

Rebels & Ruins: A Dark Revelation

Fiction by Warlord Ciara Tearnan Rothwell Tarentae

&

Battlelord Takagari "DarkHawk" KogaRyu

Deep Space

CNS Command Ship

Perdition

Consul Bentre Stahoes sat leaned back in his chair, rubbing his temples as he scanned the papers in front of him.

"Is this Intel accurate, Ashia?" the Consul asked.

"It is, most definitely," the Keibatsu replied.

"Before we rally the troops – has Master Muz seen these reports?"

"Not yet, but he should be arriving any moment," the Augur said.

Within moments, the Consul's door slid open and the Lion of Tarthos entered. Both the Consul and Proconsul greeted the Grand Master in courtesy.

Warlord Stahoes handed the intel reports over to the Lion. "We received these a few hours ago. If that is what we believe it is ... this is more your specialty, is it not?"

The Keibatsu scanned over the intel reports and orbital probe scans. His eyes narrowed. "That is potentially a significant amount of Dark Force looming there..."

"Exactly. Before we send the troops, a recon mission may be in order?"

Ashia studied her husband. She could almost see his thoughts formulating. One brow raised slightly as the Grand Master continued scanning the intel report.

"Agreed. A recon of this temple would be absolute," said the Grand Master.

"Who shall we send? Persons with an understanding of what this may be would be ideal," said the Warlord.

"I agree. Ciara would be most fitted for this mission with her knowledge of the Dark Arts," the Proconsul stated.

"Who should assist her, then?" Bentre asked.

With no hesitation in the response, the Lion of Tarthos spoke "Takagari..."



Deep Space

CNS Command Ship

Perdition

“Bring her in slow and steady, Ty, but with a purpose,” the Battlelord said.

The Duros looked over his shoulder in contempt towards his passenger. “Don’t look at me in that tone of voice, Ty,” Takagari said while continuing to look over his copy of a CNS Intel report.

He was Tytus O’Baieron – a scoundrel, a pirate, a smuggler, sometimes merc and now personal pilot and friend to one Battlelord Takagari KogaRyu, aka DarkHawk. “Don’t worry your pretty little head off, princess, I won’t scratch your new ride.”

The Decimator pilot locked in on its coordinates and began landing procedures. The Quaestor’s ship, Tārōn, received its clearance for landing, and the hangar doors of the Perdition started to open. Tytus expertly put the Decimator down in its designated spot, killed the engines and flipped the switch to lower the ramp. “All clear, your highness. Shall I draw you a bath for your return?” Tytus said, chuckling.

Takagari made his way down the ramp and did not utter a word, just hung a gloved gesture at the pilot on his way out.

As DarkHawk made his way on to the hangar, he noticed a somewhat unfamiliar ship in the bay. One Theta-class T-2c shuttle.

“Interesting,” DarkHawk thought.

DarkHawk headed straight to the turbolift and hit the Command level button. The doors whisked open, and DarkHawk turned left towards the Consul’s briefing room. DarkHawk depressed the call button, a voice boomed back, “Enter.”

The Battlelord entered the room and positioned himself in front of his Summit, the Grand Master. Takagari knelt before his Summit. “I am here as you commanded.”

“We have a particular mission for you, DH. We think it will be right up your alley,” Ashia Keibatsu said with a slight smile. “You know – sneak and peek, probably some killing.”

“From our Intel reports, scanners have pinpointed an abnormality in the temple that we need a closer look inside. If it is what we think it is, that is where Ciara’s expertise will be needed,” Bentre said.

“Dark Magic ...” DarkHawk said.

“Correct. You two have not been formally introduced: this is Ciara Tearnan Rothwell Tarentae.”

“Master Bloodfyre speaks very highly of you, Ma’am...” DarkHawk said, bowing.

The Tarentae carefully studied the Shaevalian, almost dissecting him. She nodded. “As does he of you, Takagari,” she said softly.

“We need the two of you to run a recon of that temple. Get in ... safely, check out the anomaly and get out, then back here safe and sound. If that is a pool of Dark Magic, we need to find everything we need to know to take that temple. That is where you two come in. Get in, get out – quietly and with haste ... saavy,” the Consul said sternly. The two Equites bowed their heads in acknowledgement of their newly acquired orders.

“Will you not be accompanying us, Master Muz?” DarkHawk asked.

The Keibatsu had almost the exact same look as the Tarentae did, only deeper. He broke from his concentration. "No ... something else requires my attention."

"We need you two to leave immediately. I have sent the coordinates to your ships via encrypted coding. Once you get planetside, relay back here to the Perdition," the Augur instructed.

The two Equites bowed to their Summit and began to exit the room. Master Muz grabbed Ciara's arm and whispered to her, "Did you see it?"

The Tarantae nodded. "He is unaware of it my Lord."

Muz nodded in agreement. "Keep an eye on him. Report back to me."

Ciara bowed once again and exited the room.

Both Bentre and Ashia carried a confused look over them. Muz simply nodded.



Yavin 4

Jungle Outside The Great Temple

A massive, blinding flash of light cut its way through the darkness of Takagari's meditations as Tytus set the Decimator down on the jungle floor. It wasn't the landing that lurched the towering Shaevalian forward from his seated position to catch himself on the palms of his hands. Neither was it the contents of his stomach that poured from his mouth to the ship's floor.

"Did you just retch water, princess? My landing wasn't that bad!" Tytus jerked his chin over his shoulder to see his friend putting his fingers to lips.

"Salt." DarkHawk flatly observed as his fingers dropped from his lips to collect the twin sabers that had initially been neatly crossed before him in his meditative trance. Rising to his feet with a poise that belied the sinking, gnawing feeling in the pit of his stomach, the Battlelord prepared his equipment to descend to the moon's surface. "Alert the Perdition that the Warlord and I have arrived."

Ambrian salt. It had been a year since Takagari had made his bargain with the Sith spirit on Ambria for the coveted luxum crystal beneath Lake Natth, but his new master had yet to call upon his oath of allegiance. Now, breaths away from a nexus of Dark Side power on Yavin 4, he was choking on the same water that nearly drowned him on Ambria. None of it made sense, but one thing was clear: whatever darkness was stirring on Yavin's moon found its mirror in his own soul.

"There's nothing quite like hunger, is there?" The voice of the Tarentae met DarkHawk heartbeats before its host, bearing the same warm, but foreboding weight as the jungle's eerily still climate. "You hunger for the power of the Sith who were worshiped here, while the ground itself cries out for more."

"For more, ma'am?" The Shaevalian kept his eyes stoically ahead as he cleared a path for both to walk, though he could do little to hide the resonance of the woman's words. He did hunger for that power – for the power of dark magic to finally be his to wield by the right of the very blood that coursed through his veins.

"For more blood, for sacrifice. Surely you didn't imagine it would come without a cost."

Takagari found himself halting his stride to look down on the Krath before replying with a voice that rang almost foreign in his own ears – as though at least two men spoke at once, “I have already paid the price.”

“Have you, now?” A knowing smile played at the woman’s lips as gold-flecked, emerald eyes almost danced with amusement. “Perhaps you have, indeed.”

DarkHawk observed the woman thoughtfully for a moment longer before he returned to his stride with a renewed vigor. With every step closer to the Great Temple, he breathed easier, thought clearer and saw farther. Despite the thick overgrowth, his direction was as clear as if he’d worn his own path for years. Trees and the jungle’s native predators were felled at his hands with an ease uncommon even to the Sith assassin. The Force felt closer than ever. His fingers tightened around the hilt of his lightsaber in eager – yes, hungry - anticipation of what may yet lie ahead.

The sound of an object crashing through tree limbs to the ground behind his back brought his swiftly ignited blade to bear inches from the raven-tressed head that was already bent over the object. Ciara’s characteristic smirk met Takagari’s gaze as she lifted the round, metallic sphere in her hands and stood to her feet.

“This must be where the scanners are petering out. This isn’t the only one to fall from the sky,” the Tarentae observed as a hand swept aside her crimson cloak to indicate the graveyard of probes and scanner droids buried under various stages of growth. “We’re close.”

They were close. But not close enough.

Darkness narrowed the Shaevalian’s field of view once more before being replaced by an open vision of a golden object – an eye? – buried behind a worn, temple stone.

The moment his vision cleared, DarkHawk sprang into action. He moved now in leaps and bounds with an intensity that was almost primal. He knew where it was. He had to have it. Despite his speed, the Shadow could sense his partner on this mission was close behind. Her physical agility outmatched only by her mental, the Seeker pressed into his consciousness in an attempt to break the spell.

Takagari. You’re overreaching the mission. In and out, remember?

It wasn’t Takagari who pushed back.

You are the one who overreaches, Krath.

That signature smirk broke into a full, crimson-stained grin. This was going to be fun.\



The Great Temple

An Inner Chamber

Tortured screams were the pair’s first indicator that DarkHawk’s vision had not led him astray as he navigated the maze of the Great Temple’s underground caverns. Yet the torn and bloodied bodies that lay under the taloned feet of the allegedly exterminated Terentatek had clearly lost such abilities days ago.

Ciara could see that the assassin's keen eyes had already locked on the prize behind the beast – a worn, loose-set stone in the temple wall. Though her fingers moved instinctively to her saber, they paused on the hilt. DarkHawk had already drawn his bow and readied a volley of arrows. Perhaps she would wait.

The Warlord watched as DarkHawk sprang into action. The Equite sprinted toward the beast; the Terentatek pawed the stone floor – scraping the decaying remains of its past victims before it made its own charge toward the Sith. In the blink of an eye, the two closed the gap between one another. Just before the two behemoths collided, Ciara watched the Terentatek lower its head to use its massive spikes to impale and stop the Sith's attack. As the beast planted its right leg, DarkHawk used the raging creature's footing as leverage to plant his foot firmly on the beast's knee. Pushing off with his left leg carrying his body into a backflip, DarkHawk swung his right leg harder through the maneuver and caught the creature solidly on the underside of its chin.

The Sith landed a few feet away as he watched the Terentatek shake its head from the blow. Without hesitating, DarkHawk brought his Nightsister bow up to the ready and launched three quick volleys at the animal. One plasma arrow hit the beast in the shoulder, sending it further into a berserker rampage. The beast thrashed its head and roared in agony. The second shot came short and bounced off the thick hide and skull of the Terentatek. The animal's thrashing caused the third plasma bolt to land wide, but it still caught the beast at the outside corner of its eye. It wailed in pain. Before DarkHawk could reset for another volley of his own, the Terentatek charged.

"Holy shhhhhh...." DarkHawk said to himself.

The beast hit the Equite sending him soaring backwards and slamming up against the temple wall. Ciara's hand gripped her saber tighter and began to unsheath her weapon. *"Wait..."* she told herself. Her senses sharper than ever, she could sense the presence of another. Ciara felt the same presence in the Summit's office. The Warlord had not planned on witnessing the events about to transpire, but she was eager to make the most of the opportunity.

Air left the lungs of the Battlelord as he slammed against the wall. Slumping to the stone floor saved him from the thrashing beast as it tried to regain itself from its wounds. Green blood splattered everywhere as the beast thrashed about.

"Get up, you dolt, before this mindless monstrosity finishes us both!"

DarkHawk tried unsuccessfully to shake the sinister whispers from his mind.

The malevolent tone resonated inside DarkHawk's head. The Battlelord rolled to his left and then sprang up to his feet. Still shaking the effects from the blow off himself, DarkHawk caught sight of the beast as it swung one of its massive arms. The backhanded strike from the creature sent him tumbling across the temple floor yet again.

"Fool! Your tactics are shoddy at best, you're no good to me dead!" the voice pierced through DarkHawk's psyche. The Equite pushed himself onto his hands and knees and began to stand.

The Terentatek, acting on sheer feral rage, was about to pounce on the Battlelord as he tried to regain his bearings. The beast began to bring its massive arms down like a hammer over the Sith's unguarded backside. As the monster started its attack, Ciara moved her arms in a circular motion and focused all her energy on her comrade. Like many times before, the Tarentae could feel the power flow through her and leap from her fingertips. The Terentatek were highly resistant to the Force, but the Krath had a few other tricks up her sleeve.

"Daboti tave tsis!" {Protect the Sith} she exclaimed in the ancient Sith tongue.

Dark magic danced across the temple and formed a shadowy barrier around DarkHawk. The beast's blows bounced off the shield, but its continued barrage began to take their toll on Ciara.

"DarkHawk, you need to move!" she exclaimed.

The Battlelord immediately rolled forward and spun around, igniting his saber. The Terentatek, drawn to both Dark Side practitioners, blood still spewing from the wound to its eye, made a direct assault on DarkHawk. The Sith was able to escape the first haymaker as the beast's clawed hand slammed to the ground. Two rapid strikes to the top and underside of its arm and the appendage split wide open, exposing severed flesh and staining the stone floor with thick, green blood.

The creature roared in agony, lashing out at DarkHawk with a retaliatory backfist. Almost instinctively, the Battlelord rolled forward. Still reeling from the last onslaught of the beast, the Sith's reaction time was not at maximum when the creature's blow grazed across his hips. Though not a direct hit, it was enough to leave a mark and definitely enough to throw the dodging Shaevalian off balance.

The creature spun around and was able to reach one of DarkHawk's legs as he continued his roll. The Terentatek threw DarkHawk again across the temple, slamming back-first about ten feet up on the temple wall. DarkHawk slid to the floor and slumped over face-first. The Sith could feel and taste blood running from his mouth and dripping inside his helm.

You're going to lose your host, spirit.

The Warlord's telepathic warning - though clearly not directed at DarkHawk - was almost drowned by the sound of his own heart pounding rapidly against the walls of his chest. Mustering what little energy he had left to slow his breathing and attempt to regulate his heart, the spent assassin watched the taloned claws of the Terentatek scrape across the stone floor in an almost painfully long final approach. With each step, DarkHawk felt excruciating pain coupled with the sensation that if his heart beat any faster it would explode from his chest.

Where was the Tarentae? Why had she not intervened? Perhaps it didn't matter now. Takagari felt the beast reach its massive paw down to lift his body up like a ragdoll. The pounding in his chest was now a pounding in his head - reverberating in his whole body. He could feel what seemed to be a trickle of blood from his ear. At last, the pain and sensations crescendoed into a scream - or a screech - that might've crumbled the walls had it outlasted the life of its host.

Takagari had screamed, but the ancient words that tore from his lips had not been his own. Neither had it been a scream of terror, but of power. The screech that followed on its heels came from the bloodied maw of the Terentatek as the shadowy tendrils of energy released from the Sith's dark utterance snaked down the beast's throat and wrapped around its heart. In moments, DarkHawk's fear that his heart may explode from his chest had become the reality of the beast - with all the satisfying fanfare of thick, green blood splattered on the Battlelord's helm before both combatants fell back to the temple's welcoming stone floors.

The power that left his body had been exhilarating, but costly for spirit and host. DarkHawk's body and mind were tapped - but his heart and soul thrilled. His oath of allegiance to his new master would not be fulfilled in distant calls or third-party missions - but within himself! The power of dark magic was truly within his grasp, but there was yet one more task to be fulfilled here.

Ma'am, the stone!

The Tarentae already had her fingers on the loose stone - a tidbit of information she'd freely lifted from the Sith's mental scape when he began sprinting through the jungle. As soon as her fingers brushed the gold of the ancient eye piece that lay behind the stone, Ciara understood why the spirit sought it - and that she couldn't let him - or Takagari - have it.

Ciara had stood back from the battle with the Terentatek to force the spirit to reveal itself. Though she hadn't anticipated that revelation requiring such a spectacular risk, she was glad for it now. Without training or an artifact to use as a focal point, the symbiotic expenditure of energy had weakened the spirit and his host long enough for her to escape with the artifact. If she was right, and DarkHawk wore it now, the spirit would have more than a focal point of energy.

Ciara knelt at Takagari's side and placed her hand briefly on his head.

"I have the artifact, Takagari. Rest now."

By the time her clanmate awoke from his long, Force-induced nap, the golden eye piece would be safely in the hands of a certain Grand Master aboard the *Perdition*.

For now, she would need Tytus' help moving the body.

Ciara depressed her communicator button, "Tytus, this is Ciara, we need immediate extraction and DarkHawk will need medical attention."

"Copy that Ma'am, eta five mic..."

Ciara looked at the eyepiece, studying it intently. Placing it securely in her backpack, she walked around the temple room for further investigation. Everything happened so fast with the Terentatek battle, there was no time until now to document the details of the temple. The Tarentae could feel the Dark Force Magic throughout the Great Temple. Though it seemed to be at its peak here in this room, overwhelming. But why? The temple may very well be built over sacred ground, then the realization washed over the Warlord.

"The entire temple is the beacon...!" she thought to herself.

Residual images clouded across her psyche from her last connection to Takagari. That had to be it, the temple itself must have released Dark Force Magic to drop the probe droids from the sky. A form of self preservation maybe, to hide its secrets? Ciara continued her patrol and made mental notes for her report.

The bodies that fell to the Terentatek which littered the stone floor seemed to be of various factions. The Collective forces, both Dark and Light Jedi, met their demise here. Ciara pulled a Collective patch off one of the uniforms, she made her way to one corner of the temple room. There she found two intact sabers from the remains of what looked like a Sith incursion, *"What could they have been searching for?"*

She bent over and picked up the two sabers, "What were you two doing here?" she said, her voice bounced slowly off the walls inside. Stowing the sabers away, she scanned the room again, paying careful attention of the bodies and where they fell. She closed her eyes and tried to recreate the scene. Visions of the fallen bounced in her mind, blood and visceral battles filled her thoughts, she opened her dark emerald eyes, allowing her sight to refocus.

"They more than likely were either killed by the Terentatek, or they died in battle..." she said. "

Just then her communicator squawked. "Miss Ciara, your chariot awaits..." Tytus said.

"Good, I will need you and a repulsorlift. We need to get DH on the ship and get out of here. And Tytus? Bring the droids with you..."

"Copy that," replied Tytus.

Tytus opened the cargo ramp, both Ciara's Imperial Sentry Droid and DarkHawk's DRK-1 droid made their way out of the ship and into the Temple. Ty activated the medical repulsorlift and followed the lead of the droids.

Within a few moments, the DRK-1 made its way inside the temple room and raced towards the two Sadowans. Ciara's Sentry droid came into the room, its metal footsteps booming across the main room, and poised itself near the exit. Ty entered and his eyebrows raised as he saw Takagari lying limp across the floor.

"No worries, he is just spent. A few wounds, mostly superficial, the severity is to his consciousness," said the Warlord.

"What the hell happened here?" Ty scanned the area and recognized a marking on one of the uniforms as well. He ripped off the patch and handed it to Ciara. "Merc faction..." he said.

"We need to get out of here and get our Intel back to Summit," Ciara said sternly.

"Indeed my Lady, this place gives me the creeps! There is something not normal here...I was getting massive power surges in the ship as I got closer..."

"Interesting.." replied the Tarentae.

The two loaded up their comrade onto the repulsorlift, quickly making their way out. Ciara and Tytus safely made it to the Decimator and secured their patient for the journey. Tytus was firing up the engines, as Ciara attached the last of the medical leads to Takagari. She made her way up to the flight deck and strapped herself into the copilot's seat. Ty depressed a sequence of buttons and the ship began to lift off the surface. As the VT-49 spun around, the engines spat and sputtered, both Ty and Ciara looked at each other "See, I told you, this place creeps me out..."

A smile broke over the Tarentae's face. Tytus made a few more throttle adjustments before the Decimator raced away, leaving the Temple behind them.



Deep Space

CNS Command Ship

Perdition

The Decimator landed inside the Perdition's hangar, and a flurry of medical personnel made their way to the opening cargo door. They quickly made further medical assessments as they disembarked the ship and headed to the central med bay.

"I will stay with the ship, ma'am, I want to give her a good look over," the Duros said with a smile.

The Warlord acknowledged the pilot with a nod, Tytus returned the gesture. Ciara walked with a purpose to the turbolift and hit the button for Command level. The doors whisked open, she turned to her left and walked towards the Consul's briefing room. Her thoughts went over what had transpired on the mission and wondered how Summit would react. Depressing the call button the briefing room door opened. Ciara entered to find Grand Master Muz, both Consul and ProConsul along with the Rollmaster sitting in their seats.

"How are our brethren and yourself?" asked the Consul.

"Good Sir, the medical personnel, took him to med bay one..." replied Ciara

Bentre nodded his head. "And the Great Temple...?" he asked.

"The temple is something that will need further investigations. Our initial studies conclude that the entire structure is a massive beacon of Dark Force Magic. I believe that power is what knocks out our probe droids, preventing any closer orbital scans."

The Lion raised an eyebrow "An anti-theft device...?" he said shallowly.

"What is it protecting?" asked Ashia Keibatsu.

Ciara reached into her pack and pulled out the eyepiece, she laid in on the table in front of the Summit members. Bentre brought the eyepiece closer to him, "Is this what I think it is?" he asked.

"I am confident enough to say yes. I believe it was protecting it. Though I also convinced there is more there to discover. The temple had a rather adverse affect on DarkHawk. He knew the eyepiece's location before we even entered the temple. A behemoth of a Terentatek protected the main room. DarkHawk and the beast fought, but that is where the anomaly took place."

"Anomaly?" asked the Rollmaster.

"Yes, as I stated before, I believe that the structure is a beacon of Dark Force Magic. As DarkHawk and the beast battled, the Terentatek had gained the upper hand. Their battle drew out the entity within DarkHawk. It reached out with its Dark Magic and destroyed the beast. I am convinced that this entity has been guiding him to our find. Again, there is much more to be discovered there, the main room was littered with the bodies of both Sith and Jedi, to include Collective and Mercenary factions." Ciara said as she placed the two sabers and two patches, she discovered on the table.

"Interesting indeed.." Bentre said.

"We can get another recon party ready for further investigation," replied the Proconsul.

Ciara bowed to her Summit and exited the room. Just before she entered the turbolift, a familiar voice beckoned in her consciousness. The Lion was reaching out to his Krath adherent, "Train him, this is a useful tool for the Clan..." the Grand Master's voice said.

"As you wish Master..." a devilish grin broke across the Tarentae.

