he knew that he had to go down to the surface of Morishim. He sent a message threw to his second in command and told him that he was in charge. Goror then turned to R5 and said, “We have a change of plans. We’re going down to the surface.”

For once R5 was quiet.

Goror steered his ship down towards the ground of Morishim until he felt satisfied that he was where he needed to be. The Jedi Starfighter landed and Goror jumped out. “Stay here,” he said to R5. R5 beeped his goodbye.

Goror would never see R5 again.

Part Three: Greivous Unleashed

Morishim

Only a minute had passed when Goror saw a small figure in the rocky distance. He began to run and was running faster than he ever thought he could. As he came closer to the figure he saw that it was not small at all. It was bent over. And now it was standing up.

“Jedi!” The icy voice made Goror stop in his tracks. “You have met your match,” the figure said. The figure was cloaked and looked ominous.

Goror took a deep breath and the big man said, “Who are you and what are you doing?”

The figure moved forward and Goror could fully see him now. There was no question as to who this was. It could only be General Greivous.

Goror took a step back. The General took one forward. With a swift movement two lightsabers appeared in the General’s hands.

Goror stood tall and ignited his own green lightsaber. The General ignited his to reveal one green blade and one blue blade. Perhaps the most shocking thing was that his arms were robotic.

“You’re a Jedi?” asked Goror.

“No. I am the General.”

“Of what? Cliché’s? You’re like a bad guy out of a corny story”

Actually Goror was scared out of his wits.

“Fool.” Greivous began to move forward but Goror was too quick.

The Jedi lunged to his left and struck out at Greivous. Greivous blocked the attack with his right

lightsaber and he swung his left lightsaber at Goror's head. Goror ducked and stabbed at Greivous' robotic foot. This time it was Greivous who was too fast, blocking the attack with a quick swipe. Goror jumped back and pushed out at Greivous. The General barely noticed.

The big Jedi feinted a blow at the General and then jumped too his right and ran towards the large device the General was working on. Goror raised his blade and plunged his saber right through it. The Force told him he did what he had come to do. Goror smiled.

Greivous, meanwhile, jumped high and brought both of his blades down on Goror's head. Goror brought his blade up and blocked the assault. The force of Greivous' attack pushed the Jedi to the ground. With a thrust downward Greivous stabbed Goror's heart. The Jedi jerked and fell dead.

Belkadan

Sidious' head came up quickly and he turned to Dooku. "The Atupk has been destroyed." An angry look passed over his cloaked face. "We have lost one of our most valuable possessions. Who was guarding it?"

Dooku swallowed. "Greivous."

"Hmm... That device along with the others would have allowed us to detect the Jedi."

Dooku raised an eyebrow. "The others on Ylesia and Bimmiel are still in place."

Sidious shook his head. "We needed all of them to be in place for it to work. The Atupks would send out beams that would bounce off of each other and create a large area, that would cover most of the galaxy. In that area we would be able to locate any Jedi as the beams can sense a heavy Force presence. We could have found the Jedi easily but now it will be more difficult. Nevertheless we will still hunt down all of the Jedi eventually. "For now let us await the arrival of Master Vunian."

Morishim-The Final Day

General Obi-Wan Kenobi lined up the remaining Jedi Knights. About fifty in all. The stood at the base of a hill. On the other side of the hill waited the Separatist Army. They had finally cornered the Jedi.

Obi-Wan's eyes scanned the Jedi's eyes. "With only a hundred clones left and twenty Jedi things may seem hopeless. Perhaps this *is* a hopeless situation. But that doesn't matter now. We make a stand here. It may be our last one but it will be for the good of the galaxy. We can retreat. Yet that's all we've been doing." He paused and then continued. "We can retreat like we did at Ylesia, Bimmial, Jabim. I can go on. But I won't. It's time we showed the Separatists that the Jedi Knights are a force to be reckoned with! We may be peace keepers but we are soldiers when we have to be." Kenobi took a deep breath. "NO more running. NO more hiding. This ends HERE and NOW! I know this has been hard seeing your

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friends die on this forsaken planet. Let's end this. Once and for all. No more death after today. We go in full force and do our best. That's all we can do." He turned and looked up to the top of the hill. "Let's go."

Twenty Jedi Knights activated their lightsabers and charged up the hill.

Kenobi reached the top first and looked down at the droid army waiting below. It was massive yet Obi-Wan kept on going. As did the rest of the Jedi.

The battle droids and super battle droids raised their blasters and shot at the onslaught coming at them.

The Jedi raised their sabers and deflected the shots back at the droids.

Some of the Jedi howled as they ran down and met with the droid army. Obi-Wan hacked away at droids as he pushed forward. Slash, block, slash, block. It was like a dance.

He whirled around as droids formed a circle around him. He moved faster than the droids and sliced off their heads. Droid parts clattered around as they hit the ground and rolled into each other. It was raining.

On board *The Glory of the Naboo*

Senator Padme Amidala had never led an entire fleet into battle before but there was a first time for everything. After leaving Coruscant she took the fleet from her home planet of Naboo and took command of it. The Separatist would be facing the full force of the Naboo.

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“Ma’am, we’re coming out of hyperspace.”

Padme came out of her thoughts and spoke loudly, “Contact the General of the Separatist forces.”

A few moments passed until the holographic image of General Greivous appeared. “Leave, people of Naboo,” he ordered. “You will all die.”

Padme grinned. “Our force is large, Greivous. Stand down. IMMEDIATELY.”

The image of Greivous winked out.

“Did we get through to him?” she asked aloud.

No one ventured a guess.

Morishim

General Kenobi was growing tired and he could tell the other Jedi were, too. The droids seemed to just keep coming.

It was at that moment that Kenobi saw the most beautiful sight he had ever seen. Above his head flew ten squadrons of Naboo Starfighters.

General Greivous entered the Separatist command center and said simply, “It is time to leave.”

A few hours after the arrival of the Naboo starfighters the droids were either destroyed or in full retreat. Padme Amidala came down to see the battle herself.

Obi-Wan approached Padme a few minutes after the battle had completely ended. “That was rather dangerous of you to come here. You could have been killed.”

Padme turned to face him. “Obi-Wan.”

“Yes?”

“Shut up.”

The Jedi Knight grinned and Padme did also. The grin left Obi-Wan’s face a moment later. “We lost a lot of Jedi today. Over a hundred. We lost General Tiiver, too.”

Padme just nodded.

Belkadan

It can’t be true, thought Rince Vunian as he entered the cave where Dooku’s ship had gone. Could he really be from the future?

That, he said to himself, would have to be decided at a later date.

Tonight he had a meeting with Count Dooku. A meeting that would change Rince’s life more than he could ever know.

Victory Quest IX:

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Memorial Day

There needs to be a time where we can appreciate the work that the Jedi have done. The sacrifices that they have made. This time will be in three weeks: the anniversary of the start of the war. Memorial Day - Palpatine

Round One: Vunian vs. Dooku

Belkadan- The First Annual Memorial Day

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The cave was large, large enough for Dooku's ship to fit through and land. Rince Vunian was hell bent on reaching that ship and killing it's occupant. Yet Master Vunian was missing one tidbit of information: Dooku's ship had two people in it and the second person was even deadlier than Dooku.

The gravel on the ground of the cave rose and fell as Jedi Knight Rince Vunian ran towards the large opening at the back of the cave. The opening was like a giant mouth ready to eat Rince Vunian for lunch. Nevertheless Vunian ran as if he was a man gone insane. Perhaps he was.

Rince Vunian had only one thought in his mind and that was to reach and kill Dooku. It seemed, to him, that he *had* to do that. Justice must be served, he thought to himself. It's only fair. He was responsible of the death of Zair McDashin and countless other Jedi. When Rince Vunian had to speak and name some of the Jedi that had died at a large funeral service a few months ago, Rince knew that Dooku had to die. First the Jedi killed Dooku's pawn, Defera, then he set his sights on Dooku. Now he had the chance to end it all.

There was one part of Vunian's mind that screamed at him. You shouldn't be doing this! Something isn't right, it said. Vunian did not listen. He blocked off that part of his brain even though he knew that what it was saying was true. It was too late now, though. He had to go through with this. The confrontation had to happen. Dooku *must* die!

There he was. Inside the hole in the cave stood Count Dooku, leader of the Confederacy of Independent Systems, also know as Darth Tyrannous, Sith Lord.

There was no exchange of words as Rince Vunian ran towards Dooku. Both knew what was going to happen.

Rince Vunian ignited his green lightsaber as he leapt into the air and struck down at Dooku. With a swift motion Dooku ignited his own red lightsaber and the two saber's met with a screech as energy beam hit energy beam.

Vunian through himself backwards and slashed out at Dooku with his blade. With an inhuman howl Vunian charged forward and hacked at Dooku's head and Dooku brought up his saber to block the attack. The Jedi Knight was quick and fought against Dooku pushing him backwards, farther into the cave. Yet, for some reason, it seemed as if Dooku was really in command.

The sabers clashed and the two opponents charged back and forth at each other with intense anger. The two men slowly circled around each other lashing out at odd moments. The blue walls of the cave were scorched as sparks flew.

Vunian moved forward and put Dooku back on the offensive forcing him backwards. The two were slowly moving towards a small tunnel in the side of the wall that led back up to the surface and, eventually, to the top of a cliff.

Dooku's elegant movements seemed to clash with Vunian's clunky, yet powerful, assaults. Screeches echoed throughout the cave as the combatants entered the small tunnel. Dimly lit it was harder to fight. After a few moments light filtered through and the men came out of the cave and attacked each other harder than before. Finally Dooku jumped backwards and the battle entered into a stalemate mode.

Neither moved yet both looked as if they were the predator and the other was the prey.

The eerie silence was broken when Vunian charge forward and brought up his saber and brought it back down in an arc. Dooku countered the block and thrust towards Vunian's abdomen. The Jedi parried the move just in time yet his robes were slightly scorched.

Vunian twirled his saber in front of Dooku, taunting him. The Sith Lord did not move.

Rince breathed deeply and renewed his attacks. Dooku easily parried the other's advances and slowly forced Vunian to go up the hill.

Rince didn't seem to notice and continued to slice at Dooku and parry his assaults. Finally, in an act of pure rage, lightening flied from Vunian's left hand and Dooku brought up his saber to block it. "Ah, you surprise me using such a Force power, Master Vunian," Dooku said in a mocking tone. Vunian was in a state of such rage that he probable didn't even hear what Dooku was saying.

The two went at it again and Rince was forced up the hill even further. He was losing ground and fast. Rince was growing furious and attacked Dooku even harder. Yet, even though he was attacking Dooku powerfully, he was becoming sloppy in his blind rage. He soon found himself with a few too many close calls.

With a deep breath the Jedi seemed to become a different person and his attacks regained elegance. Dooku let himself be pushed backwards, into the tunnel.

The red and blue blades were flying about as they entered the tunnel. Dooku lunged forward and caught Rince off guard. Rince slammed into the wall and slowly sank to the ground as his vision began to cloud. He slashed out to keep Dooku back and jumped back up as he inhaled. His vision cleared and the two Force users entered into the main cave.

Rince attacked Dooku with an uppercut and Dooku jumped back. “Very good, Master Vunian.” Again, Rince seemed not to hear. The two shot back at each other and the battle became more dangerous than before. The two fought viciously both hoping to catch the other off guard but neither did. Thrust, parry, thrust, parry. It was like a sick and twisted dance. The blades twirled around and hit each other as the opponents hoped to strike a killing blow. Lunge, block, lunge, block. The dance continued.

Finally they backed off of each other and regained their breath. A second later the battle was back on and the two moved in at each other. Slashing at Vunian Dooku finally managed to wound him in his left shoulder. Vunian grunted and crawled backwards, gasping for breath. He fought to stand and get back on the offensive.

He jumped back up and feinted at Dooku’s legs and arms. Dooku was not fooled in the least bit by the others fake moves.

“Come now, Master Vunian. Unleash your anger.” For the third time Rince did not respond.

“Stop,” said a newcomer.

An invisible force pushed Vunian to the ground. A moment later Vunian looked up and saw that a newcomer had used the Force to push him to the ground.

Darth Sidious revealed himself. He was completely concealed in a cloak bar his mouth.

“Good evening, Master Vunian,” Sidious said dryly. “Amazing that in a way I’m talking to myself.”

Vunian put his right hand on his left shoulder and found that it was covered in blood from Dooku’s attack. The Jedi Knight turned his attention towards Sidious. “So it is true. I am your clone.”

“Yes.”

“But why? And how did you know? You made me didn’t you? You created me! Correct? Ah!” he growled. “I’m not from the future am I.”

“Confused, my friend.”

Rince stared at the cloaked man. “Not anymore.”

Sidious chuckled. “I see my intelligence has remained intact through the process.”

Vunian roared and activated his lightsaber. With a flick of his hand Sidious sent Rince flying backwards and the Jedi’s saber clattered to the floor.

“You will find that I am more than a match for you, my young friend.”

Sidious walked slowly towards Vunian and the Jedi suddenly felt cold. “I would have never guessed that my plan would work so well. Whether you like it or not, Master Vunian, you are

mine. And you have unknowingly done *my* will. You have been my spy in the Jedi Order. Perhaps not the only one. But you were the best. Do you know why? Because you didn't even know that you *were* a spy. You sent me a transmission of the going ons in the temple. In the middle of the night you would send me detailed messages." Sidious smiled a twisted smile and said, "You have done well. You have truly become one with the Dark Side. Everything that has happened in your life has been orchestrated by *me*. I knew Zair's death would push you over the edge. If you think about it, Master Vunian, you murdered him." Sidious cackled.

"Liar!"

"Ha! You know that what I say is the truth. You can no longer deny your fate! You will be my instrument. You will do my will!"

"No!" Vunian stood. "I am a Jedi Knight!"

Sidious spread his hands. "You ceased being a Jedi the moment you met Defera. That is when your downfall began. Everything has led you to this moment in time."

"I'll never join you. Whoever you are!"

"You know who I am."

"Yes," Vunian said softly, "I do. You are Darth Sidious."

Sidious smiled. "Correct. I am the true Sith Master!"

Vunian smiled sadly. "Is it also true, then, that you are Palpatine?"

Sidious chuckled but Dooku grew worried. "What are you planning to do with him, Lord Sidious?"

"All in due time, Lord Tyrannous."

An angry expression crossed Dooku's face. "No. I demand to know!"

"Silence."

Rince smiled. "Lover's quarrel?"

Sidious didn't seem to hear. He paced back and forth. Finally he spoke, "Join me, Master Vunian and together the galaxy will be ours."

Round Two: Vunian vs. Sidious

"I'll never join you, Sidious. I may be your clone but I am a different person at heart. Don't ever doubt that. I am a Jedi Knight."

Sidious chuckled. "You are very mistaken my friend. Your anger is there. It has consumed you and yet you still try to ignore it! Embrace it, it is your destiny!"

"No!" Rince was shocked out how loud he said this. Yet for some reason it still sounded hollow.

"Don't ignore your fate, Master Vunian. You, like Defera and Ezzan, can no longer turn *back*."

The Jedi Knight shook his head. "That's not true! You are a monster! I will never stoop to the likes of you."

Finally Sidious seemed to lose a little bit of patience. "You *are* me, Vunian! You can deny it all you won't but you are me."

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Vunian stuck out his hand and shot lightning straight at Sidious. Sidious raised his hand and seemed to absorb the lightning. As he did this Vunian went for his lightsaber and ignited it. Dooku went to go for his own but Sidious stopped him. “Let Master Vunian see how much power he can have if he truly embraces it. Come, Rince. Attack me with your saber. Witness the power that you can have. See what you can do!”

Against his better judgment Rince came barreling forward and swung his lightsaber at Sidious’ head. An invisible force seemed to hold it back and Rince found himself being thrown across the room. Sidious walked forward and unleashed lightning that wracked through the Jedi’s body.

Rince flailed back and forth, barely able to stay conscious.

“Do you finally see what you can do if you fully embrace the power that you have?”

“I yield!” Rince was breathing hard. The pain was almost too much to bare.

Sidious shook his head. “I really don’t think you do.” And with that he unleashed another round of lightning.

“AHHHHHHH!!!!” Rince gasped as his vision clouded and darkness engulfed him.

Round Three: Vunian vs. Vunian

Jedi Knight Rince Vunian could sense the two Sith Lords' presence as he became semi-conscious.

I told you, said a voice in his head. Your anger has broken you. It has given you nothing but pain and destruction. You are a broken man because you let your anger take command of you! Do you even have control over yourself at all.

Rince tried to block out the voice but as he did another began to speak. This voice was familiar: it was Zair McDashin.

All this destruction that you have done is to avenge me? Why do I doubt that, Rince? Why do I feel that on some level you wanted this? You are a clone of Sidious and his anger and evil is inside of you. You need to conquer it. I could have helped you if you had only told me. But you didn't! You told no one. Now look where you are! Half dead and facing two Sith Lords who are more powerful than you are.

Rince knew that Zair's voice was really a part of his conscious but a part of him felt that if Zair was here he would say that. Why didn't I tell you Zair? Because I was too afraid. I've always known that it was there. This evil part of me that seems to slowly eat away at me.

It was at that moment that Rince Vunian remembered what Master Yoda would often say, "Fear leads to anger, anger leads to hate, hate... leads to suffering." That circle of hatred had happened to Rince and he wondered if there was any way for him to turn back now.

There isn't, said the voice of Defera. *You have truly become one with the Dark Side. You are like me! You have failed completely. How does it feel that I get the last laugh, Rince. I've beaten you! I have beaten you! You are now just like me!*

Then the dry voice of Darth Sidious made itself known. *You are mine. There is no turning back. Everything that has happened has led you to this point. From the events on Ylesia to the battle of Varonet to the chase from Dantooine to your arrival here and your meeting with the ghost of Anakin Skywalker.*

Veerya, the young intelligence agent who had a crush on him, spoke in a harsh yet loving tone, *You saved me and you seemed to be the ideal person and now look what you have become. A man ruled by his hate and anger. Almost a pathetic figure. Rince, I love you. Come back to me.*

She is dead now, said the voice of Sidious. *I needed her dead so I had it arranged. Unfortunate that she met you. Really it was your fault she died. Just like it was your fault that Zair and General Cambini died. And at this very moment a large army fights on Morishim. The Jedi Council sent a task force there to create a diversion hoping that this diversion would let you reach Dooku more easily. Don't you see? The Jedi Council is using you as a pawn.* At that moment Vunian knew that Sidious was talking to him. Sidious' voice wasn't his conscious, the Sith Lord was reading his mind. Perhaps the biggest tragedy of all was that Rince Vunian did not care.

Sidious continued, *Where was the Jedi Council when you were forced to mourn the death of your friend, Zair? Where was the Jedi Council when you*

were slipping away from the Jedi path. They didn't care! They were using you. They don't care about you at all. They are using your weakness to their advantage. Join me, and you can have your revenge upon the Jedi Council!

A part of Rince knew that this wasn't true. Rince shut that part of his mind away and embraced his anger.

Round Four: Anything Goes

Rince Vunian slowly came back to consciousness and shook his head to clear his mind.

“Welcome,” said Darth Sidious. “to the Dark Side.”

Rince stood. “Why, thank you. But there are a few things I'd like to know first.”

Sidious was silent and Rince took this as a sign to ask his questions. “How did you orchestrate all of this? How were you sure I'd come?”

Darth Sidious said nothing as he was deep in thought. So many factors were involved but which factors did he tell Rince Vunian? Could this ex-Jedi be trusted? Finally the Sith Lord decided to tell him only part of the story. “You were cloned on the planet of Kamino and then sent to the planet of Ord Mantell where I paid off a man to claim that he

was your father. That man brought you to the attention of the Jedi Knights. They began to train you.”

Rince thought about all of this. “I don’t remember anything until I was the age of five.”

“Your memory was wiped right before I gave you to the Jedi.”

Rince shook his head. “That still leaves questions. How did you know I would come here?”

“I made sure you were assigned to the mission on Ord Mantell, where you would meet Zair and Defera.”

Things started to come together in the Jedi’s mind. Yet one question still remained. “*How* did you make sure I was on Ord Mantell?”

Sidious said nothing.

“I want to know,” stated Rince. “I need to know this.”

“No,” replied Sidious dryly, “you do not need to know.”

Rince had an idea forming in his head, though. The hologram that said it was the ghost of Anakin Skywalker had said that Sidious and Palpatine were one. Was that true or was it a lie like some of the other things that the hologram had said? He tried to put it together in his mind. If Sidious did want complete control he had to know that the Separatists couldn’t give him that. But the Republic was powerful enough so naturally Sidious had to get into a position of power in the Republic. What was a more powerful position than Supreme Chancellor of the Galactic Republic? Yes, it did fit. But one large question was still unanswered.

How did Sidious, if he indeed was the Chancellor as Vunian suspected, get to become Chancellor? So many unanswered questions...

At last Vunian decided to ask one last question: "Who trained you in the ways of the Sith?"

Sidious was silent for a moment and then decided to give out that information. "Darth Lamian."

Rince didn't know if this was true or not but he decided to investigate a little bit more. "Is he still alive?"

"No. He is dead. When he died I became the Lord of the Sith."

Vunian had a nasty suspicion that Sidious had killed his master. He wouldn't put it past him. "Just one more question. Why do you think I'll join you?"

"Because you want your revenge on the Jedi. They destroyed your life as you know it. As I said before you are a pawn to them. No more than an instrument to be used and then discarded. We have the means to do that."

Dooku nodded. "Indeed we do. The Sith are more powerful than the Jedi. That is how we have survived for so long."

"So," concluded Sidious, "will you join us?"

"Yes." At that moment the floor opened up and Vunian fell.

Darth Sidious said nothing as Vunian fell down the chute. Dooku arched an eyebrow, though. "What was that?"

Sidious smiled a slightly. “Master Vunian fell into the carbonite chamber. He will be frozen in carbonite for the time being.”

“Why?”

Sidious sighed. “You haven’t figured it out yet, Lord Tyrannous? I’m disappointed in you. I have perfected the freezing process and he will not age a day until he is released from there.”

“How long do you intend to leave him there?”

Sidious chuckled. “You and I both will be dead when he awakens. I have planned for all possible futures, Lord Tyrannous. If I one day die, Rince Vunian will be awoken and take my place.”

Dooku saw a flaw in the plan. “How do you know he will follow your path?”

“He’ll have no choice. A set of directions will be repeated to him while he is frozen. Subliminal messaging. He will know what to do when he comes to.”

“What if he is not awakened?”

“I set the chamber to unfreeze him on a certain date, A long time from now.”

Dooku nodded. “So he is basically a backup? Very smart, Lord Sidious.”

“Indeed, Lord Tyrannous. Just remember that today the Sith has truly triumphed.”

The two Sith boarded the ship.

Many feet below them was the frozen body of Rince Vunian who had sworn to himself to kill the Jedi no matter the cost.

The End