

Angel of the 501st

by  
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Based on the Star Wars characters, situations, and universe originally created by George Lucas. This project was written purely for fun, not for credits, and is dedicated to the members of the 501st - Vader's Fist!

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ANGEL OF THE 501ST

PART I: THE ANGEL

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away...

MUSIC

EXT. GALAXY - OPENING CRAWL

STAR WARS  
Angel of the 501st

It is a challenging time for the heroes of the Empire. Rebel thugs, spurred on by their destruction of the Death Star battle station, have continued to terrorize the peaceful worlds of the Imperial New Order.

On the Outer Rim colony of Nati IV, an evil horde of Rebel mercenaries, smugglers, and corrupt officials have ensnared an unwary populace to trade and manufacture munitions that will be used against innocent civilians.

Responding to a call of distress, the Emperor and His Emissary, Lord Darth Vader, dispatch their finest warriors, the Fighting 501st, under the command of General Maximilian Veers, to restore Imperial peace and justice to the planet...

EXT. GALAXY - PLANET NATI IV

The massive Imperial Command Ship Executor slowly moves into place above Nati IV. Several laser cannon beams emanate from its stern, flashing down to the planet's surface.

From the Executor's v-shaped underbelly, three sleek Lambda-Class shuttles emerge, followed by an elongated Y-85 Titan Dropship, and additional military support vessels. TIE fighters escort the convoy as it makes its way downward towards the planet.

INT. EXECUTOR - BRIDGE - MAIN CONTROL DECK

Imperial Emissary Lord Darth Vader stands on the command walkway before the bridge window, gazing out at the small world of Nati IV below.

Near-by, Captain Firmus Piett leaves the weapons station alcove and heads to the security foyer.

INT. EXECUTOR - BRIDGE - SECURITY FOYER - COMMUNICATIONS  
CONSOLE

PiETT looks over the shoulder of Communications Officer Lin Durn who works a control board.

DURN:  
Captain, we finally have a hailing  
channel.

PIETT:  
Good. Our laser cannons must have  
opened up their communication lines

INT. EXECUTOR - BRIDGE - COMMAND WALKWAY

Lord Vader strides across the command walkway ramp towards the security foyer as other officers and technicians go about their business above and below the main bridge control pits. Some crew members glance nervously at the Dark Lord, then return to their tasks.

INT. EXECUTOR - BRIDGE - SECURITY FOYER - COMMUNICATIONS  
CONSOLE

PiETT silently acknowledges Lord Vader with a curt, but highly-respectful nod.

A large vid screen appears above PiETT, showing a stern-faced man dressed in a simple security force uniform. He is Neal Omus, newly-installed Prefect of Nati IV. Omus waits tacitly for Captain PiETT to speak.

PIETT:  
I am Captain PiETT of the Imperial  
Command Ship Executor...By order of  
the Emperor, the colony of Nati IV  
and its inhabitants are now under  
the Empire's authority.

INT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - LOBBY - DAY

Neal Omus, flanked by two anxious Nati IV security force men, stands before a semi-circular receiving counter in the middle of a storied lobby area. A small vid screen displays the face of Captain PiETT aboard the Executor.

Behind Omus are glimpses of pandemonium from panicking traders and politicians who run to and fro within the interior and open hallway levels of the Nati IV City Center government building. Shredder droids are quickly being fed paper and data chips by frantic-looking bureaucrats. Explosions are heard in the distance.

Far from being cowed by the Imperial declaration, Prefect Omus looks relieved at the prospect of having some order restored by the Empire.

OMUS:

Captain, I am Neal Omus, acting Prefect of the Nati IV Colony...I apologize for the lack of immediate contact. There's been a...a dispute among our administrators. We accept your authority and...

On the small vid screen, Omus views Captain Piett quickly stepping away as the imposing face mask of Lord Darth Vader appears and interrupts the Prefect in mid-sentence.

VADER:

Not only will you accept our authority, Prefect, you will also assist us in hunting down enemies of the Empire...

INT. EXECUTOR - BRIDGE - SECURITY FOYER

Full shot of Lord Vader as he explains the situation to Omus from aboard the Executor.

VADER: (CONT'D)

Be prepared to support General Veers and his troops...The General is your administrator, now!

EXT. NATI IV - CONVOY - LEAD LAMBDA-CLASS SHUTTLE

Outside shot of the lead shuttle's front cockpit viewport as it zooms into the atmosphere of Nati IV.

INT. LAMBDA-CLASS SHUTTLE - COCKPIT

Dressed in full battle armor and helmet, the powerfully-built General Maximilian Veers gazes icily over the shoulders of two shuttle pilots towards the looming, mountainous surface of Nati IV.

Major Freja Covell, a tough, gravelly-voiced soldier around the age of thirty, enters the cockpit and addresses Veers.

COVELL:

General Veers, Com-Scan reports the city center's deflector shields are down.

VEERS:  
(nodding)  
What word of the Rebel outpost?

COVELL:  
A small power generator has been located outside a mountain cavern, about 12.8 klicks from the outlying farm areas...Doesn't look like much of a catch.

VEERS:  
Lord Vader wants the assault units of the 501st tested, Major Covell. We won't fail him.

COVELL:  
Yes, sir.

From the shuttle's viewport, the main city rooftops buzz by, then disappear. In the distance, a large agricultural valley set before a mountain range comes into view.

EXT. NATI IV - MAIN CITY - STREET - DAY

Secondary explosions caused by the Executor's laser cannons are heard in the distance. Panic-stricken inhabitants quickly make their way down a street away from the fiery carnage. A loud rumbling noise is heard. Some of the inhabitants pause and look upward to see an Imperial military convoy streak overhead.

Among the onlookers is a woman named Rhees Omus and her two young daughters, Amie and Aniz, ages 5 and 7, who are visibly shaken by the ominous sights and sounds of the attack.

Beside Rhees and her daughters is Lady Meena Valorian, a lovely young woman whose slightly-worn, but elegant dress and calm demeanor stands out amongst the somewhat rough and tumble crowd. Unafraid, Meena gazes intently at the passing military convoy. As soon as the last transporter zooms by, Meena turns to Rhees.

MEENA:  
The convoy is headed away from the city...only the warehouse district has been hit.

Meena shakes her head in disgust.

MEENA: (CONT'D)

There must have been armaments  
hidden there to cause those  
secondary explosions.

The crowd is on the move again. A couple of slimy-looking  
smugglers leer at the two women.

SMUGGLER:

(to Meena)

Need a little protection, Angel?

Meena gives him a withering look. The smuggler gives her a  
smirk, and then thinks the better of it. He and his cohort  
move on down the street.

RHEES:

I hope Omus convinces the Empire  
that not all of us agreed with what  
was going on.

MEENA:

So do I, Rhees...we could use some  
Imperial law and order around here!

EXT. NATI IV - VALLEY PLAIN - DAY

The convoy has landed in a valley plain set before a steep  
mountain. A small farmhouse surrounded by crops is seen  
within range of the landing. With incredible precision and  
haste, the Imperial Army sets up its ground forces.

General Veers, Major Covell, Colonel Gatz, and a small cadre  
of battle-armored commanders and officers debark from the  
hatch walk of the lead shuttle. Additional stormtroopers,  
technicians, reporter embeds, and their equipment quickly  
descend from the remaining two shuttles, followed by a biker  
scout unit.

The hovering Y-85 neatly deposits a TX-203 advance scout tank  
and four chariot-lav QH-7 assault vehicles, followed by two  
massive AT-AT walkers whose giant legs begin to unfold and  
rise as soon as the fighting machines hit the ground with a  
powerful thud. Two TIE fighters scream in and make a graceful  
landing near the heavy apparatus.

Three stormtrooper commanders join General Veers, Colonel  
Gatz, and Major Covell. They gather around a shaded  
repulsorlift portable battle station to confer.

A small group of Imperial News Net reporters set up recording  
instruments near the convoy.

Veers glances their way with annoyance. He turns to Covell with a silent "who the hell are they?" look.

COVELL:  
Reporter embeds, sir. Imperial News  
Net.

Veers' irritation regarding the news crew is brief. His attention focuses on a 3-D holo of the cavern outpost as it is projected upward from the portable battle station.

In the background, stormtroopers and technicians ready their units for the upcoming assault.

VEERS:  
Our objective is this rebel transit  
site located near the mountaintop.  
...We've been ordered to destroy  
the preliminary defenses...then  
capture the outpost for an Intel  
sweep...Any comments?

There are none. Veers turns to Colonel Gatz, a grizzled veteran who has worked his way up through the Imperial Army ranks.

VEERS: (CONT'D)  
Colonel Gatz, have your trooper's  
helmets been fitted with the  
advanced vision prototypes?

GATZ:  
They have, sir.

VEERS:  
Good. I'll expect a full report on  
their effectiveness.

COVELL:  
And may that report end all talk  
about troopers who can't hit the  
broadside of a dead bantha!

The men chuckle at the worn cliché. Veers gives only a slight smile as he turns toward the mountain and looks into his electrobinoculars.

INT. ELECTROBINOCULARS - MOUNTAIN RIDGE - DAY

Through the electrobinoculars, Veers scans the mountain ridge and locates the cavern opening. An energy shield guarding the entrance glistens in the sunlight. Adjusting his lenses, the outpost comes into focus.

Below the cavern's entrance, located to the far right, figures are seen hastily setting up defenses before a small, poorly concealed power generator.

EXT. NATI IV - VALLEY PLAIN - DAY

Gazing into his electrobinoculars, the slight smile on the chiseled face of General Veers is now cold and implacable.

EXT. NATI IV - CITY - MARKET PLACE - DAY

Smoke and ash from the warehouse district fire drifts into a market place as frightened inhabitants make their way towards the fireproofed City Center. Meena, Rhees, Amie, and Aniz find themselves surging along with the ever-increasing crowd.

Looking ahead, Meena recognizes a young man named Dyn Mawr. Dyn is moving in the opposite direction of the crowd. He looks over and spots Meena. He makes his way through the congestion to her side. Rhees and her daughters stop a little ahead of them and wait under a shop awning.

DYN:

Meena! Are you heading for City Center?

MEENA:

Yes, Dyn. Omus is Prefect now... he'll negotiate with the Empire.

DYN:

The Empire doesn't negotiate...it dictates!

MEENA:

(angrily)

If it weren't for you and your Rebel friends, this city wouldn't be in such a state!

DYN:

We've no time to argue, Meena. I'm leaving to fight for the Rebellion. (places his hands on her shoulders) So be an angel and say a prayer or two to the maker...for my sake and that of my friends.

MEENA:

There's an ancient military saying, Dyn Mawr: The maker is on the side of the big guns!

Dyn Mawr's expression is pained at the barb, but his obvious love for Meena compels him to draw her close for a final embrace. He gently kisses the top of her head. She freezes, momentarily shocked by this physical expression.

DYN:  
Good-bye, Meena.

Dyn releases her and heads up the street. Meena looks confused, worried, and then exasperated at what she perceives as Dyn's reckless abandonment of her and the situation. Meena joins Rhees and her daughters. They move towards City Center.

EXT. NATI IV - MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY

The big guns of the Empire are up and running as the 501st heads upward through the forest towards the mountain cavern outpost. Two AT-AT walkers flank the TX-203 advance scout tank, several chariot-lav QH-7 assault vehicles, and one armored troop carrier loaded with soldiers.

Hovering well before the war machines and infantry, mobile probe droids scan for any traps or land mines. Laser beams from these floating military droids ignite any hidden ordinance in a controlled manner. Smaller droids, resembling flying fire hydrants, expertly put out any blow-ups caused by the explosions with a reddish spray substance.

Two TIE fighters take turns strafing the shield generator trench area, swooping up and down the mountain ridge.

EXT. NATI IV - CAVERN OUTPOST - SHIELD GENERATOR - DAY

A handful of rebel soldiers man a short trench before a small power generator. A single turret ray gun fires down on the Imperials with little effect. Fire from a TIE fighter hits one of the soldiers. He dies. From their expressions, the remaining rebels know there is little chance of survival.

INT. NATI IV - CAVERN OUTPOST - ENTRANCE AREA - DAY

Within the cave, hundreds of containers of Rebel Alliance contraband line the inner walls and floors of the outpost. Rebels and smugglers are seen getting ready to fight or flee. Battle sounds are heard in the near distance.

The Rebel commander, a middle-aged man named Jak Toors, speaks with the chief smuggler, a tough, wiry woman who goes by the name of Bonn Brode. Brode's gang of motley looking aliens and humanoids stand in back of her.

BRODE:

No sense in sticking around, Toors,  
not with an Imp army on the way.

TOORS:

That's why we need this last bit of  
merchandise.

Toors hands Brode a small case. Brode quickly opens it up to reveal rows of neatly stacked Imperial credits. One of Brode's gang hands a heavy box to Vorra Kyrr, a pretty, teen-aged female Rebel.

BRODE:

Nice doing business with you.

Bonn Brode gives a hand signal. She and her band quickly take off down a cavern passageway.

Vorra, still holding the box, moves towards Toors. She carefully places it at his feet. They exchange anxious looks. Toors takes the lid off the container. Carefully nestled inside are a dozen thermal detonators.

TOORS:

Let's set these things up for  
remote discharge. Easy now, Vorra.

EXT. NATI IV - MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY

The Imperial AT-AT walkers continue to lumber up the mountain, smashing trees, vegetation, and crushing anything in their path. Woodland creatures flee in terror from the mechanical behemoths. Some of the furry critters are not so lucky as the AT-AT's massive legs move up and down the mountainside.

INT. IMPERIAL WALKER - COCKPIT

Through the cockpit window, General Veers and his two walker pilots view the devastation as they make their way upward towards the objective.

PILOT:

We're almost within range, sir.

VEERS:

Steady. I want a clean shot with  
minimal damage to the outpost.

Veers lowers his electrorangefinder in his black-gloved hands.

INT. ELECTRORANGEFINDER LENSE

Through the electrorangefinder, Veers views the small power generator with the meager, undermanned trench before it.

EXT. NATI IV - SPACEPORT - HANGER 37 - DAY

Thick, dark smoke from the nearby warehouse district fills the air as Dyn Mawr makes his way down a deserted street that leads to Hanger 37 of the Nati IV spaceport. The blasted body of a dead alien lies next to the hanger entrance. With his blaster drawn, Dyn moves to the side hanger doorway, punches a control, and enters.

INT. HANGER 37 - MOMENTS LATER

Dyn Mawr cautiously steps into the dimly lit hanger. He notices the body of another dead alien - similar to the species lying out on the street - slumped up against the hanger wall.

A sleek rebel prototype fighter ship, similar to an A-Wing, lies in the middle of the docking area. A ladder leads up to an open cockpit. Cargo is strewn to the side of the ship. Dyn hears a female voice come from behind him. It is Arie Nugeen, a rebel pilot.

ARIE:

Dyn Mawr?

Dyn turns slowly to face the voice. Arie is in her mid-twenties and has an air of cool capability as she lowers her blaster ever so slightly at the young rebel. She holds a pilot helmet in her other hand and is dressed in an orange flight suit.

DYN:

(nodding)

You must be Arie Nugeen. Toors sent me.

The two place their blasters back in their holsters. Arie heads towards the fighter and motions for Dyn to get on board. He goes up the ladder and climbs into the cockpit. Arie joins Dyn, putting on her helmet and talking as she enters in after him.

ARIE:

(pointing to the alien)

Had some trouble with would-be thieves...I've made a little room for you in the cockpit.

## INT. REBEL FIGHTER SHIP - COCKPIT

Dyn notes there is very little room in the cockpit as he squeezes his body back into the cramped space. Arie settles in front of him as best she can. Dyn is not so sure this will work. Arie straps herself in.

DYN:

It's a bit cozy.

Arie grins as she works some controls. She flips a switch and the fighter's lights go on. The cockpit cover closes as the engines start to rumble.

ARIE:

This fighter's a prototype...not very passenger-friendly, but even with extra weight, she'll outrun Imperials.

The engine noise becomes louder. Dyn looks over Arie's shoulder and sees the hanger door opening to reveal a smoky, barely visible flight path. The cockpit window shows the Rebel fighter lifting and heading out of the hanger area.

ARIE: (CONT'D)

(loudly)

You had anything to eat recently?

DYN:

(shouting)

No!

ARIE:

(shouting)

Good!

Dyn's head is thrust back violently against the cargo panel by the sudden force of the fighter as it zooms off into the smoke-filled air.

## EXT. NATI IV - SPACEPORT - HANGER 37 - DAY

Arie Nugeen's fighter ship soars over the Nati IV spaceport and main city. From the air, the fires from the warehouse district are spreading near the hanger docks and into some of the residential neighborhoods. The city becomes smaller as the rebel craft flies upward into the sky.

## EXT. SPACE - PLANET NATI IV

The Imperial Command Ship Executor maintains its dominance over the planet of Nati IV. TIE fighters dart to and fro.

INT. EXECUTOR - BRIDGE - SECURITY FOYER - HOLOPAD

A 3-D hologram of the battle below emanates from the holopad in the security foyer of the bridge. Lord Darth Vader, Grand General Malcor Brashin, and assorted Imperial army and naval officers observe the action as it is transmitted from the ground to the ship.

INT. EXECUTOR - BRIDGE - COMMAND WALKWAY

Across the bridge from the military assemblage, Captain Piett stands on the command walkway in front of the main viewports, observing a series of space battles between Imperials and fleeing ships from Nati IV. One such ship explodes in space. A tractor beam is pulling in another ship.

Officer Durn, now overseeing a pit crew communications station, calls to Piett.

DURN:

Captain, another ship has left the spaceport, heading for sector 2.

PIETT:

Send part of a fighter squadron to intercept it.

INT. REBEL FIGHTER SHIP - COCKPIT

Arie pilots the fighter ship. Clear sky is seen through the cockpit window.

ARIE:

My orders are to get you to Ord Mantell, then on to Echo Base...Too bad about Toors and his people... Must be hell to go up against that much firepower.

DYN:

If I know Toors, he'll take some Imps to hell along with him.

INT. NATI IV - CAVERN OUTPOST - ENTRANCE AREA - DAY

Within the rebel outpost, Commander Jak Toors and some of his soldiers are putting the finishing touches on a thermal detonator trap. Vorra stands next to him as he addresses the remaining rebels.

TOORS:

Imperial Intel can't get a hold of this stuff.

(MORE)

TOORS: (CONT'D)  
 I've rigged the thermal detonators  
 to explode as soon as our guests  
 arrive...I'll stay behind to greet  
 them.

There is a murmur of protest from the rebel soldiers. Toors silences them with a firm gesture.

TOORS: (CONT'D)  
 The Alliance needs soldiers. I'm  
 ordering you to retreat by way of  
 the back passage...You'll then head  
 to our designated shelter points.

Toors motions to one of the rebel soldiers.

TOORS: (CONT'D)  
 Call in the others.

EXT. NATI IV - MOUNTAIN FOREST - DAY

The 501st moves methodically up the mountainside. The walkers are surprising steady as they lumber over trees, rocks, and other obstacles.

Suddenly, the walkers come to a complete stop. The creature-like head of the walker on the right tilts upward aiming at the cavern entrance and power generator trench.

The rest of the elite assault units hover behind, waiting for orders to move forward.

EXT. NATI IV - CAVERN OUTPOST - SHIELD GENERATOR - DAY

The energy shield glistens in front of the cavern entrance. A lone rebel soldier is seen running out of the unprotected shield side and down to the power generator trench area. He calls to the entrenched soldiers and motions for them to come with him.

REBEL SOLDIER:  
 (yelling)  
 Fall out!

The rebel soldiers scramble to get out and to the cavern entrance.

INT. WALKER - COCKPIT

Veers gazes into his electrorangefinder.

INT. ELECTRORANGEFINDER LENSE

Through the electrorangefinder, Veers lines up the small power generator. He views the rebel soldiers retreating.

INT. WALKER - COCKPIT

VEERS:

Target. Minimum firepower.

EXT. NATI IV - MOUNTAINSIDE - WALKER - DAY

Blasts from the walker head's heavy laser cannons shoot upward towards the power generator.

EXT. NATI IV - CAVERN OUTPOST - SHIELD GENERATOR - DAY

Minimum firepower does the trick as the small power generator explodes, killing most of the fleeing rebel soldiers. The energy shield is down. The cavern opening is clearly seen.

INT. WALKER - COCKPIT

Veers looks out the Walker cockpit window and sees the generator explosion.

Miniature holo images of 501st Commanders appear on the cockpit's small holopad.

VEERS:

Prepare for ground assault. Probe droids will clear the way.

INT. REBEL FIGHTER SHIP - COCKPIT

Arie works the control panels. Dyn doesn't look well - although he's probably grateful he skipped breakfast.

ARIE:

Get ready for the jump!

EXT. SPACE - PLANET NATI IV

TIE fighters close in on the rebel spacecraft. Fire from one of the Imperials hits the Rebel fighter, but not seriously.

INT. REBEL FIGHTER SHIP - COCKPIT

The cockpit of the fighter shudders after being nicked by the TIE fighter fire. Behind Arie, Dyn is as calm as he can be under the tight, incredibly uncomfortable circumstances.

Arie braces herself, flips a switch, and watches the cockpit window shoot into hyperspace.

EXT. SPACE - PLANET NATI IV

TIE fighters zoom to and fro around the ICS Executor, which continues to hover over Nati IV.

INT. EXECUTOR - BRIDGE - SECURITY FOYER - HOLOPAD

In the security foyer, Captain Piett stands apart from Lord Vader, Grand General Brashin, and the other army and navy brass observing the 3-D holo of the Nati IV operation.

Naval Lieutenant Piers Shekel walks up to the Captain.

SHEKEL:

Sir, the Rebel fighter has gone into light-speed...The tracking device our agents installed appears to be working.

PIETT:

Notify me when it reaches its destination, Lt. Shekel.

SHEKEL:

Yes, sir.

Lt. Shekel turns, and walks away. Piett moves towards Lord Vader to inform him of the news.

EXT. NATI IV - MOUNTAINSIDE NEAR CAVERN ENTRANCE - DAY

Three Imperial probe droids float up to the cavern entrance.

INT. NATI IV - CAVERN OUTPOST - ENTRANCE AREA - DAY

Alone and ready, Jak Toors crouches behind a stack of containers. In his hands he holds a remote control box. An ominous humming sound is heard. Toors looks around the container stack to see 2 massive, spider-like Imperial probe droids hover just outside the entrance. A smaller probe droid moves in between them and enters the cavern.

INT. NATI IV - CAVERN - TUNNEL

The remaining rebel troops run down a narrow cavern passageway. Vorra hesitates. She stops for a moment, then turns, and resolutely makes her way back to Toors.

Two of the rebel soldiers note her departure. They exchange glances and follow in after her.

EXT. NATI IV - MOUNTAINSIDE NEAR CAVERN ENTRANCE - DAY

Now on the ground, General Veers, Major Covell, and the elite assault units from the 501st move towards the cavern outpost entrance. In the background, the AT-AT walkers are in low mode. Chariot-lavs hover behind the advancing troops.

COVELL:

We have clearance from the probe droids...Scanners indicate limited life form readings within the main cavern.

VEERS:

Stand-by for full-frontal assault.

COVELL:

Standing-by.

VEERS:

Converge!

INT. NATI IV - CAVERN ENTRANCE AREA - DAY

The small probe droid has entered the cavern. It floats over to the stack of containers that Toors hides behind. The droid raises one of its mechanical arms and shoots a laser at Toors. Toors drops the remote control box and pulls his blaster on the droid. He is too late as the droid shoots another more lethal laser at the rebel commander. Toors slumps to the ground and dies.

INT. NATI IV - CAVERN TUNNEL

There is light at the end of the tunnel as the rebel soldiers make their escape. The lead soldier cautiously draws his blaster and exits the passageway into the daylight. The others follow.

EXT. NATI IV - MOUNTAIN - CAVERN TUNNEL EXIT - DAY

The rebel soldiers have exited the mountain cavern to a small clearing of rocks and vegetation that border a thick forest. The rebels are about to leave when a synthesized voice stops them in their tracks.

STORMTROOPER:

Freeze!

From out of the woods and above the rocks of the cavern opening comes an Imperial assault unit of stormtroopers and biker scouts, led by a battle armor-clad Colonel Gatz.

Next to Gatz, a rather smug Bonn Brode is also seen, shrugging her shoulders in a false "I had no other choice" manner to the entrapped rebels.

The Rebels drop their weapons and raise their hands.

INTERIOR: NATI IV - CAVERN ENTRANCE AREA - DAY

The deadly Imperial probe droid hovers near the body of Jak Toors. A powerful blast of fire causes the probe droid to explode. The blast comes from Vorra Kyrr, who is joined by the two rebel soldiers who followed her back.

Stormtroopers enter. They exchange fire with Vorra and the rebel soldiers. Vorra sees Toors body, then the remote. She lunges for the remote, desperately working the controls, while the other soldiers exchange fire with the Imperial troops. One Rebel soldier is hit by a blast. Wounded, he continues to fire back.

The fire fight is becoming intense as more Imperials rush into the outpost. The Rebel soldier is finally dead. The other rebel is too wounded to fight.

The detonator trap doesn't appear to be working. Vorra gives up on the remote control and grabs a near-by thermal detonator. She manually twists the explosive open and hurls it at the feet of a stormtrooper.

The trooper sees the detonator and jumps back.

STORMTROOPER:

Watch it!

The thermal detonator lies still. It does not explode. Vorra goes for another detonator, but is stopped in mid-throw by a stun blast from the stormtrooper. The rebel female falls. The detonator rolls harmlessly out of her hand. It, too, fails to explode.

EXT. SPACE - PLANET NATI IV

The Executor hovers over Nati IV. A Lambda-Class shuttle exits the Imperial Command Ship's docking bay and heads down to the planet.

INTERIOR: EXECUTOR - BRIDGE - SECURITY FOYER - HOLOPAD

Grand General Brashin, Lord Vader, Captain Piett, and other officers surround the 3-D holo of the Nati IV operation. The operation holo fades. In its place, a life-size holo of General Veers appears.

VEERS:

Lord Vader, gentlemen: The 501st has secured the outpost with minimal damage...Intel units may start their landing.

The holo of Veers fades out.

LORD VADER:

The 501st has done well...(to Brashin) General Brashin, have Intel get to work immediately. I want the location of the Rebel's main hidden base!

BRASHIN:

Yes, my lord!

The Dark Lord of the Sith leaves the assemblage and exits through an entrance off of the main corridor. General Brashin looks at Captain Piett.

BRASHIN: (CONT'D)

Score one for the army ground-pounders, eh, Captain?

Piett gives him a tight smile. He knows it's not over yet.

EXT. NATI IV - CAVERN ENTRANCE - DUSK

The Nati IV sun sets while the soldiers of the 501st secure the area. Troopers, officers, and a few technicians are stationed outside of the cavern entrance. Boxes of rebel contraband are being brought out, labeled, and loaded onto flatbed hovercrafts for further study.

INT. NATI IV - CAVERN

Inside the cavern, General Veers stands surveying the inner workings of the rebel outpost. Major Covell is at his side playing with a thermal detonator. Covell is obviously not worried about the object going off.

Several Army Intelligence officers with datapads sift through the cavern contents while troopers carry some of the smaller containers out of the cavern proper.

Captured rebels - among them a very shaken Vorra Kyrr - are marched by troopers into a corner of the cavern. The rebels are told to sit down with their hands over their heads while a trooper methodically places stun-cuffs on the sullen prisoners.

Major Covell, still playing with the thermal detonator, looks off into the direction of Vorra Kyrr. The rebel teen looks back at the Major with hatred, and then despair.

COVELL:

(pointing at Vorra)

That girl can't be much older than my niece.

VEERS:

Don't go soft, Major. She was ready to blow us all to hell in an instant.

COVELL:

Yeah, fortunately for us, her supplier switched sides...You can't win a battle with dud detonators.

Three black tunic-clad Imperial Intelligence agents enter the area near the Rebel captives. One of the agents stands out from the other two. He is Agent Arik Ganner, an Imperial Intelligence military liaison. In his late-twenties, Ganner is a handsome, menacing-looking person who, in addition to his blaster holster, sports a distinctive red and silver lightsaber hanging from his tunic belt.

Ganner quickly looks over the prisoners. He zeroes in on Vorra, roughly yanking her hair and head back so he can get a better likeness of her face. Vorra is at first defiant, but something in Ganner's gaze and manner changes her expression to one of fear. Ganner releases her and says something to one of the guards. The trooper points to Veers. The agent walks over to the General and gives an Imperial salute.

GANNER:

General Veers, I am Agent Arik Ganner, Imperial Intel. I have orders from Lord Vader to interrogate any prisoners.

VEERS:

I take it you and your men will be setting up a detention area in the City Center building?

GANNER:

The basement is being secured as we speak.

VEERS:

(nodding)

Carry on.

Ganner nods, turns, and heads back to the prisoner area to speak with the guard detail.

COVELL:

(quietly)

Did you catch that lightsaber on his belt?

VEERS:

(nods)

I believe Agent Ganner is a pupil of Lord Vader's.

Over to the side, Colonel Gatz and an Army Intelligence officer examine the contents of one of the larger containers.

GATZ:

General, you ought to have a look at this.

Veers and Covell join Gatz. Inside the container are cold weather uniforms complete with snow hat and goggles. Colonel Gatz pulls a padded parka with a Rebel Alliance military insignia out of the container.

GATZ: (CONT'D)

All of this gear is built for extreme cold...same goes for most of the equipment we've uncovered.

COVELL:

(to Veers)

Looks like the Rebel base forecast is cloudy, with a chance of snow.

Veers is not amused by Covell's attempt at observation humor.

VEERS:

Seasonal changes occur on most planets...However, it might be wise to plan for a cold weather rapid assault.

EXT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - NIGHT

The Nati IV ground operation is over. Soldiers of the Empire neatly unfurl an Imperial flag from the three-story City Center building's front, while armed stormtroopers guard the steps leading up to the main entrance. Imperial officers and efficient-looking technicians walk briskly around, out of, and into, the colony government structure that is now being used as a temporary HQ.

To the left of the building, Imperial News Net reporters record a large group of refugees from the city fires that are huddled together, cordoned off by a tight formation of stormtroopers who hold them back.

Lady Meena, Rhees, and her two daughters, stand near the front of the refugee block.

Near the women, an Imperial officer carrying a datapad greets the arrival of Agent Arik Ganner. Ganner and the officer stand at attention, surveying their surroundings. Ganner zeroes in on the lovely Meena.

Meena notes the Imperial Intelligence agent's interest, albeit with a slight twinge of discomfort due to the intensity of his gaze. She takes the opportunity to address him.

MEENA:

Sir...may I have a word with you?

Ganner motions to a stormtrooper to let her pass. He keenly appraises the young woman, never letting his eyes off of her graceful form. Meena moves towards Ganner with dignified determination as she gathers her strength under his penetrating stare.

GANNER:

Your name?

MEENA:

Meena. Lady Meena Valorian.

GANNER:

And I am Agent Ganner...Your identification, please?

Meena does her best to maintain her composure as she pulls a small square chip out of her belt utility pocket. She hands the identichip to Ganner who then inserts it into the other officer's datapad.

Ganner carefully watches Meena while the other officer checks out a reading that instantly appears on the datapad's screen. Meena glances back at Rhees, silently reassuring her friend - and herself - that all is well. Ganner finally turns his attention to the read-out.

GANNER: (CONT'D)

Name: Meena Valorian. Birthplace:  
Coruscant. Age: Twenty.  
Occupation: Music Teacher.  
Imperial ID number: Expired.

MEENA:

I've been out of Imperial territory for some time...Would you kindly tell me who is in charge of this operation? There are civilians in need of aid.

GANNER:

Perhaps I could be of service, although I must confess, mercy missions are not my speciality.

MEENA:

Please, I need to speak with the ground troop commander.

GANNER:

The 501st is under the command of General Maximilian Veers...who is occupied at the moment.

Meena instantly recognizes the name of Maximilian Veers.

MEENA:

(confidently)

Maximilian Veers! You must take me to him at once.

GANNER:

(sardonically)

Is that an order, Lady Meena?

MEENA:

No, it is a request...from the daughter of the late Grand General Lars Valorian, who was a commanding officer...teacher...and friend of Maximilian Veers.

Partly convinced of Meena's sincerity, Ganner respectfully nods his head, and with a slight bow, motions for Meena to follow him.

A few of the officers, soldiers, and the Imperial News Net reporter embeds have overheard the exchange, recognizing the name of the Clone War hero Lars Valorian. They watch curiously as Agent Ganner and Lady Meena walk up the steps into the City Center building.

Rhees Omus and the other refugees observe, too, and hope for the best.

## INT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - LOBBY AREA - NIGHT

The chaos of the day has been replaced by Imperial order and expertise. Military droids are in the process of cleaning up the mess left by the fleeing corrupt administrators. An imposing Imperial flag, hung from the rafters, is clearly visible in the background. Portable security and control stations, manned by officers and technicians, have been set up on the ground floor of the lobby.

Stormtroopers guard the halls and open upper floors of the building. A group of Rebel prisoners that include Vorra Kyrr, some civilians, and former colony officials, are marched down a hallway by an armed escort.

Agent Ganner and Lady Meena enter. They stop before the security checkpoint station. Meena stands before a console for a retina and hand scan.

General Veers and Major Covell, still in their battle armor, stand before the lobby receiving counter conferring with a young and energetic Captain Jess Dav, Veers' very capable assistant. Colonel Gatz enters with Prefect Omus.

GATZ:

General Veers, this is Prefect Omus.

VEERS:

You're the one who sent out a distress signal?

OMUS:

I'm the one, General.

VEERS:

A prefabricated garrison will be brought down from the Executor and assembled outside the city...

During the conversation, Ganner and Meena approach Veers and the others.

VEERS: (CONT'D)

You and your men will mobilize patrols with Colonel Gatz and his troopers.

OMUS:

I understand.

Ganner stands at attention, waiting for Veers to acknowledge him.

VEERS:  
What is it, Agent Ganner?

GANNER:  
Sir, this young woman is Lady Meena Valorian...She claims to be the daughter of the late General Lars Valorian...

A surprised Veers looks closely at Meena.

GANNER: (CONT'D)  
I am currently running a complete scan to verify...

Veers raises his hand to silence Ganner and addresses Meena.

VEERS:  
What brings the daughter of General Valorian to this part of the galaxy?

MEENA:  
It's a complicated story, General Veers...one that I can explain later...Right now, I'm asking you, as commander of this operation, to grant this city the Act of Beneficence.

VEERS:  
An Act of Beneficence is not to be asked lightly, Lady Meena...nor is it given without full consideration of the events preceding it.

MEENA:  
(respectfully)  
I trust your full consideration will not be long?

VEERS:  
Until this city is secured, its inhabitants will live with the consequences of allowing illegal activities to thrive.

Veers turns to Captain Dav.

VEERS: (CONT'D)  
Captain Dav, escort the Lady Meena to more comfortable surroundings...

DAV:

Yes, sir. M'lady, if you'll please follow me.

Meena instinctively knows this is not the time to argue with or make demands of the General. She graciously gives the officers and Omus a slight bow of her head. They return her gesture with gentlemanly nods. Captain Dav escorts her to the lobby turbolift.

Agent Ganner, again, watches Meena intently. His interest does not please Veers.

VEERS:

(to Ganner)

I want the results of her identity report as soon as possible.

GANNER:

Would you like for me to question her further as to why she is here?

VEERS:

No. General Valorian was a mentor of mine. If she is his daughter, I want her treated with the utmost courtesy.

GANNER:

Yes, sir.

Ganner turns and walks off in the direction of the security checkpoint. Major Covell and Colonel Gatz exchange looks that indicate Agent Ganner is not a popular fellow with them.

Prefect Omus addresses Veers.

OMUS:

General, I worked with Meena during a Rhulusian plague outbreak...at that time, she was a great help to this city.

VEERS:

I'll take that into account, Prefect, but at this time there are more important matters to deal with.

The Prefect understands...completely.

INT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - OFFICE SUITE - MORNING

It is early morning. Sunlight streams through the windows of one of the more spacious office suites within the City Center building. Meena is curled up asleep on a small divan in the office waiting room. An open arched entry leads to work areas and a fresherette. A soft dingy sound awakens the young woman.

The office door slides open to reveal Captain Dav bearing a tray of food and a covered container of tea.

DAV:

Good morning, Lady Meena. I see you got some rest under the less than ideal circumstances.

Dav places the tray on a small table before her.

MEENA:

Yes, thank-you, Captain Dav.

Meena takes the tea container in hand, rises, and heads towards the office window. She is on the top floor of the building looking down. Holding the warm beverage, she gazes out at the sight below.

EXT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - FRONT COURTYARD

Looking outward, intense fire damage to the northern section of the city can be seen as rescue and response crafts hover over the area spraying fire repellent on the still smoldering ruins.

The voice of Captain Dav is heard during the next exterior shot.

DAV: (O.C.)

Regarding the civilian situation, the General has ordered the males separated from the women and children...Water is being given out until further notice.

The camera pans downward to the refugee block which has become less crowded. Most of the civilians are women and children sitting or resting on the grounds. Several stormtroopers hand out what looks like liquid containers to some of the crowd. The Imperial News Net crew is busy recording the activity.

A mixed patrol of Imperial and Nati IV security officers heads out into the city proper.

INT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - OFFICE SUITE - MORNING

A beeping noise sounds. Dav presses a button on his utility belt. An M-3PO military protocol droid enters through the office doors. The droid is holding a small trunk, a large velvet drawstring pouch, and an elongated music case that contains an elegant instrument known as a metaharp.

Meena turns from the window, noticing the M-3PO unit depositing the baggage on the office desk. The droid moves back to the office door and waits.

MEENA:

Those are my things!

DAV:

I took the liberty of procuring some items best not left to the fires or to thieves.

Meena walks over to the desk and smiles gratefully at Captain Dav.

MEENA:

I take it this means my identity has been confirmed?

DAV:

(smiling)

It does, m'lady. Should you need anything else, ask for me. If it's on planet, I'll find it. By your leave...

Captain Dav motions for the M-3PO. He bows slightly to Meena, turns, and is out the door followed by the droid.

INT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - LOBBY AREA - MORNING

Captain Dav exits from the elevator into the lobby area. The Imperial presence is more settled and less busy than the previous night. A few city officials are seen engaged in quiet conversations with the floor officers.

INT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - CORRIDOR

Dav walks briskly down a large windowless corridor. Unlike the formal lobby, this area is more utilitarian. Against the walls, Imperial troopers without their helmets and a few officers stand, sit, or converse with one another.

Dav passes the building's cafeteria where more Imperials and a few Nati IV security force men sit at tables eating and relaxing. A large military Nutri-bot dispenses trays of food and beverages to some soldiers who wait in line.

Outside the cafeteria, Sgt. Flax and two off-duty stormtroopers spot General Veers' aide-de-camp.

FLAX:

Captain, sir, what about that Tryax beer the General promised us?

Without missing a beat, Dav neatly pulls back a tarp off of some boxes stacked up against the wall. The familiar, scantily-clad Tryax Beer Girl, holding foaming beer pouches in each of her hands, is clearly visible on the marked containers. A rousing cheer goes up from the surrounding soldiers who quickly gather around the liquid bounty.

Dav grins and moves down the corridor to a door guarded by a couple of stormtroopers. The door opens and he enters.

INT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - SECURITY OFFICES

Located at the front of a long, windowless room, a large desk is manned by Nati IV security men. Behind them, Imperial Army Intelligence officers and technicians are examining the wall file units and information panels.

An Imperial officer waves Dav through to the back where Veers and Covell, now dressed in their gray-green service uniforms, stand before a small kitchenette, drinking hot coffee - the Imperial Army's beverage of choice.

COVELL:

(to Dav)

Corporal Riza said you saw some action last night.

DAV:

I reached both my objectives, Major.

COVELL:

I'll bet you did.

DAV:

(to Veers)

Sir, per your request, I managed to pull some of Lady Meena's things out before the fires hit...Do you have any further orders?

Major Covell is very interested in this line of conversation. He throws Veers a quick "you ordered what done?" look.

VEERS:

No, Captain Dav, that will be all.

DAV:

Yes, sir.

Dav gives a military nod, turns, and walks briskly across the room and out the door.

Veers sets his coffee down on the counter. He pulls his black gloves from his pants pocket and places them on his hands while he speaks to Covell.

VEERS:

After inspection, I'm going to speak with Lady Meena. I'll be back to look over those reports.

Covell nods his head. As soon as General Veers turns and walks across the room, Covell breaks out into a sly grin.

COVELL:

(softly)

It's good to be the General.

INT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - OFFICE SUITE - MORNING

Meena has taken advantage of Dav's resourcefulness in obtaining some of her possessions. Her long hair is combed and loosely tied back with a ribbon, which matches the modest, but becoming garment she has changed into.

Carefully laid out on the desk, next to the opened trunk, are two items of sentimental value to Meena - her late mother's sterling silver silandar, a sort of compact, futuristic tea samovar, and her metaharp, an ancient instrument akin to the Japanese samisen that lights up and changes colors, depending on the mood and skill of the musician.

Meena examines the metaharp for possible damage. She opens the instrument's power box and discovers it is empty.

A soft dinging sound interrupts her observation. General Veers enters. He is intrigued by Meena's lovely appearance, but tries to hide the attraction under a thin veneer of formality.

VEERS:

Lady Meena, I must apologize for the assurance of your identity check. When last we met, you were only a child.

MEENA:

Perfectly understandable, General Veers.

Meena points to her things.

MEENA: (CONT'D)

I'm very grateful to you and your Captain Dav for retrieving these items...The tea silandar and this metaharp are family heirlooms.

VEERS:

You're most welcome.

Veers notices the metaharp's empty power box.

VEERS: (CONT'D)

Is there a problem with your instrument?

MEENA:

The power crystal for the metaharp is missing.

VEERS:

I'll have it looked into...Your mother, the Lady Arwa, was an accomplished musician...It was with regret that I learned she had died of the Rhulusian plague.

Meena sadly nods her head in response.

MEENA:

I suppose you are wondering how she and I came to Nati IV.

VEERS:

Yes.

MEENA:

Shortly after father died, there were rumors circulating that he and others had been conspiring against the Emperor.

VEERS:

That's inconceivable. General Valorian was a loyal Imperial soldier.

MEENA:

Even so, mother and I left for Lynessa to get away from such talk. ...There, the Governor became an admirer of mine...I did *not* admire him...

Meena pauses. Veers eyes narrow at the thought of anyone - especially an Imperial official - causing discomfort to a lady.

MEENA: (CONT'D)

...We found ourselves unable to leave the system without the services of a smuggler...who abandoned us here.

VEERS:

(softly)  
Why did you stay?

MEENA:

Insufficient funds. After mother passed away, I sent word to her family...I've yet to receive a response.

VEERS:

The former prefect was known to disrupt the interchange.

MEENA:

That's hardly surprising, given the level of criminality I've seen on this planet.

VEERS:

Why then did you request an Act of Beneficence?

MEENA:

Because I believe the Empire...the Empire that my late father and you serve under...is one of honor and justice...at least to those who respect law and order.

VEERS:

I'm sorry for your recent misfortunes, Lady Meena. My deep respect for your father compels me to help you...however, I can't grant this corrupt city an Act of Beneficence.

Meena is clearly disappointed, but is prudent enough to accept Veers' mandate.

MEENA:

As a general's daughter, I shall respect your decision.

Veers is pleased with Meena's submissive response. He gazes at her with new found interest, taking in her calm beauty.

VEERS:

You've grown into a brave and gracious young woman...Your parents would be proud.

Meena blushes in response to his praise.

MEENA:

My parents spoke often of your strength of character...I'm very thankful to be under your protection.

Meena, believing the meeting is now over, offers her hand to Veers who takes the young lady's hand in his and bows slightly, turns, and heads for the door. He hesitates briefly, then turns back to address Meena.

VEERS:

Lady Meena, if there are any persons here you deem worthy of Imperial relief, you are free to help them...Captain Dav will assist you.

Meena smiles gratefully at the General whose expression is now one of surprise...and some embarrassment...by his sudden, unofficial change of heart.

EXT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - COURTYARD - DAY

A portable table with an awning has been set up in the large front courtyard of the City Center building. From the table, beleaguered inhabitants who have stood in a short line are being interviewed and processed by municipal workers.

Next to the table are stacks of small containers, foodstuffs, and water packets that are being doled out by several stormtroopers to those persons who have gone through the line. One trooper hands out treats to some excited children.

Off-duty troopers, dressed in their black service uniforms, linger, flirting with some of the volunteer local girls who are sorting used clothing at another table near-by.

The Imperial News Net team carefully records all of the activity.

Out of range of the distribution line - and the Imperial News Net reporter's scope - additional armed stormtroopers guard the perimeter while a Mark IV patrol droid hovers above.

Captain Dav and Lady Meena are seen haggling with a short, pudgy alien who is waving his arms and squealing loud, unintelligible sounds. Two armed troopers stand next to them.

MEENA:

(firmly)

I know you have the last of the utility shelters for sale, but that was not the price we agreed upon.

The alien merchant squeals indignantly. An exasperated Meena looks at Dav, who is busy punching aurebesh numbers and writing onto a small datapad.

MEENA: (CONT'D)

(incensed)

Just a few more people in need and he wants to exploit them!

Dav motions to the two stormtroopers who advance on the alien merchant.

DAV:

Have his entire supply of goods brought to the refugee camp at once.

STORMTROOPER:

Yes, sir!

The alien lets out a loud squeal as the two troopers each grab him by his arms, easily lifting the pudgy creature up off the ground between them. Dav pulls off a piece of paper that has popped out of the datapad. He sticks it onto the profiteer's round belly.

DAV:

This Imperial voucher is good for  
reimbursement. (to the troopers)  
Carry-on.

The two troopers literally carry-on, turn, and advance out of the courtyard with the now struggling alien merchant who, still squealing his protest, helplessly swings to and fro between them.

Dav and Meena begin to walk back to the City Center building.

MEENA:

(curiously)  
Which branch of the Empire honors  
his redemption?

Captain Dav pauses, not sure of the answer himself. They stop before a fountain surrounded by flowers and shrubbery that is being tended to by a gardening droid.

DAV:

I have no idea...the voucher  
instructions are rather vague in  
that respect.

Meena is somewhat shocked, then somewhat amused, at the red tape mess the unscrupulous alien merchant may have gotten himself into. She sits down on a bench near the courtyard fountain. Captain Dav stands beside her, his gloved hands neatly clasped behind his back.

MEENA:

Well, aside from that bureaucratic  
mystery, you and the 501st have  
been an absolute marvel of  
efficiency these past few days.

DAV:

As have you, m'lady.

MEENA:

How long have you served under  
General Veers?

DAV:

About three years...starting with a  
garrison on Corellia and now here  
aboard the Executor.

MEENA:

My father once said Veers was one of the most brilliant, but under-utilized ground troop tacticians in the Empire.

DAV:

No longer. His service under Lord Vader has given him purpose...The men respect the General...they know he is demanding, but fair...and he puts performance over political or family connections.

MEENA:

He has a son who would be about seventeen, now.

DAV:

Yes. Zevulon Veers. He's a cadet at the Junior Military Academy on Carida.

MEENA:

The last time I saw Zev was at the funeral of his mother...nearly ten years ago.

DAV:

The General never speaks about his late wife.

MEENA:

She died in an accident during a family outing. At her pyre service, he stood there like a stone...outwardly cold and empty.

Meena's gaze becomes distant while her voice becomes soft.

MEENA: (CONT'D)

I was only a child, yet, somehow, I sensed this terrible grief and guilt buried deep inside of him. ...He has yet to release the pain.

Meena realizes that she has said more than she should have. Dav seems to understand and places a hand on her shoulder.

DAV:  
(quietly)  
Thank you for sharing this with  
me...I assure you, it will go no  
further.

Meena nods gratefully to the Captain.

Unbeknownst to the two of them, General Veers has exited the City Center building entrance just in time to see Dav's hand resting on Meena's shoulder. Veers' expression is one of momentary jealousy, then resignation, as he reigns in his growing interest towards the beautiful young daughter of his former mentor.

EXT. SPACE - PLANET ORD MANTELL

Numerous space craft of every size and make orbit the pink cloud-covered planet of Ord Mantell. Arie Nugeen's sleek Rebel fighter ship is seen heading for the surface.

INT. ORD MANTELL -SPACEPORT - CHECK IN POINT - NIGHT

Spacers, smugglers, traders, travelers, bounty hunters... including the infamous Boba Fett...casino tourists, and even a few Imperial officers on leave, crowd the wide halls of the Ord Mantell Spaceport. An announcement voice-over welcomes travelers to the planet.

FEMALE ANNOUNCER: (V.O.)  
Welcome to Ord Mantell, the Heart  
of the Bright Jewell System.  
Travelers wishing to board transit  
for Wolport and other points south,  
please enter the main channelling  
areas.

Arie Nugeen and a worse-for-wear Dyn Mawr are part of the bustle. They head up into a tall, circular glass atrium where Ord Mantell's two moons, peeking out from pink-tinged clouds, can be seen from the ceiling's domed sky view. On the main floor of the atrium, gift shops, restaurants, bars, and mass transit channel ways line the curved walls.

In the center of the area, a public holo display churns out local casino advertisements, public service announcements, weather, and news reports from around the galaxy. The familiar, scantily-clad Tryax Beer Girl is seen exhorting the public to drink more of the fine beverage.

Arie and Dyn stop at a rest bench near the holo display. The bounty hunter Boba Fett is seen observing the two from a safe distance.

DYN:  
 Interesting place. They let us sail  
 through customs.

ARIE:  
 They let anyone on this rock  
 willing to spend some credits  
 at the casinos...The Empire  
 could care less...

Dyn looks over and sees a small group of Imperial soldiers in their service uniforms standing in front of the public holo display.

ARIE: (CONT'D)  
 ...although you do see Imps on  
 leave from time to time.

A couple of casino show girls cling to one of the Imperials who is happy, but a bit unsteady, possibly from drinking too much Tryax beer.

DYN:  
 What next?

ARIE:  
 Our contact will take us to a  
 transport.

An Imperial News Net report regarding recent doings on Nati IV is being broadcast on the holo display.

Holos of the battle operation, the capture of Rebel fighters, the dashing General Veers, and Lady Meena Valorian's mercy mission to the beleaguered populace, with the help of the soldiers of the 501st, appear in tightly-orchestrated video vignettes. An overly dramatic male voice narrates the action.

INN NARRATOR: (V.O.)  
 Responding swiftly to a call of  
 distress, the brave fighting men of  
 the 501st, lead by General "Iron  
 Max" Veers, take out a terrorist  
 lair on the colony world of Nati  
 IV...Lawlessness and corruption,  
 fueled by political malcontents,  
 had left many of the inhabitants  
 homeless and their main city near  
 ruin...

(MORE)

INN NARRATOR: (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 To their relief came an angel of  
 mercy...Imperial citizen Meena  
 Valorian, who, with the assistance  
 of General Maximilian Veers and the  
 magnanimous men of the 501st,  
 helped to restore peace, order, and  
 justice to a planet on the verge of  
 chaos...

A larger holo close-up of Lady Meena Valorian appears.

MEENA:  
 "Had it not been for the fanaticism  
 of the Rebels and the greed of  
 their criminal associates, I  
 believe a great deal of suffering  
 could have been avoided."

The Rebel contact approaches Dyn and Arie. Arie recognizes  
 him. She pulls a reluctant Dyn away from the holo display as  
 Meena finishes her INN interview sound bite.

ARIE:  
 Time to go.

INN NARRATOR: (V.O.)  
 This has been an Imperial News Net  
 Holo Report...

The Rebel trio leave the area, unaware they are being tailed  
 by the bounty hunter Boba Fett.

EXT. SPACE - PLANET NATI IV

A large transport vessel carrying a hanging signal tower  
 exits from the open under belly of the ICS Executor and heads  
 down to the planet's surface.

EXT. NATI IV - OUTSIDE THE MAIN CITY - DAY

On the outskirts of the city, a massive, prefabricated  
 Imperial garrison is nearing completion. Technicians and  
 construction droids are hard at work on the structure.

An AT-AT walker and several chariot-lavs patrol the grounds  
 in front. The transport from the Executor hovers above the  
 garrison roof, neatly depositing the signal tower.

EXT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - DAY

The courtyard area of the City Center building is almost back  
 to normal save for the presence of Imperial troopers who  
 continue to guard the area.

Several civilians and city officials are seen wandering the fountain area which is being cleaned by municipal droids.

Lady Meena, Rhees, Amie, and Aniz, are seen walking past the fountain towards the building's main entrance.

EXT. NATI IV - SIDE STREET NEAR CITY CENTER - DAY

The City Center building is seen from a side street. A few pedestrians amble by while Wade Polst, a Nati IV security guard, quietly confers with two Rebel civilians.

POLST:

They're getting ready to relocate to the new garrison.

1ST REBEL:

What about Vorra?

POLST:

(grimly)

Not good. An Imp Intel agent named Ganner has made Vorra his pet project.

2ND REBEL:

We've got to get her and the others out.

POLST:

I've left a surprise to draw attention away from the prisoner transfer...Tell your people to await my signal.

The two Rebels acknowledge Polst's information and part ways.

INT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - LOBBY - DAY

Fewer stormtroopers are stationed in and around the lobby. Most of the temporary Imperial command and control centers have been dismantled. Technicians are busy packing up one such center and moving it down a corridor.

The security checkpoint is still up and manned by Imperial officers. Near-by, Prefect Omus stands in front of the semi-circular receiving desk conferring with Colonel Gatz.

Meena, Rhees, Amie, and Aniz enter. An Imperial officer in charge of the security checkpoint waves them through. Meena says something to Rhees, gives Rhees a hug, and then heads for the turbolift.

Rhees and her children approach Gatz and Omus. Amie rushes over to the Prefect.

AMIE:

Daddy!

Amie hugs Omus by his leg. Aniz follows suit. Colonel Gatz grins. Omus is a bit embarrassed, but he is happy to see his wife and daughters.

INT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - OFFICE SUITE - DAY

Meena enters the office suite to discover Agent Ganner standing next to the desk on which her metaharp is placed. The instrument is lit up with a lavender glow and gives off a low humming sound.

GANNER:

Forgive my intrusion. A security scan mistook your metaharp's Adegan crystal for a weapons part...I've brought it back to you.

Ganner waves his hand over the metaharp. The soft purplish light changes hue and the instrument emits an airy melodic sound. It then suddenly turns off without his ever touching the switch.

GANNER: (CONT'D)

A lovely instrument. I'd be honored if you'd play it for me.

MEENA:

I haven't time, Agent Ganner. I'm going to stay with the Prefect's family and need to gather my things...Thank you for returning the crystal.

GANNER:

My pleasure...Before I leave, would you care to answer a few questions?

Meena is becoming increasingly uncomfortable in his presence.

MEENA:

Very well.

GANNER:

You knew a former security officer and pilot by the name of Dyn Mawr?

MEENA:

We met during the Rhulusian plague relief.

GANNER:

Did you know he was a Rebel?

MEENA:

I never approved of Dyn's politics  
...or in his choice of smuggler  
friends.

Ganner moves closer to Meena. He senses something interesting in her reactions.

GANNER:

Do I make you uneasy, Lady Meena?

MEENA:

Yes...I suppose it's part of your  
duties to do so.

GANNER:

(smoothly)

I don't enjoy making you uneasy.

MEENA:

That's odd, because I have a strong  
feeling that you enjoy it very  
much.

Ganner observes Meena, who is now trembling and trying to avoid his gaze.

GANNER:

(curiously)

Yes, you have very strong  
feelings...

Ganner's attention is suddenly focused on the doorway. A soft dinging sound is heard. Captain Dav enters. Dav doesn't like the sight of Ganner's presence and Meena's obvious distress. Dav waits for Ganner to speak.

GANNER: (CONT'D)

I've returned the metaharp's  
crystal, Captain...the one you  
were seeking the other day.

DAV:

Very good, Agent Ganner.

Ganner bows slightly to Meena.

GANNER:

Lady Meena, by your leave.

Meena nods her head. Ganner exits. Dav turns to Meena.

DAV:

Are you all right?

Meena regains her composure.

MEENA:

I'll be fine.

DAV:

I've sent Madame Omus home, m'lady.  
There's been a change of plans. The  
General will explain everything.

EXT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - LOADING DOCK - DAY

Stormtroopers, along with a small detail of the Nati IV security force that includes the rebel sympathizer Wade Polst, guard the back of the City Center building. A Mark IV patrol droid buzzes in and around the area while a prisoner transport craft hovers at the top of a sunken driveway that leads to the basement loading dock entrance.

INT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - BASEMENT

Near the basement entrance of the building, two black-helmeted Imperial naval security guards close a tall metal box containing three spherical ITO-series interrogator droids stacked one on top of the other.

Former officials and rebel prisoners are marched by armed troopers towards the basement entrance. Only four of the captured rebel soldiers appear to have survived their debriefing. A despondent and nearly-broken Vorra Kyrr is among them.

The entrance doors of the basement begin to open.

INT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - CORRIDOR

Captain Dav and Meena walk down the corridor past the cafeteria where a small group of Imperial officers are congregating.

Agent Ganner is seen standing near the cafeteria entrance engaged with another officer. He notices Dav and Meena walking by.

EXT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - LOADING DOCK - DAY

Escorted by armed guards, the row of prisoners is marched up the sunken driveway to the waiting transport craft. Among the guards surrounding the craft is Wade Polst. Polst looks over in another direction and nervously fingers a slim hand control.

INT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - CORRIDOR

Sgt. Flax and Corporal Riza, dressed in their off-duty black service uniforms, approach Captain Dav and Meena.

FLAX:

Sir, the storeroom codes aren't working. We need to transfer the ah, liquid refreshment over to the garrison.

Dav pauses. He looks at Meena who gives him an amused "Go ahead, I'll wait" look. Dav removes a code cylinder from his uniform pocket.

DAV:

(to Meena)

Wait here. This will only take a moment.

Meena nods and waits. Dav, Flax, and Riza disappear around a corner of the corridor into another hallway.

EXT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - LOADING DOCK - DAY

The prisoners are being loaded onto the craft. Polst squeezes his hand control. The Mark IV patrol droid stops and whirls around as a loud explosion emanates from within the City Center building.

INT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - CORRIDOR

From around the corridor corner, a loud explosion is heard. Meena falls back, stunned by the force and sound of the blast. She covers her ringing ears as smoke fills the area. Officers and troopers rush past her.

EXT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - LOADING DOCK - DAY

A blaster skirmish is underway as a small group of rebel fighters, shooting from the alleyways and back streets of the City Center building, engage the Imperial guards.

A large blast knocks the Mark IV security droid violently against the wall of the City Center. Another blast disables the droid.

More stormtroopers emerge from the loading dock entrance. They fire back at the insurgents.

INT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - HALLWAY OFF CORRIDOR

Through the dissipating smoke, the hallway off of the corridor is a horrific sight. Blood spattered walls and bodies of Imperial soldiers lie strewn before blown-open storeroom doors. Officers yell out for medic droids, while others examine their fallen comrades.

Lying near the corner wall, on his side, is the wounded body of Captain Jess Dav. The young aide-de-camp is badly burned and he has a side wound that is open and bleeding profusely.

EXT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - LOADING DOCK - DAY

By sheer numbers and military discipline, the Imperials gain an upper hand on the bold - or incredibly fool hardy - band of rebels.

One of the Imperial prisoners has managed to escape. Vorra Kyrr is seen running away with Wade Polst. Shielding Vorra, Polst fires his blaster at a Nati IV security guard. Polst is shot by the guard and falls. Another rebel fighter pulls Vorra to safety. They disappear into an alleyway.

INT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - HALLWAY OFF CORRIDOR

In the aftermath of the explosion, Lady Meena's strangely serene presence is barely noticed as she moves silently among the commotion. The noise from the activity dims and her face takes on an almost trance-like expression. She knells over the body of Dav, placing her hands on his bleeding side wound. Dav's eyes open momentarily in pain as Meena gently pulls a piece of shrapnel out, then presses the skin surrounding the largest wound together, stemming the flow of blood. A soft blue light emanates from Meena's palms.

Agent Ganner appears over her shoulder carefully observing the interaction. A medical officer and floating medibot arrive. The medical officer is about to reach down when Ganner gives him a hand signal to hold off.

The blue light fades away as Meena continues to tenderly massage the wound area with bloodied hands. Dav's eyes are now empty of stress and strangely peaceful. Finally, the medical officer's voice breaks her concentration.

MEDIC OFFICER:

(to Ganner)

I need to scan these wounds! Get her out of here!

Sounds from the area become louder. Meena looks confused as she comes out of her trance-state. Agent Ganner lifts the perplexed, but cooperative young woman up and guides her away from the shocking scene.

INT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - BASEMENT

An Imperial commander readies more stormtroopers for outside action. Blaster fire is heard in the distance. A livid, barely-contained Veers confronts Prefect Omus and two of his security men near the open basement entrance.

VEERS:

I want the scum responsible for this! No excuses, Prefect...or the Nati IV security force will be permanently disbanded!

Omus understands...completely. He and his men head off, followed by stormtroopers and an Imperial officer.

A grim-faced Colonel Gatz and Major Covell check in.

VEERS: (CONT'D)

Colonel Gatz, I want a house-to-house search immediately, starting with the refugee camp...Contact the garrison for more troops if you need them.

GATZ:

Yes, sir!

Gatz moves out with a contingent of soldiers. Veers turns to Covell.

COVELL:

Seven dead...Sgt. Flax and Corporal Riza included. Two wounded. Captain Dav's condition is critical...One Rebel prisoner is unaccounted for.

Veers' anger and enmity of the situation is amplified. He looks around the area.

VEERS:

(tightly)

Where is Agent Ganner?

## INT. NATI IV - CITY CENTER BUILDING - CAFETERIA

The cafeteria is empty save for Meena and Ganner who are seated in front of a table facing one another. Officers leading repulsorlift stretchers are seen rushing through the corridor past the cafeteria's large open entryway, barking orders to underlings.

Meena is still in somewhat of a daze as Ganner holds one of her delicate blood stained hands in his black-gloved right hand. With his left gloved hand, he slowly and methodically wipes each of her fingers with a white cloth that soon becomes streaked with red.

Unlike the confusion that reigns outside the cafeteria, this scene is one of cool, almost chilling, calm.

GANNER:

That was an interesting display of talent, Lady Meena

MEENA:

I don't know what you mean.

GANNER:

I mean...you have a gift.

MEENA:

I don't understand.

Ganner takes hold of Meena's other hand and continues the cleansing process.

GANNER:

Ah, but you will understand...when your gift is better developed. In some ways, we are alike in that we can sense and manipulate what is around us. Where we differ, is that you heal and I...I do not.

Meena begins to tremble, sensing the darkness behind Ganner's last three words. She suddenly jerks her hand away from his grasp and rises somewhat unsteadily. She looks desperately out into the hall as if expecting someone to interrupt this exchange.

Veers and Covell appear in the entryway.

VEERS:

Agent Ganner!

Ganner rises instantly at the sight and sound of Veers' authoritative voice.

VEERS: (CONT'D)  
(coldly)  
One of your prisoners has escaped.  
I suggest you get down to the  
basement and tend to your duties.

GANNER:  
Yes, sir.

Ganner gives a military nod and exits.

Veers turns his attention on the distraught Meena whose blood stained dress and disheveled appearance softens his demeanor and tone of voice. He moves quickly to Meena's side.

VEERS:  
Lady Meena, are you injured?

MEENA:  
(distressed)  
I saw what happened. Captain Dav...

Veers places his hands on Meena's shoulders to steady her trembling. Veers' touch seems to soothe Meena. She melts into his arms, burying her face into his chest. Veers tries hard to keep his emotional distance, but the closeness of the vulnerable young woman's body next to his betrays his guarded sentiments. He looks over at Covell.

VEERS:  
Major Covell, have the medics make  
room for her aboard the shuttle!

Covell nods and immediately heads out down the hallway.

Veers tenderly holds Meena who now looks up at him.

MEENA:  
I'm not physically hurt...there's  
no need for me to go.

VEERS:  
You were scheduled to be aboard the  
Executor, regardless. I have orders  
from the Emperor Himself to bring  
you to Imperial City within the  
month.

Meena gently disengages from Veers who does his best to revert back to his formal commanding manner.

MEENA:  
(surprised)  
Imperial City...on Coruscant? Why?

VEERS:  
My orders state you are to be  
commended for your service to  
the ideals of the Empire.

MEENA:  
But, I've done so little...

Veers again places his hands on her shoulders, not so much  
for protective comfort, but as a sign of deep respect.

VEERS:  
You've done far more than this  
wretched place deserves, Lady  
Meena.

EXT. SPACE - PLANET NATI IV

A sleek Lambda-Class shuttle zooms up from the surface of  
Nati IV and heads towards the main docking bay of the  
Executor.

INT. EXECUTOR - BRIDGE - MAIN CONTROL DECK

On the command ramp, Captain Piett observes his men as they  
work the array of electronic components within the control  
pits. Piett heads for the security foyer. Lt. Shekel  
approaches the captain.

SHEKEL:  
Sir, the Avenger is in orbit above  
Ord Mantell. A bounty hunter is  
tracking the Rebels we allowed to  
escape.

PIETT:  
(with disdain)  
A bounty hunter!

SHEKEL:  
Lord Vader ordered Captain Needa to  
engage his services.

PIETT:  
Very well.

Piett and Shekel head to the security foyer.

INT. EXECUTOR - BRIDGE - SECURITY FOYER

Officer Durn calls to Piett from his communications console.

DURN:

Captain, General Veers and the last  
of the operation detail have  
returned.

PIETT:

Alert all stations. Make ready to  
leave the system.

INT. EXECUTOR - MAIN DOCKING BAY

The shuttle enters the docking bay and lands. Stormtroopers  
move into formation on either side of the shuttle. Darth  
Vader enters the bay and stands at the end of the formation.

The shuttle hatch lowers. Two stormtroopers, bearing an  
Imperial flag-covered flat holding seven clear ash cylinders  
with the 501st emblem on the front, make their way down the  
ramp. General Veers and Major Covell follow. Agent Ganner  
is the last to come out of the shuttle. Ganner hangs back  
somewhat from the proceedings as the others solemnly stride  
towards the Dark Lord.

The troopers bearing the cylinders walk by Vader who  
acknowledges their passing with a deep nod of his black  
helmet.

The platoon formations fall in behind them as the funeral  
procession for the fallen comrades of the 501st heads out of  
the docking bay.

Veers and Covell stop in front of Vader, give military nods,  
and stand at attention. Ganner, who goes down on his knee and  
bows his head to the Dark Lord, joins them. Ganner rises and  
stands before his Sith Master.

VADER:

What have you to report, General?

VEERS:

My lord, the garrison is fully  
operational and the main city is  
under our control...The outlying  
settlements will be brought into  
line by Colonel Gatz and his men.

VADER:

I trust the inhabitants fully understand the consequences of defiance?

VEERS:

Yes, my lord...even more so than when we first arrived.

VADER:

You have yet to fail me, General Veers.

Vader points at Ganner.

VADER: (CONT'D)

As for you, Agent Ganner...501st soldiers died and a Rebel prisoner escaped due to your lack of oversight. We will discuss this further...in private.

GANNER:

Yes, master.

The Dark Lord pivots, striding out of the docking bay into a corridor. Ganner follows.

Covell turns to Veers, putting his hand near his throat, mimicking what he believes might be in store for the Imperial Intelligence agent.

EXT. SPACE - NATI IV

The Imperial Command Ship Executor leaves orbit, making the jump into hyperspace.

INT. EXECUTOR - MEDICAL CENTER - 2 DAYS LATER

Within the medical facilities of the Executor, MD-0's, 2-1B's, MD-21B's, and other medical assistance droids interact with human medical doctors and specialists who confer with one another or tend to their patient's needs in the rows of separated bed cubicles that line one wall.

The Executor's distinguished Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Arnen Taask, and Lady Meena, now wearing a clean gown and her hair simply styled, stand before Captain Dav who floats within one of several bacta tanks contained in the Imperial sic bay.

TAASK:

Captain Dav's status has been moved from critical to stable...The bacta tank should help with the healing process.

MEENA:

That's good to hear, Dr. Taask.

General Veers enters and heads towards Dr. Taask and Meena. He notes Meena's interest in Captain Dav with some misgiving.

TAASK:

It's been an honor having you under our care, Lady Meena. The staff as well as our patients will miss your company.

MEENA:

Then you won't mind if I stop by to visit?

TAASK:

Not at all.

Dr. Taask nods to Veers and then moves on to another patient area.

VEERS:

(to Meena)

Your concern for Captain Dav is considerable.

MEENA:

He was very helpful to me on Nati IV...I consider him a friend.

Veers offers Meena his arm, somewhat encouraged by her brief explanation of her and Dav's relationship. He escorts Meena away from the bacta tank, passing advanced medical equipment, operating areas, and examining tables that are seen through windowed rooms or placed against the walls.

VEERS:

I wanted to come see you sooner, but my duties kept me away.

MEENA:

While you were engaged, I was able to rest and think things over.

VEERS:

Such as?

MEENA:

Mostly about how fortunate I was to  
have had you find me...

INT. EXECUTOR - BRIDGE - MAIN CONTROL DECK

Captain Piett, Grand General Brashin, the aristocratic Lt. Suba, and a few other bridge officers stand near the bow of the destroyer. From the blurred view of the bridge viewports, it is clear that the ship is in hyperspace.

INT. EXECUTOR - BRIDGE - MAIN CORRIDOR

Veers and Meena enter. An MSE-6 mouse droid scurries by them.

INT. EXECUTOR - BRIDGE - MAIN CONTROL DECK

Veers and Meena move down the narrow bridge walkway between the control pits. The crew's productivity takes a collective nose dive as they eye the lovely young woman strolling past. Captain Piett goes to greet them.

PIETT:

Lady Meena, I am Captain Piett.  
Welcome aboard the Executor.

Meena extends her hand to the Captain and is escorted by him to the bow of the main bridge where she is quietly introduced to the officers. Veers joins them, watching Meena with a tinge of possessiveness, well aware of the admiring and hopeful looks from some of the younger naval officers.

INT. EXECUTOR - MAIN BRIDGE - SECURITY FOYER

Lord Vader enters the security foyer from the main bridge corridor's right double doors, followed by Meena's floating metaharp. He stops for an instant, then strides towards the control deck. Lady Meena and the other officers can be seen quietly exchanging pleasantries near the command walkway's front viewports.

INT. EXECUTOR - BRIDGE - MAIN CONTROL DECK

Some of the officers hear Vader approaching. Their bearing becomes more rigid as they view the oncoming Dark Lord. His back to Vader, Captain Piett has finished with his introductions and is speaking to Meena who anxiously notes Vader's presence.

PIETT:  
 ...Routinely, Admiral Ozzel would  
 be the officer inviting you to  
 dinner, but I'm afraid he's  
 indisposed...

Piett turns to Lord Vader who is midway across the command  
 ramp.

VADER:  
 (sneering)  
 The Admiral was clumsy. He tripped  
 over a mouse droid into the crew  
 pits.

PIETT:  
 Lord Vader, may I introduce...

VADER:  
 Lady Meena and I have met before.

A nervous Meena gives the Dark Lord a respectful nod.

MEENA:  
 I see your lordship has not  
 forgotten that impertinent child.

VADER:  
 I have an excellent memory for  
 impertinence.

The officers are aghast. Meena, however, does not sense any  
 animosity in Vader towards her and relaxes...slightly. From  
 behind Vader, the metaharp moves smoothly to the forefront.

VADER: (CONT'D)  
 Your instrument's repulsorlift was  
 faulty. It has been fixed.

For a moment, a surprised Meena is not sure what to say. The  
 officers are not sure what to think.

MEENA:  
 Thank-you, Lord Vader, that was  
 very...thoughtful of you.

VADER:  
 The daughter of General Valorian is  
 our honored guest.

The Dark Lord gives the group a curt nod of his black-  
 helmeted head, turns, and strides off the bridge ramp before  
 Meena or the officers can acknowledge his leaving.

The metaharp remains floating in front of Meena. She gives the officers a "well, that was that" look and does her gracious best to recover.

INT. EXECUTOR - CORRIDOR - TURBOLIFT DOORS

Holding her deactivated metaharp, Meena and Veers enter a turbolift.

INT. EXECUTOR - TURBOLIFT

Veers pushes a button and settles back. Meena gazes down at her instrument and speaks.

MEENA:

I first met Lord Vader when I was six-years-old. I had wandered off and there he was...all in black. ...Like nothing I had ever seen before...or since.

VEERS:

You must have been frightened.

MEENA:

I was. Still, I asked him a question...the kind that only a curious child would dare ask.

VEERS:

Did he answer?

MEENA:

He just stood there, looking down at me from behind his mask. Finally, he said "you are a very impertinent child" and walked away.

The turbolift stops. The doors open. Meena and Veers exit into a corridor.

INT. EXECUTOR - CORRIDOR - GUEST SUITE DOORS

VEERS:

I have found it wise not to question Lord Vader. His methods are harsh, but he has the Empire's best interests at heart.

Veers and Meena stop before double doors guarded on either side by two stormtroopers.

VEERS: (CONT'D)

I trust your new quarters will be  
to your satisfaction.

One of the troopers punches a side panel. The double doors  
slide open. Meena and Veers enter the Executor's guest suite.

INT. EXECUTOR - GUEST SUITE - LIVING QUARTERS

The living quarters of the guest suite exudes a luxurious,  
masculine polish. Black upholstered furnishings, chrome-  
plated accent tables, desk, and a holo projector are  
invitingly arranged within the military gray steel walls,  
one of which contains a viewport that currently looks out  
into hyperspace.

To the right of the living area, a framed piece of multi-  
colored artwork hangs over a small dining table, chairs and  
built-in food service unit. Plush patterned carpets and  
potted plants strategically placed around the seating  
arrangements give the quarters a dramatic spot of color. A  
side door leads to other rooms within the suite.

Veers stands near the entry surreptitiously taking in Meena's  
lovely figure as she carefully places her metaharp on the  
dining table. She turns and walks back to the General.

MEENA:

(impressed)

I'm sure this will be quite  
satisfactory.

For a moment, Veers looks as if he wants to say something to  
Meena. He can not find the words. Meena senses his anxiety  
about recent events, moves closer to him, and speaks.

MEENA: (CONT'D)

General, what happened last on Nati  
IV was a violent, desperate act. I  
realize it was your duty to respond  
in whatever manner you felt was  
just.

VEERS:

In war, respect comes through  
retribution.

MEENA:

I wish it were not so.

VEERS:

A soldier must fight to defend and maintain order...sometimes at the cost of his own life...or even that of the innocent.

MEENA:

Father held those same convictions, but Prefect Omus and his wife befriended me when I had no one else to turn to...I fear for their safety.

VEERS:

Prefect Omus is worthy of our respect. He and his family are well. You may send word to them if you like.

MEENA:

(relieved)

I'd like that very much. They're honest, law-abiding people...unlike some others I met there.

EXT. SPACE - PLANET ORD MANTELL

The Imperial Star Destroyer Avenger looms like a hungry shark amidst the many space crafts orbiting the pink cloud-enshrouded world of Ord Mantell.

EXT. ORD MANTELL - SPACEPORT - HANGER ENTRANCE - DAY

Blaster fire and stun sounds are heard as Dyn Mawr and Arie Nugeen rush down a narrow walkway of the Ord Mantell spaceport, exchanging fire with a detail of stormtroopers.

Dyn backs up against a wall barrier near Arie, shooting back at the encroaching Imperials.

DYN:

You said the Imps could care less about this rock!

ARIE:

Someone in the Empire cares about us!

DYN:

Sounds like some of their blasters are on stun!

ARIE:  
 Mine's not!

Arie grabs a comlink from her belt and talks into it as she shoots back.

ARIE: (CONT'D)  
 Orange 9, this is Orange 5...we got  
 company, over!

A static-ridden voice comes over the comlink.

VOICE:  
 Copy, Orange 5.

EXT. ORD MANTELL - SPACEPORT - DOCKING BAY WALL - DAY

On top of a narrow walkway above the spaceport docking bay wall, the infamous bounty hunter Boba Fett sets up a bulky disruptor gun stand. Fett moves over to the wall's edge, crouches, and aims his blaster rifle downward towards a hanger entrance.

EXT. ORD MANTELL - SPACEPORT - HANGER ENTRANCE - DAY

Dyn Mawr and Arie Nugeen race towards a hanger entrance. The sights and sounds of blaster fire follow them.

EXT. ORD MANTELL - SPACEPORT - DOCKING BAY WALL - DAY

From above, Boba Fett watches as Dyn and Arie run towards the hanger entrance. Stormtroopers follow in the near distance. He readies his rifle when a laser blast shoots from behind him, barely missing his right shoulder. He turns and fires back at the rebel contact of Dyn and Arie who is shooting from the roof of a near-by building.

EXT. ORD MANTELL - SPACEPORT - HANGER ENTRANCE - DAY

Arie punches a code into the hanger entrance door's side panel while Dyn covers her against the oncoming blaster fire. Dyn looks up to see the upper back of Boba Fett near the wall's top edge firing his rifle at an unseen assailant. The door opens and Arie and Dyn fall in.

The door shuts tight as the Imperial troopers enter the area blasting away at the fleeing rebels.

INT. ORD MANTELL - HANGER

Two Rebels inside the hanger are readying Arie's star fighter for take-off. One of them is suited up to fly the ship.

The pilot climbs into the open cockpit just as Dyn and Arie rush in. The cockpit cover closes.

Dyn and Arie are motioned over by the other Rebel to a corner. A secret trap door in the floor is revealed. The three descend into the hole closing the door over them.

The retractable ceiling of the hanger begins to open as the fighter lights go on and the engines become louder.

INT. REBEL FIGHTER - COCKPIT

Working the controls, the rebel pilot looks out and sees one wall area of the hanger turning black. The cockpit window shows the fighter slowly lifting and spinning upward towards the nearly opened ceiling.

After one full spin, the cockpit window shows the black area exploding leaving a large gaping hole. Stormtroopers are seen through the dissipating smoke. The fighter tilts and begins to fly out of the docking bay as the troopers rush in, blasting at the fleeing ship.

EXT. ORD MANTELL - SPACEPORT - DOCKING BAY WALL - DAY

The body of Boba Fett's rebel assailant lies dead on the building roof.

On the walkway, Boba Fett stands behind the disruptor gun as the rebel fighter is seen flying out of the hanger's fully opened ceiling. Boba shoots a powerful disintegrator beam at the fleeing ship. The ship explodes, disintegrating into a thick mass of black ash that swirls, and then floats to the ground.

INT. EXECUTOR - BRIDGE - SECURITY FOYER

Seen from the security foyer, Darth Vader stands with General Veers on the command walkway near the defense station alcove of the Executor's bridge.

A MSE-6 mouse droid scurries down the ramp between the control pits towards the security foyer. Captain Piett enters from the main corridor, deftly sidestepping the roving rodent as it ducks into a turbolift.

Piett approaches Officer Durn who is standing near the communications consoles with a concerned Lt. Shekel. Shekel motions for Piett to look at the console. Piett becomes increasingly distressed as he reads a coded message on the screen.

The Captain nods to the officers, gathers his considerable courage, and carefully moves to the Dark Lord with the news.

INT. EXECUTOR - BRIDGE - DEFENSE STATION ALCOVE

VADER:  
Yes, Captain?

PIETT:  
My lord, hyperwave signals from the Avenger indicate the Rebels on Ord Mantell were...disintegrated.

VADER:  
(angrily)  
What!

PIETT:  
The bounty hunter claims he was to keep the Rebels from escaping, my lord...he demands payment.

VADER:  
Find out who is responsible for the miscommunication. As for the bounty hunter, he may still be of use. Pay him.

PIETT:  
Yes, my lord.

VADER:  
What of the probe droids the fleet launched?

PIETT:  
No leads to the Rebel base, yet, my lord.

VADER:  
I want to know the instant we have a lead, Captain.

PIETT:  
Yes, Lord Vader.

Piett moves away as the Dark Lord stalks off the bridge. Veers and Piett exchange glances.

VEERS:  
(quietly)  
A cold lead might be your most promising.

Piett gives Veers a "how so?" look.

EXT. GALAXY - PLANET HOTH

A Rebel transport ship zooms towards the ice planet of Hoth.

EXT. HOTH - ICE PLAINS - POWER GENERATOR - DAY

Rider-backed Tauntans move to and fro in front of a series of giant generators being set up to power the planetary shields protecting the hidden Rebel base.

INT. HOTH - ECHO BASE - COMMAND CENTER

An Alliance flag is tacked onto the carved walls of a rudimentary command center within an icy cavern of the planet Hoth. A Rebel controller sits at his station eyeing a screen showing a moving dot heading towards a depiction of the sixth planet of the Hoth system. The controller turns to a female Major who is overseeing another console placement.

CONTROLLER:

Major, a ship just came out of  
light-speed in sector four.

The Major moves to the communications console just as a static-ridden voice is heard.

VOICE: (V.O.)

This is Transport Emancipator to  
Echo Base, transmitting code  
clearance white.

The Major gazes over the controller and studies a read-out on the console.

MAJOR:

Their code's good.

CONTROLLER:

Echo Base control to Transport  
Emancipator, welcome to Hoth. You  
are cleared to land.

VOICE: (V.O.)

Copy, Echo Base. Prepare for new  
troop transfers.

EXT. SPACE - EXECUTOR

TIE fighters enter a hanger bay of the Imperial Command Ship moments before it makes another hyperspace jump.

INT. EXECUTOR - CORRIDOR - TURBOLIFT DOORS

The turbolift doors hiss open to reveal a human-shaped, 1.6 metres tall robot encased in lustrous platinum armor.

MS-2, an upscale maidservant droid manufactured by Industrial Automaton, steps out and walks the length of the corridor. It is momentarily startled by a passing MSE-6 unit. An agitated MS-2 shoos the small, box-shaped robotic rodent away as it nears the stormtroopers who guard the double doors leading into the guest suite.

INT. EXECUTOR - CORRIDOR - GUEST SUITE DOORS

MS-2 stops at the entrance while one of the troopers inspects the droid. The trooper nods to his comrade who then punches the wall panel. The doors open.

STORMTROOPER:

Go on in.

MS-2 enters. The double doors close behind the droid.

INT. EXECUTOR - GUEST SUITE - SLEEPING QUARTERS

The Executor's guest suite sleeping quarters is similar in style and furnishings to the outer living area.

Lady Meena is busy inspecting a large upright trunk that she is unfamiliar with. She presses a catch button and the trunk opens up to reveal a striking array of gowns, footwear, and accessories.

Meena takes a white shimmersilk evening dress embroidered with a spray of ice-blue crystals out and holds it up to her to see if it will fit. Meena looks a bit guilty at the thought of wearing the expensive gown she is holding.

From behind her, the door to the bedroom swooshes open. Meena turns to view the MS-2 droid who speaks with a decidedly feminine electronic voice.

MS-2:

Greetings, your ladyship. I am MS-2  
...a droid specially programmed for  
manicures, hair styling, and other  
serviceable functions.

MEENA:

(amused)  
I wasn't aware the military  
utilized MS-2 units.

MS-2:

They don't ordinarily...A Captain Dav requisitioned me on Nati IV, along with some inventory he felt would be useful to your ladyship.

Meena glances down at the evening gown she holds with a "that explains it" look.

MEENA:

How did he find the time to obtain all of this?

MS-2:

I wish I could enlighten your ladyship, but most of my memory banks have been erased.

MEENA:

(dryly)  
How convenient.

Meena shakes her head, and then gives in to temptation.

MEENA: (CONT'D)

All right then, you may help me get dressed for dinner.

INT. EXECUTOR - OFFICERS DINING ROOM

Within the officer's dining room, Lt. Shekel supervises a formal dinner for Lady Meena and select officers of the Executor. Several ensigns silently and efficiently finish arranging the silverware, crystal and Imperial emblem-encrusted china settings on a white linen-covered dining table.

Off to the left of the dining area is a lounge area. Grand General Brashin, General Veers, Dr. Taask, Lt. Suba, Lt. Venka, Captain Sarkli, and other Imperial bridge officers stand or sit, quietly conferring with one another while an ensign serves glasses of sparkling T'ill-t'ill.

A bell sounds and the double doors to the dining room open to reveal a smiling Lady Meena, stunningly gowned and coiffed, on the arm of Captain Piett.

The seated officers immediately rise. Veers' usual cool bearing before his colleagues is momentarily caught off guard by Meena's appearance. Captain Piett escorts her to the table. The officers join them.

FADE OUT

INT. EXECUTOR - OFFICERS DINING ROOM - LATER

Lt. Shekel keeps careful watch over the ensigns as they quietly and efficiently clear away the remnants of the formal dinner party.

In the lounge area, officers stand or are seated, drinking tea - the Imperial Navy's beverage of choice - while they listen to a gracefully kneeling Lady Meena play her metaharp.

Ethereal, plaintive melodies and lavender-colored lights ebb and flow as the young woman skillfully moves her hands over the floating instrument strings. Her concentration intensifies as do the sounds emanating throughout the room.

Meena looks up momentarily to give Veers' a shy smile. The General does his best to remain impassive, but it is obvious to some of the naval officers, like the aristocratic Lt. Suba who is envious of the upstart Veers, that there is something more than mere courtesy going on between the two of them.

INT. EXECUTOR - FITNESS BAY

Within a lofty fitness bay, rows of windows from the upper reaches look down on a platoon of stormtroopers who practice formation drills while their black service uniformed commander, Ian Hiebert, barks directions.

The camera pans up to a window in the far corner of the fitness bay where Major Freja Covell is seen viewing the activity.

INT. EXECUTOR - VEERS' OFFICE

A conference desk, chairs and console areas fill the neat, utilitarian work space of General Veers. An Imperial flag and a 501st insignia banner, along with a portrait of the Emperor at his majestic best, are placed prominently on a wall. Wanted posters of familiar rebel terrorists Han Solo, Leia Organa, and Luke Skywalker, hang near the office door.

Major Covell's back is turned toward an office window overlooking the gym area while stormtrooper Sgt. Narthax, dressed in his black service uniform, sits at a console leisurely eyeing a holomag article on actress and singer Alanna Nova.

The office door opens and General Veers enters, upsetting Narthax who quickly shuts down the holomag and gets back to work.

VEERS:

Sgt. Narthax, if you paid as much attention to your work as you do to the holo charms of actress Alanna Nova...I'd have those cold weather assault plans in my hands now.

NARTHAX:

Sorry, sir. I'll get right on it.

Narthax grabs a datapad off of the console and exits the room. Veers joins Covell at the window and looks down.

INT. EXECUTOR - FITNESS BAY

The stormtrooper platoon files out of the fitness bay, followed by Commander Hiebert.

From another entrance, Darth Vader and Agent Ganner enter. Ganner is out of uniform, dressed in a gray tank top, black jacket, boots, and fatigues from which his lightsaber hangs. Ganner turns, removing his jacket, when he hears the familiar hum of Vader's lightsaber igniting.

Ganner swiftly ignites his own saber and pivots just in time to deflect a blow from his Sith Master.

VADER:

Your concentration is off, adept.

Ganner does his best to counter Vader's moves.

VADER: (CONT'D)

The Emperor's assessment of your skill is misplaced.

Ganner swings his saber with more force, momentarily catching the Dark Lord off guard.

GANNER:

You question the Emperor's judgment, master?

The remark enrages Vader. Ganner does his best to counter the Sith Lord's angry blows - and does a good job of it.

INT. EXECUTOR - VEERS' OFFICE

From the window, Veers and Covell watch as Vader and Ganner battle each other.

COVELL:

I'll bet navy outnumbered army at dinner the other night...right, Max?

Veers keeps his eye on the duel while he answers.

VEERS:

In that setting, navy always has the upper hand.

INT. EXECUTOR - FITNESS BAY

The saber duel continues. Vader uses the Force to loosen some heavy hand weights from a wall rack. The weights fly through the air to pummel Ganner.

INT. EXECUTOR - VEERS' OFFICE

COVELL:

Yeah, but I'm also betting army walks away with the prize.

Veers continues to watch Vader and Ganner. Although confident in himself and his abilities, this sort of battle remains a mystery to him. Veers' eyes narrow in fear at the display of Force power. It is the one defensive measure he is not trained to deal with.

INT. EXECUTOR - FITNESS BAY

Ganner is almost defeated, but continues to battle on despite the bruising from the flying weights. Ganner suddenly somersaults backwards, ending upright on top of a piece of workout equipment. He now has the high ground.

INT. EXECUTOR - VEERS' OFFICE

VEERS:

What are you getting at, Freja?

INT. EXECUTOR - FITNESS BAY

Using the Force, Vader pulls Ganner's perch out from under him, sending the equipment crashing into a wall. Ganner quickly jumps, momentarily losing his balance.

INT. EXECUTOR - VEERS' OFFICE

Veers and Covell watch as Vader hovers over the downed Ganner.

COVELL:  
Just thinking you might need some  
career insurance.

INT. EXECUTOR - FITNESS BAY

Vader seizes the opportunity. Ganner's saber shuts down and flies into the hand of Vader. With his free hand, Vader neatly slices a straight wound on Ganner's chest with his own lightsaber.

GANNER:  
Ahhh!

Ganner falls to his knees, trying desperately to regain some control over his pain and self-importance.

INT. EXECUTOR - VEERS' OFFICE

Veers turns from the scene below and looks straight at Covell.

VEERS:  
I don't view Lady Meena as an  
insurance prize.

COVELL:  
Unmarried officers do. She comes  
from a Core military family...with  
political clout on her mother's  
side.

VEERS:  
Such connections mean nothing to  
me...or to Lord Vader.

Covell is not convinced and gives Veers a "who are you trying to kid?" look. A disturbed Veers heads back to his console to work. Covell returns to the scene below.

INT. EXECUTOR - FITNESS BAY

Vader continues to stand over his wounded pupil with his red-tipped saber ignited. Ganner, his slashed chest heaving, has gained control over his pain, but not his arrogance. The Sith adept gazes at Vader with seething hatred.

VADER:  
Your hate flows in an unfortunate  
direction, adept.

Ganner lowers his eyes ever so slightly, respectfully aware that Vader could cut him down at any moment.

VADER: (CONT'D)  
Yes, you should respect my power.

Vader waves his lightsaber over Ganner's fresh wound, barely touching the open gash.

VADER: (CONT'D)  
Let it scar as a remembrance of my tutelage. When we reach Coruscant, the Emperor will complete your training.

The Dark Lord retracts his lightsaber blade, tosses Ganner's lightsaber to him, and abruptly leaves.

Ganner, still on his knees, watches the departing Sith Lord with a contemptuous expression on his handsome face.

INT. EXECUTOR - MEDICAL CENTER

Imperial News Net reporters finish recording an interview with Dr. Taask and some of his medical assistants. Dr. Taask is approached by a stormtrooper.

INT. EXECUTOR - MEDICAL CENTER - CUBICLE AREA

Lady Meena, her metaharp in her lap, sits next to Dav who is resting in a bed cubicle. His burns are healing and he looks glad to see Meena.

DAV:  
You're becoming quite a fixture around here, m'lady. The doctors think your presence is as good as bacta...if not better.

MEENA:  
(quietly)  
It would be better if those news recorders weren't always hovering about.

Dr. Taask arrives with the stormtrooper at his side.

TAASK:  
I'm sorry to interrupt your visit, Lady Meena, but Lord Vader requests that you report to him at once.

INT. EXECUTOR - MEDICAL CENTER - EXAMINING AREA

Clutching her metaharp, Meena and her stormtrooper escort walk through the medical center.

They pass an examination table where a shirtless Agent Ganner is being looked after by a medical specialist who finishes applying a clean bandage to the Sith adept's recent chest wound.

The specialist hands Ganner a gray cross-over undershirt and his black tunic from a rack stand, and then leaves, silently acknowledging Meena's presence.

Ganner is very pleased to see Meena, who is not as pleased to see him, but stops when she notices his bruising and bandaged injury. Ganner quickly and neatly puts on his undershirt and tunic during his and Meena's conversation.

GANNER:

Lady Meena, the ministering angel of the 501st...what a pleasure to see you again.

MEENA:

Agent Ganner, you're wounded.

GANNER:

I wish it were more serious... enough to warrant your gentle touch.

MEENA:

How did it happen?

GANNER:

(sardonically)  
An occupational hazard, the details of which must remain secret.

Ganner grabs his lightsaber attached to a belt from the rack and fastens it around his waist.

MEENA:

I hope your wound heals quickly.

GANNER:

Ah, being the object of your compassion, rather than your consternation is a new experience for me.

Ganner adjusts his tunic collar and smiles at Meena, who senses a hint of mockery behind his words.

MEENA:

My concern is genuine...I'm on my way to meet with Lord Vader, so if you'll excuse me.

GANNER:

Allow me to escort you there.

Meena and her escort are about to protest when Ganner raises his hand slightly towards the stormtrooper.

GANNER: (CONT'D)

(to the guard) )

You will allow me to escort her to Lord Vader.

STORMTROOPER:

I will allow you to escort her to Lord Vader.

Ganner gestures to Meena to follow him to the near-by exit doors. She reluctantly does so. The medical center doors close on the couple as a somewhat befuddled stormtrooper stands alone by the examination table.

INT. EXECUTOR - CORRIDOR LEADING TO SECURITY CHECKPOINT

Ganner and Meena, holding her metaharp, head down a corridor. Meena does her best to keep a polite distance from Ganner.

GANNER:

Do you know the history of the metaharp, my lady?

MEENA:

The earliest accounts of its use are around 4,000 years old.

GANNER:

There is a legend from that time of a healer who created the instrument using the remnants of a lightsaber. ...Her music soothed a Sith Lord's anger...but not enough to save her from him in the end.

MEENA:

(annoyed)

A rather dark tale, don't you think?

GANNER:

(smoothly)

I thought you might be interested.

MEENA:

I'm *not* interested.

Ganner smiles wickedly, gratified by Meena's increasing apprehension towards him.

They stop before a security checkpoint located before a large closed entry, flanked by black-helmeted naval security guards, stormtroopers, and two crimson robed royal guards.

INT. EXECUTOR - VADER'S OFFICE

Darth Vader sits at a large desk within a sparsely decorated, dimly lit chamber. A small contour bench is positioned before the work area. Seated at Vader's left, are two black-garbed Imperial officer aides who are engaged with their datapads.

The door from across the desk area opens. A nervous and upset Lady Meena enters. Vader and the two aides rise.

VADER:

Sit down, Lady Meena.

Vader points to the bench in front of the desk. Meena does as he requests, placing her metaharp to the side. Vader and the aides resume their seats. For a brief instant, there is silence, save for Vader's distinctive echoed breathing.

VADER: (CONT'D)

You are distressed. I'll see to it that Agent Ganner no longer annoys you.

MEENA:

I'd appreciate that, Lord Vader.

VADER:

General Veers informs me the ex-governor of Lynessa had you and your late mother unlawfully confined.

MEENA:

Did you say ex-governor, my lord?

VADER:

The former Governor Yarayn is on trial for trafficking with Black Sun criminals. I want a statement about his illegal treatment of you.

MEENA:

I consider it my duty to do so.

VADER:

Good. You will have your revenge.

MEENA:  
It's not revenge I desire, Lord  
Vader. I seek justice.

VADER:  
Justice is revenge.

MEENA:  
(conceding)  
Justice and revenge are similar in  
that they both can be unyielding.

There is another brief lull as Meena and the Dark Lord  
observe one another.

VADER:  
Interesting. You sense things more  
than others?

MEENA:  
Sometimes...I don't always  
understand why, my lord.

VADER:  
We will discuss this further after  
you have given me your statement.  
You may go now.

EXT. GALAXY - PLANET HOTH

The Millennium Falcon zooms towards the ice planet of Hoth.

EXT. HOTH - ECHO BASE ENTRANCE - DAWN

The Millennium Falcon flies into the main hanger area.

INT. HOTH - ECHO BASE - MAKESHIFT CAFETERIA

Vorra Kyrr and several Rebels dressed in padded snow suit  
uniforms shiver within a makeshift cafeteria that has been  
carved out of ice. The group stands in line, picking up  
covered containers of hot soup and tea from a vending bot.  
They find a table and sit down.

REBEL SOLDIER:  
(to Vorra)  
On Hoth, you'd better eat and drink  
fast...before it freezes.

In the background, other Rebels try to relax - and keep warm  
- while watching holo vids of Imperial military recruiting  
ads that are roundly hooted and jeered at.

An Imperial News Net holo report appears giving the results of the annual Miss Imperial contest - for the past 20 years, always a human winner with a Twi'lek runner-up.

A short series of vignettes regarding Meena Valorian's damaging testimony against the corrupt and lecherous former Governor Yarayn of Lynessa is also shown.

Dyn Mawr and another Rebel soldier walk by Vorra and her companions. Vorra calls out to Dyn.

VORRA:

Dyn!

Dyn goes to Vorra, giving her a friendly hug.

DYN:

Vorra! Someone told me you just arrived.

VORRA:

I was lucky to escape.

DYN:

Same here.

Vorra points over to the Imperial News Net holo report being aired. Lady Meena Valorian is featured prominently, thanking Lord Vader, General Veers, and the Imperial Justice System for doing their duty by rescuing her on Nati IV, plus exposing the corrupt ex-governor of Lynessa, who is now on his way to the spice mines of Kessel.

The holo report ends with a blurb about Meena's upcoming trip to Imperial City to meet with the Emperor.

VORRA:

(to Dyn)

What do you think of your angel of mercy, now?

DYN:

The Empire is using Meena.

Vorra gives Dyn a "don't be such a sap" look and shakes her head. She looks again at the fading holo image of Meena with contempt.

VORRA:

As far as I'm concerned, she and her Imp heroes can rot on Coruscant!

EXT. GALAXY - PLANET CORUSCANT

The Executor hovers above the planet of Coruscant surrounded by numerous Imperial warships.

INT. EXECUTOR - GUEST SUITE - LIVING QUARTERS

The lively space above the Imperial capitol world can be seen through the viewport of the guest suite living quarters.

Lady Meena sits at the desk, working on a small datapad, when a buzzer sounds. Meena speaks into the desk's built-in comlink.

MEENA:

Yes?

Near the entry, MS-2 oversees an M-3PO unit move some of Meena's belongings out of the guest suite double doors into the corridor.

PIETT: (V.O.)

Lady Meena, the shuttle to Imperial City leaves within the hour.

The guest suite doors remain open long enough for a MSE-6 mouse droid to scoot in.

MEENA:

I'll be ready, Captain Piett.

MS-2 is not very happy about the MSE-6 intruder and tries to shoo it back outside. The mouse droid refuses to cooperate.

MS-2:

Shoo, shoo, you disgusting robotic rodent.

The MSE-6 droid rolls in circles around the agitated MS-2 while making electronic squeaking sounds. Meena rises and looks at the two droids.

MEENA:

MS-2, what's going on?

MS-2:

Oh, your ladyship, this place is positively crawling with these revolting creations!

The mouse droid rolls over to Meena.

MEENA:

Now, MS-2, they have their uses  
 ...nibbling up bits of trash,  
 delivery, and what not...I think  
 this one's rather cute.

The MSE-6 unit squeaks happily at Meena's astute observation.  
 It wanders into the sleeping quarters.

Meena hands MS-2 her datapad.

MEENA: (CONT'D)

I must go thank Captain Piett  
 before our departure. Finish with  
 the packing, and then meet me  
 aboard the shuttle.

MS-2:

Yes, your ladyship.

INT. EXECUTOR - GUEST SUITE - SLEEPING QUARTERS

The floor compartment of the open wardrobe trunk has a  
 stowaway MSE-6 unit parked inside. A delicate black metal arm  
 extrudes from the mouse droid, carefully pulling one of the  
 hanging gowns around its squat form. The arm retracts just as  
 MS-2 enters to close the trunk and its contents for pick-up.

INT. EXECUTOR - HANGER BAY

Darth Vader's Lambda-Class shuttle is being readied for take-  
 off. A formation of stormtroopers stand at attention on  
 either side of the craft. General Veers, a fully healed  
 Captain Dav, and Major Covell stand near the ramp.

At the far end of the hanger bay, Vader and Lady Meena enter.  
 Vader addresses Meena as they move towards the shuttle.

VADER:

Have you applied the meditation  
 technique I taught you?

MEENA:

Yes, Lord Vader. I used it to calm  
 myself during the trial on Lynessa.

VADER:

You will need this skill in the  
 presence of the Emperor.

MEENA:

(nervously)  
 May I ask why, my lord?

VADER:

My master must know you are a Force healer...and therefore no threat to him or the Empire

MEENA:

(alarmed)

I mean no harm to the Emperor.

VADER:

Nor do you desire power...In time, your destiny will reveal itself.

Meena is puzzled, but decides not to pursue the subject further as they approach Veers, Covell, and Dav.

The officers respectfully acknowledge the Dark Lord as Vader leaves Meena with them and makes his way up the ramp into the shuttle.

VEERS:

(to Meena)

I have orders to accompany you to your audience with the Emperor.

MEENA:

That's reassuring. I'll need your strength to help steady my nerves. (To Covell and Dav) Good-bye, Major Covell...Captain Dav.

DAV:

Good-bye, m'lady. The Major and I hope to see you again...soon.

COVELL:

That's right.

Meena offers her hand to Dav and Covell who both return her gesture in a gentlemanly manner. Veers steps forward.

VEERS:

Lady Meena, Lord Vader is waiting.

Veers offers his arm to Meena and nods to Dav and Covell. Veers and Meena move to and then up the rampart. The two officers watch as the couple enters the shuttle. They both exchange knowing smiles.

EXT. SPACE - PLANET CORUSCANT

Vader's shuttle emerges from the Executor's docking bay and heads towards the surface of Coruscant.

## INT. LAMBDA-CLASS SHUTTLE - MAIN HOLD

In the main hold, Vader is ensconced in a custom chair facing the shuttle cockpit entrance, while Veers and Meena are seated next to one another in the central passenger section. MS-2 sits quietly behind them.

Veers glances sideways at Meena. He takes her hand in his black-gloved one and gently massages her palm. An already apprehensive Meena is a bit flustered by Veers' physical attention.

VEERS:

(quietly)

I have a few days leave before the fleet is deployed. My father and son will be joining me. I'd like for you to meet them.

Meena begins to relax as she senses Veers' intent. Her eyes give him a silent go ahead. He clasps her hand firmly in his.

MEENA:

Call on me at the home of my Aunt Alyce, the Countess Motti.

VEERS:

I've met the Countess...at a gathering she hosted on Carida.

MEENA:

(smiling)

Aunt Alyce always threw some of the best parties...and was thought to be very influential.

VEERS:

(dryly)

From what little I know of such things, that observation still stands.

## EXT. CORUSCANT - IMPERIAL PALACE - DAY

Dark and elegant, the towering pyramidal structure of the Imperial Palace dominates the Coruscanti skyline.

## EXT. CORUSCANT - IMPERIAL PALACE - LANDING PLATFORM - DAY

Vader's shuttle coasts onto a landing platform of the palace.

## INT. IMPERIAL PALACE - HALLWAY

Crimson robed royal guards line the walls, standing silently at attention as courtiers, bureaucrats, high-ranking military officers, and planetary dignitaries confer, gossip, spy, and meander about a stately, pillared hallway of the Imperial Palace.

Of indeterminate age, the Countess Alyce Motti, a beautiful woman with an air of cynical amusement, confidently glides down the hallway with the Lady Inna Mitz and Lady Janel Piett in attendance. Alyce Motti wears a tailored, stylish gown and classic adornment that is in sharp contrast with her two companions who, like most of the Imperial courtiers, are elaborately dressed and dripping with jewels.

Many of the hallway denizens acknowledge the Countesses' presence with a respectful nod, bow, or surreptitious glance. Other courtiers...mostly female...glare or whisper in jealous frustration over one of the more public members of the Emperor's elite inner circle's seemingly superior attitude towards them.

Baron Ulric Tagge, an imposing older man who sports a ceremonial armored belt/plate over his military-style garments, approaches the Countess and her ladies. Next to Tagge is his unofficial counselor, the shrewd and intelligent Imperial Chief Aron Bast.

TAGGE:

Countess Motti, I was told you would be here.

ALYCE:

Baron Tagge, are you ready for the hunt? Two days hence...Manarai Mountain Lodge.

TAGGE:

I'll be on hand...along with Chief Bast and General Veers for back up.

ALYCE:

Grand Admiral Zaarin has sworn revenge over last season's defeat. Army verses Navy...always an interesting match.

TAGGE:

Indeed.

Tagge looks in the direction of Inna and Janel who are waiting to be introduced.

ALYCE:

Oh, Lady Inna and Lady Janel, allow me to introduce the Baron Ulric Tagge and Chief Aron Bast.

Inna, Janel, Tagge, and Bast murmur polite greetings while acknowledging each other with courtly nods.

ALYCE: (CONT'D)

Death Star survivors...as is General Veers. The three of them meet yearly to celebrate their good fortune...which is more than I can say for my dear brother Admiral Motti, whose luck finally ran out on that overblown battle station.

TAGGE:

Countess, may I have a word with you...alone?

ALYCE:

Certainly.

Alyce waves a hand at Inna and Janel.

ALYCE: (CONT'D)

Inna, Janel...head back to my villa and hold off the tea party guests. Meena's arrival has been delayed... she and I won't be on time to greet them.

JANEL:

Really, Alyce, you're the only hostess I know who can be fashionably late to her own event.

ALYCE:

Quite. Now, run along...The Baron has that House of Tagge verses House of Motti look.

Inna and Janel leave, albeit reluctantly. Chief Bast moves discreetly over to an alcove while Tagge and Alyce converse.

TAGGE:

Your niece, Lady Meena Valorian, I'd like for her to marry my son Orelus.

ALYCE:

That was direct.

TAGGE:

I don't have time for subtle games.

ALYCE:

Meena will decide whom she marries.

TAGGE:

Come now, Alyce, you can't resist meddling in such affairs. It's part of your nature.

ALYCE:

Still smarting over our broken engagement? Would this arranged marriage between our houses be a sort of penance on my part?

TAGGE:

Your penance is the position you've held all these years...that of an unmarried companion to the Emperor.

ALYCE:

(defensively)

That companionship has never been exclusive...I've made the best of my situation.

TAGGE:

Have you? Your niece will have a better chance for happiness with my son, than here among the sly ghouls which inhabit this court.

ALYCE:

(anxiously)

Careful what you say, Baron.

TAGGE:

What's this? A hint of concern in your tone? For yourself...or Lady Meena?

ALYCE:

(hushed)

For all of us!

Two crimson robed royal guards approach Alyce and Tagge. One of the guards nods slightly to Alyce and speaks.

ROYAL GUARD:

The Emperor commands your presence.

ALYCE:  
(to Tagge)  
The Emperor calls. Good day, Baron  
Tagge.

Tagge bows to Alyce.

TAGGE:  
Good day, Countess Motti.

Chief Bast joins Tagge as they both observe Alyce being escorted down the hall by the royal guards.

INT. CORUSCANT - IMPERIAL PALACE - VESTIBULE

Within a private vestibule just outside the Emperor's audience chamber, Imperial Grand Vizier Sate Pestage is with Agent Arik Ganner. Ganner is now dressed in the tailored black robes of a Sith adept. His distinctive lightsaber dangles from a crimson belted sash.

The Countess Alyce Motti enters the chamber with the two guards. Alyce nods her head in formal greeting to Pestage.

ALYCE:  
Grand Vizier Pestage.

Alyce notices Ganner.

PESTAGE:  
Countess Motti, may I present Agent  
Arik Ganner, who has just come from  
an audience with the Emperor.

Ganner bows to Alyce while she looks him over. Ganner and Alyce eye one another for a few moments. Ganner suddenly jerks and wears a startled expression on his handsome face.

ALYCE:  
Right back at you, Agent Ganner.

Ganner recovers and smiles knowingly at the Force-sensitive Alyce.

ALYCE: (CONT'D)  
A little game I play with new  
members of the cowl brigade.

GANNER:  
Cowl brigade, Countess?

ALYCE:

It's a term I use to describe Sith adepts...of which you are one.

Ganner nods his head at what he views as a compliment. Pestage interrupts the exchange.

PESTAGE:

(to Alyce)

His Majesty awaits you in the audience chamber.

GANNER:

A pleasure, Countess Motti. May we meet again...By your leave, Grand Vizier Pestage.

Pestage nods as Ganner exits the chamber followed by the two royal guards.

Alyce turns to Pestage, using a more familiar manner and tone with the Grand Vizier now that they are alone.

ALYCE:

Sate, I trust you've turned off that annoying fear gas for Lady Meena's presentation?

PESTAGE:

Of course.

ALYCE:

And let's pray the Emperor puts on his grandfatherly routine...

Pestage and Alyce head towards an entry way.

ALYCE: (CONT'D)

No sense in scaring the hell out of my favorite niece...

INT. CORUSCANT - IMPERIAL PALACE - AUDIENCE CHAMBER DOORS

Deep within the Imperial palace, Lord Darth Vader, Lady Meena, and General Veers stand before the impressively high audience chamber doors that are flanked by crimson robed royal guards. The doors begin to open.

Veers offers his arm to Meena who gratefully accepts his gallantry. Veers gives the young woman an encouraging glance. Meena takes a deep breath and begins to calm herself using the meditation technique taught to her by Lord Vader.

As the doors become fully opened, Grand Vizier Sate Pestage, at his ceremonious best, is seen standing inside the entry of the vaulted hall of the audience chamber.

PESTAGE:

His Supreme Excellency, the Emperor Palpatine, will see you now.

Vader, Veers, and a relatively serene Meena enter the chamber.

INT. CORUSCANT - IMPERIAL PALACE - AUDIENCE CHAMBER

Guided by Grand Vizier Pestage, Lord Vader, General Veers, and Lady Meena move down a vaulted hall manned on each side by more crimson robed royal guards.

They stop before an elevated chamber at the hall's end where the elderly Emperor, his head covered by a black-hooded robe, sits with his gnarled hands resting on the arms of a dark gray throne chair. The Emperor is looking grandfatherly as he smiles benignly down upon the trio.

On the Emperor's lower right, Countess Alyce Motti stands, elegantly bearing a slender, oblong box. Alyce looks reassuringly at Meena whose poised demeanor is impressive under the circumstances.

To the lower left of the Imperial throne, are Lord Gale and Lady Aniva Suba, a rather dour-looking middle-aged couple who are the court representatives of COMPNOR, (Commission for the Preservation of the New Order) an organization fiercely dedicated to maintaining the loyalty, standards, and ethics of the Empire and its citizens. Lady Aniva holds a gray silk shoulder sash in her white gloved hands.

The Grand Vizier approaches the throne and bows deeply before the Emperor. He then stands and moves to the right.

PESTAGE:

Your Supreme Excellency, Emperor Palpatine, Bringer of Order, and Majestic Overlord of the Galactic Empire, may I present your Emissary, Lord Darth Vader...

Vader goes down on his knee to his master and bows his head.

PESTAGE: (CONT'D)

Major General Maximilian Veers...

Veers goes down on his knee to his Emperor and bows his head.

PESTAGE: (CONT'D)  
and Honored Imperial Citizen Lady  
Meena Valorian.

Meena curtsies gracefully before the Emperor as the Grand Vizier moves next to Alyce.

The Emperor motions to Vader.

EMPEROR:  
Rise, my friend.

Vader rises and moves behind Alyce and Pestage.

EMPEROR: (CONT'D)  
Rise, and be at ease, General  
Veers.

Veers rises and stands at ease.

EMPEROR: (CONT'D)  
Lady Meena, you may come closer.

Meena approaches the throne. She is now calm and at peace.

EMPEROR: (CONT'D)  
Citizen Valorian, in the face of  
corruption and misfortune, your  
loyalty and dedication to the  
ideals of the Empire has been  
noted...

Alyce opens the oblong box to reveal a platinum Imperial Roundel hung from a black ribbon.

EMPEROR: (CONT'D)  
It is our desire to grant you the  
Imperial Roundel as a token of our  
esteem.

Pestage removes the roundel from the box and goes to Meena, placing it around the young woman's neck. Pestage moves back to the right.

EMPEROR: (CONT'D)  
It is also our desire to grant you  
a ceremonial position as head of  
the newly-formed Imperial Angels of  
Mercy League.

The Emperor motions to Lady Aniva.

EMPEROR: (CONT'D)  
 Lady Aniva Suba shall explain.

Lady Aniva Suba steps forward, gives a stiff curtsy, and addresses the Emperor.

ANIVA:  
 Thank you, my Lord Emperor.

Aniva moves to Meena and gives what appears to be a smile - the effect of which is rather ghastly.

ANIVA: (CONT'D)  
 On behalf of the Commission for the Preservation of the New Order, I congratulate you, Lady Meena, for encouraging Imperial citizens to emulate your compassionate nature.

Alyce raises her eyebrows ever so slightly at the opening of Lady Aniva's blather.

ANIVA: (CONT'D)  
 Under the auspices of COMPNOR, the Imperial Angels of Mercy League will consist of upstanding ladies who will travel the Empire... dispensing care to civilians in need...and giving inspiration to our brave military personnel.

Aniva makes another feeble attempt to smile, and places the gray silk shoulder sash - embroidered with a logo patch and aurebesh wording of the Imperial Angels of Mercy League - over Meena's head. Aniva adjusts the sash and carefully places the Imperial Roundel over it. She then returns to her former place next to her husband Lord Suba.

The Emperor and Meena regard one another. Meena remains strong and serene. It is clear Meena has not let the attention and accolades go to her head.

EMPEROR:  
 You are an exceptional young woman, Lady Meena.

MEENA:  
 Thank you, my Lord Emperor.

EMPEROR:  
 We shall look forward to your future endeavors with great interest.

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE - GRAND CORRIDOR - RECEPTION BALCONY - DAY

Monumental sparkling cut-glass windows frame a large reception balcony overlooking a section of the Grand Corridor of the Imperial Palace. Double rows of exquisite greenish-purple Ch'hala tree tops, tended by floating MN-2E droids, and rising upwards to the magnificent vaulted ceiling, are seen from the balcony guard rails.

Tables laden with elaborate finger foods and beverages are watched over by royal stewards as an assemblage of persons - civilian, military, and bureaucratic - gather in groups chatting or standing in line while they await an introduction to the Citizen of Honor, Lady Meena Valorian.

Meena, still wearing her gray silk sash and Imperial Roundel, stands next to Lord and Lady Suba graciously shaking hands and accepting congratulations from a mercifully thinning line of guests. Baron Tagge and Chief Bast are among the last to meet with Lady Meena.

Imperial News Net reporters are seen, recording the reception for the latest holo report.

By the balcony railings, Alyce chats with Grand General Brashin, Brashin's attractive wife Livia, and General Veers. Alyce looks over and notes Baron Tagge and Chief Bast being introduced to Meena. Alyce turns to Veers.

ALYCE:

I've found a lovely young lady for your son to escort to the ball tomorrow night...

VEERS:

Thank you, Countess, I'm sure Zevulon will enjoy himself.

LIVIA:

(to Veers)

I hear your father will be joining you for the New Year Fetes.

VEERS:

Yes, both my son and the Major are due to arrive this evening...

ALYCE:

And the Major will be *my* escort, isn't that splendid? I intend to keep General Veers and his family occupied this holiday.

VEERS:

I'm sure we'll enjoy your  
hospitality, Countess.

ALYCE:

Good, because after the opera, you,  
your father, and son must spend New  
Year's Eve dinner at my villa.

VEERS:

Provided my leave extends that far,  
I accept your invitation.

Baron Tagge and Chief Bast approach the foursome.

ALYCE:

(exasperated)

Someone should tell Lord Vader the  
Rebels can wait until after the New  
Year.

Brashin sees Tagge and Bast.

TAGGE:

If anyone could delay the Death  
Squadron for a garden party, it  
would be you, Countess.

BRASHIN:

Baron Tagge...Chief Bast, good to  
see you. You remember my wife, Lady  
Livia...and, of course, you know  
the Countess Motti and General  
Veers.

Tagge and Bast and the others politely nod their heads in  
greeting. Alyce gives Tagge an peeved look and takes Livia's  
arm.

ALYCE:

Livia, dear, we need to gather up  
Meena and get her off to my tea.

Alyce smiles charmingly at the men...save Tagge.

ALYCE: (CONT'D)

Gentlemen, if you'll excuse us.

Alyce and Livia head towards Meena who is conversing with  
Lord and Lady Suba.

EXT. CORUSCANT - IMPERIAL PALACE - LANDING PLATFORM - DAY

Escorted by two royal guards, Alyce and Meena exit an elaborate arch way of the Imperial Palace onto a landing platform. They are greeted by a royal steward, who is followed by Meena's MS-2 droid.

STEWARD:

A transport will be here shortly,  
Countess.

ALYCE:

Thank you, steward.

The steward returns to the platform to await the transport's arrival. The royal guards stand at attention near the women, while MS-2 moves forward to address Meena.

MS-2:

The wardrobe trunk has been sent on  
ahead, your ladyship. Is there  
anything else to be done?

MEENA:

Not at this time, MS-2.

ALYCE:

An MS-2 unit? How quaint. Did you  
know they can be programmed for  
observation and analysis?

MEENA:

(shocked)  
You mean gossip?

ALYCE:

Yes, isn't it delicious? They have  
a short range recording function...  
you should let her loose at my next  
party!

MEENA:

Aunt Alyce, I don't think...

Meena's objection is interrupted by the arrival of a black airlimousine, driven by a red-armored royal pilot. The airlimo slides in and hovers low on the platform. In the air above the transport are two black cloudcars, manned by Imperial police.

ALYCE:

Here's our transport!

The royal steward stands by the open airlimo doors to assist the ladies. Alyce, Meena, and MS-2 move forward.

EXT. CORUSCANT - SKY ABOVE IMPERIAL CITY - DAY

Given a royal escort by the black cloudcars, the airlimo zooms towards an exclusive Manairi Mountain neighborhood of the wealthy elite. The normally heavy traffic of Imperial City stops in either direction to let the entourage pass.

INT. ROYAL AIRLIMOUSINE - PASSENGER SECTION

Alyce and Meena are nestled in the spacious back seat of the limo. MS-2 is seated across from them. Alyce gives Meena a gentle hug.

ALYCE:

You carried yourself well...both in the presence of the Emperor and during that pompous reception.

MEENA:

I've never been so overwhelmed in all my life!

Meena gazes out the limo window and notices the stopped traffic.

ALYCE:

Cheer up, dear. Your story's only good for about one more news cycle.

MEENA:

You think so? The fuss made over me is disconcerting, to say the least.

ALYCE:

Yes, being referred to as the "flower of Imperial womanhood" by Lord Suba was a bit over the top.

A mortified Meena covers her face, then lets out a brief giggle. Alyce adds a low chuckle to her niece's reaction.

ALYCE: (CONT'D)

Tell me, Meena, what do you think about Maximilian Veers?

Meena blushes. Alyce is pleased by the response.

MEENA:

(hesitantly)

Since I was a child, I've always admired the General.

ALYCE:

Admiration is well and good, but how do you feel about him now that you're a woman?

Meena blushes again. It is clear that there is much more than admiration on the part of Meena for Veers. Alyce regards her niece for a moment, smiles, and gently pats Meena's shoulder.

ALYCE: (CONT'D)

It's obvious you and Max were meant for each other...Just let me handle the arrangements...no sense in *your* being too forward in these matters.

EXT. CORUSCANT - SKY ABOVE VILLA MOTTI - DAY

Within view of the snow-capped Manairi Mountain range and beautiful Lake Azure, the royal airlimousine soars over several large, showy estates until it lands on a round mosaic landing pad located a short walking distance from the more modest-sized, but impressive home of Countess Alyce Motti.

EXT. CORUSCANT - VILLA MOTTI - DAY

Surrounded by lush gardens, shimmering water fountains, and accented by colorful flowering vines that cling to the classical architecture of the structure, Villa Motti is something to behold.

Alyce and Meena have just exited the airlimo. MS-2 follows, mechanically gawking as she takes in the scene. The royal entourage flies off into the sky behind the trio. Alyce turns to Meena as they walk arm in arm towards the villa's pillared front porch.

ALYCE:

Welcome to Villa Motti. Not very spacious, but as real estate people say...location...location. And this location is one of the best to be had on Coruscant.

Alyce stops and looks pointedly at Meena.

ALYCE: (CONT'D)

Always say Coruscant, dear, *never* Imperial Center!

(MORE)

ALYCE: (CONT'D)  
 Only the military can use that term  
 with impunity...All others are  
 social-climbers, whose status is  
 suspect...Those who are secure in  
 their station, say Coruscant.

The pair continue their walk with MS-2 close behind them.

ALYCE: (CONT'D)  
 Say Coruscant.

MEENA:  
 (amused)  
 Coruscant.

ALYCE:  
 Nicely done.

The two women and MS-2 have reached the villa. From the sweeping front porch comes a trim, dark-haired male, about 40, neatly bearded, and dressed in flowing blue robes. He is Karuk: Countess Motti's indispensable manservant. The staid Karuk speaks to them in a deep, dignified voice.

KARUK:  
 Welcome home, Mistress Motti...and  
 to you, Lady Meena.

ALYCE:  
 Meena, dear, this is Karuk...my  
 manservant. I trust him implicitly.

Alyce lowers her voice in a conspiratorial tone.

ALYCE: (CONT'D)  
 ...And with things I don't trust  
 him with, I just erase his memory  
 banks.

Meena looks at Karuk with surprise. MS-2 is also surprised.

MEENA:  
 (quietly)  
 He's an android?

MS-2:  
 I never would have known...my  
 sensors indicate he is human!

ALYCE:  
 Yes...it's a little family secret.

Karuk motions for them to enter the villa.

## INT. CORUSCANT - VILLA MOTTI - ENTRY HALL

The entry hall of Villa Motti is tastefully decorated and runs through the main level of the home. On the left side of the hall, one can glimpse the luxurious, yet intimate living and dining rooms that are separated by a massive, carved stone fireplace. The ancient House of Motti emblem hangs over the hearth. To the right, open double doors lead into a sumptuous two-story library and study.

Karuk leads MS-2 through a doorway off the entry. Alyce and Meena move down the wide hallway past the main rooms.

ALYCE:

(to Meena)

Are you a brave girl? Oh, but, of course you are...being a general's daughter.

The two women are nearing the end of the hall towards a pair of stunningly beautiful stained-glass doors. They stop. Alyce looks at Meena with a glint in her eye.

ALYCE: (CONT'D)

You need to be a good soldier for what I'm about to subject you to.

The doors swing open to reveal a magnificent walled garden, filled to the brim with a suddenly silent throng of elite, formidable looking, tea drinking females, frozen in mid-sip, who stare intensely at Alyce and a rather startled Meena.

ALYCE: (CONT'D)

(dramatically)

Say hello to the Imperial Officer's Wives Club...

## EXT. CORUSCANT - IMPERIAL CITY - OFFICERS HOUSING - EVENING

Amidst the dazzling lights and towering buildings of Imperial City lies an enclave of skyscrapers set aside for the command officers of the Empire.

From the look of these soaring structures, no expense or amenity has been spared in providing favored military personnel with spacious, attractive living accommodations with which to house their families or spend their leave.

## INT. OFFICERS HOUSING - VEERS' LIVING QUARTERS - EVENING

At the window of an upper level accommodation, retired Major Martyn Veers - a tall, powerfully built man, around the age of 65 - stands surveying the glittering, never-ending whirl of Imperial City.

Behind Martyn, the living area is simply decorated with masculine comfort in mind. A lit, glass-front cabinet holds both ancient and modern military artifacts. Near-by, Martyn's son, General Maximilian Veers, pours Corellian whiskey into two glasses at a built-in bar unit. An impressed Martyn turns towards Veers.

MARTYN:

Officers housing was never like  
this in the Old Republic...

Veers smiles and brings his father a drink.

VEERS:

(proudly)  
The New Order treats its soldiers  
well, father.

Martyn takes the offered whiskey and raises the glass to his son.

MARTYN:

Here's to your continued health and  
success.

VEERS:

Long Live the Empire!

Martyn downs some of the drink. Veers does the same. Veers looks at his father with respect and some regret.

VEERS: (CONT'D)

We haven't spent much time with one  
another over the years.

MARTYN:

We're together, now.

Martyn moves to a chair and settles in.

VEERS:

Yes. I sent Captain Dav out with  
Zev, so we could be alone.

Veers finds a chair and sits facing Martyn.

VEERS: (CONT'D)  
Some personal matters of mine need  
to be discussed.

MARTYN:  
Such as you and Lady Meena getting  
together?

VEERS:  
I find the thought of marriage  
appealing. However, I have my  
doubts.

MARTYN:  
You were never one to back down  
from something you wanted.

VEERS:  
My career demands most of my  
attention...a young wife might feel  
neglected. My own son resents my  
absence.

MARTYN:  
Zev reminds me of you at his age.

VEERS:  
At his age, I was never cited for  
insubordination...

Martyn leans forward at this information

VEERS: (CONT'D)  
I've been told Zev argues with his  
teachers...and challenged a direct  
order from his commander.

MARTYN:  
A cadet needs to obey and not  
debate.

VEERS:  
Precisely. His future is in  
jeopardy. I have only so much  
influence.

A concerned Martyn gazes at his son, who is staring down at  
his drink in quiet frustration. Veers finishes his whiskey  
and ponders his family's future.

EXT. CORUSCANT - IMPERIAL CITY - ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT -  
EVENING

Speedercars and airtaxis zoom in and out of the colorful and exciting entertainment district of Imperial City.

EXT. CORUSCANT - IMPERIAL CITY - ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT -  
MAIN LEVEL - EVENING

Pedestrians can be seen walking the brightly-lit ramps that lead into various restaurants, holo theaters, and drinking establishments that cater to the fun-loving visitors and residents of Coruscant.

EXT. CORUSCANT - IMPERIAL CITY - ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT -  
STAR TO STAR BAR AND GRILL - EVENING

Droves of off-duty Imperial officers, technicians, pilots, troopers, plus a few of their civilian dates, are seen going in and out of the famous Star to Star Bar and Grill. Named after the unofficial anthem of the Imperial Star Fleet, it is a popular stop for military persons on leave.

INT. STAR TO STAR BAR AND GRILL - MOMENTS LATER

Upbeat music booms over the sound of Bantha steaks sizzling on an open grill of the crowded Star Fleet hang-out. Tryax beer and other fine beverages flow freely from a long, winding bar where several squads of rowdy off-duty troopers, some of whom are singing a few bars of the "Star to Star" song, congregate. Attractive waitresses, dressed in slinky outfits designed to depict Imperial star systems, weave in and out of the grill's packed booths and tables, serving drinks and house specialties to boisterous patrons.

Captain Dav and Cadet Zevulon Veers, dressed in his gray-blue Academy uniform, enter the establishment. Seventeen year-old Zev is of medium height with a slender, compact build. From his studious expression, the young cadet looks as if he would be more comfortable at a liberal arts college, rather than enrolled in a military institution.

Dav quickly appropriates a booth being vacated by some low-ranking naval officers. He and Zev slide in.

DAV:

This is it, Zev...the Star to Star  
Bar and Grill. I'll wager none of  
your Academy mates have been here.

A pretty waitress approaches their booth. Her name is Demi. Dav and Zev exchange appreciative smiles.

DEMI:  
Good evening, gentlemen, my name is  
Demi. May I take your order?

DAV:  
Two house specials...medium  
rare...a Tryax beer...and for my  
friend...

Dav looks over at Zev expectantly.

ZEV:  
(sheepishly)  
A blue fizzy.

Demi smiles, and then leaves to fetch their drinks.

DAV:  
(to Zev)  
You can order something stronger  
than a blue fizzy...

Zev shrugs his shoulders.

ZEV:  
With my luck, I'll be cited for  
underage drinking...and I've  
already got enough citations  
according to father.

DAV:  
Here it comes...

ZEV:  
I should quit the Academy before I  
get booted out.

DAV:  
(quietly)  
That's not an option. The General  
pulled some strings to clear your  
record.

ZEV:  
So much for father going on and on  
about "performance over privilege."

DAV:  
(pointedly)  
Your father put his reputation on  
the line for you.

Dav's words have an immediate effect on Zev's attitude.

ZEV:  
 (guiltily)  
 I didn't mean for him to go and do that...it's just, I find it hard to listen to...let alone take orders from idiots.

DAV:  
 (smiling)  
 You and the General have something in common...Ask him how he deals with ineptitude.

Demi arrives with a mug of Tryax beer and a blue fizzy. She sets the drinks down on the table, smiles, and hurries off to another booth. Dav raises his beer glass to Zev and smiles encouragingly.

DAV: (CONT'D)  
 Glory to the Empire!

Zev hesitates, gives a wry smile, then raises his blue fizzy to Dav.

ZEV:  
 (resigned)  
 To the Empire...

EXT. GALAXY - PLANET HOTH

Several X-wing fighters zoom downward to the ice planet of Hoth.

EXT. HOTH - ECHO BASE ENTRANCE - DAY

The X-wing fighters fly into the enormous ice cavern entrance of the rebel base, followed by a snowspeeder.

INT. ECHO BASE - MAIN HANGER DECK

The interior of the main hanger deck is bustling with rebel soldiers, droids, and activity as the lone snowspeeder glides in and parks near the X-wings. Rebel technicians rush over to service the incoming crafts.

Ari Nugeen and Dyn Mawr, dressed in pilot gear, climb out of the snowspeeder's twin cockpits. They are met by a Rebel officer and technician. Dyn removes his helmet.

REBEL OFFICER:  
 How did she fly?

ARIE:  
(removing her helmet)  
Needs more mods to deal with the  
cold.

REBEL TECHNICIAN:  
We'll get right to work.

The Rebel officer nods to the technician who looks over the snowspeeder, then he turns to Dyn.

REBEL OFFICER:  
Private Kyrr was looking for you in  
the south corridor, Captain.

DYN:  
Thanks.

The Rebel officer goes over to the X-wings.

INT. ECHO BASE - ICE CORRIDOR

Dyn and Arie move through a winding ice corridor. Rebel personnel and service droids pass by them.

ARIE:  
What's with Vorra?

DYN:  
She wants me to get a message to  
her grandfather on Paxillia...

ARIE:  
I meant what's wrong with  
Vorra...she hardly talks with  
anyone but you.

Dyn stops as does Arie. More personnel pass by.

DYN:  
(softly)  
Vorra wasn't just tortured on Nati  
IV...she was...

ARIE:  
You don't have to go on...I get it.

DYN:  
She doesn't remember everything...  
when a memory does come back, I'm  
the one she opens up to.

Down the corridor, Vorra Kyrr is seen heading towards them. Vorra stops to speak with Dyn. Arie nods her head in greeting to Vorra, then disappears down the ice corridor. Vorra hands Dyn a message disk.

EXT. CORUSCANT - VILLA MOTTI - EVENING

A soft glow emanates from the windows and night-lit garden walkways of Villa Motti. The android manservant Karuk stands before the front of the home and activates three hovering sentry droids. The mechanized guardians whirl their way out onto the grounds.

INTERIOR: VILLA MOTTI - MEENA'S BED CHAMBER - EVENING

Meena, clad in a flowing nightgown, sits at a mirrored dressing table within a lavishly appointed bed chamber, while MS-2 brushes her long hair.

Alyce, wearing an evening robe, enters, holding a goblet filled with her favorite beverage of warmed Luranian brandy. She is followed by an MSE-6 mouse droid upon which a small tray bearing a cup of tea and a plate of sweet biscuits is perched.

ALYCE:

Look what our little stowaway has brought us.

The MSE-6 unit rolls happily over to Meena and squeaks a greeting. MS-2 abruptly steps aside, placing her mechanical arms on her metal waist in contempt.

MS-2:

How that loathsome contrivance got past my sensors, I'll never know, your ladyship!

MSE-6 squeaks indignantly. Both Meena and Alyce are amused. Meena picks up the cup of tea and a biscuit.

MEENA:

It's a shame we'll have to return the droid...it does seem to want a new home.

Meena places the teacup on the dressing table and nibbles at the biscuit.

ALYCE:

Return it? Not after it's debut at my tea party this afternoon.

A few crumbs from Meena's biscuit fall to the carpet. MSE-6 quickly scoops them up.

ALYCE: (CONT'D)

The way the ladies jumped when it came zooming through the garden with MS-2 in hot pursuit...that alone makes it a keeper.

MEENA:

(smiling)

But isn't it navy property?

ALYCE:

We'll get Admiral Ozzel to sign a release...it'll be one less thing for him to trip over.

A few more biscuit crumbs fall onto Meena's lap. She brushes them off. Once again, MSE-6 scoops the crumbs up.

MEENA:

I once had a pet that nibbled everything in sight. Perhaps we should call *it* Nibs?

"Nibs" squeaks an affirmative to its nickname and playfully rolls around in a circle.

ALYCE:

(raising her goblet)

Nibs it is!

Alyce and Meena laugh. MS-2 gives out a short mechanical "hmmph", signifying her disdain for the new robotic addition to the household, then returns to brushing Meena's hair.

EXT. CORUSCANT - IMPERIAL CITY - OFFICERS HOUSING - NIGHT

It is well after midnight. Less air traffic surrounds the officers housing complex and only a few of the window levels remain lit.

INT. OFFICERS HOUSING - VEER'S LIVING QUARTERS - NIGHT

Maximilian Veers sits in a chair, carefully cleaning a custom hunting rifle. At the sound of the main door opening, Veers looks up from his task to see his son Zevulon enter the living area.

VEERS:

How was your evening?

ZEV:  
Fine, sir...we ate dinner and saw  
an actionholo.

Veers examines the rifle scope.

ZEV: (CONT'D)  
Captain Dav told me what you did  
regarding my record...I won't put  
you in that position, again.

Veers lays his hunting rifle to the side of his chair and  
looks directly at his son.

VEERS:  
(sternly)  
From now on, you must honor your  
commitments without complaint.

ZEV:  
I will, sir.

Veers picks up his rifle and motions for Zev to come closer.  
Zev does so, but he is stiff and unsure of himself around his  
autocratic father. Veers does his best to try and reach out  
to his son.

VEERS:  
My new hunting rifle...I've heard  
you're quite a gunner yourself,  
excelling in marksmanship.

ZEV:  
So, I've been told, sir.

VEERS:  
You might be interested in how this  
works.

Zev is very interested. He relaxes a bit and sits down next  
to his father.

END OF PART I











