

# **Dark Force Rising Study Guide**

## **Dark Force Rising by Timothy Zahn**

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## Plot Summary

The middle novel in a trilogy, *Dark Force Rising* follows Grand Admiral Thrawn and the warriors of the New Republic as they race to control the long-lost and highly coveted dreadnaughts of the Katana fleet ("Dark Force"). In desperate need of new warships in great quantity, Imperial Grand Admiral Thrawn has raided the Sluis Van space station and implicated New Republic Admiral Ackbar in possible treason. Thrawn hunts the notorious smuggler turned information-peddler, Talon Karrde, to locate likely ships. Han Solo is the first survivor of Sluis Van to return to Coruscant, where he reveals that the Empire is headed by a Grand Admiral who has perfected cloaking. The situation is grave.

The friends spread out to find information vindicating Ackbar. Han and Lando, via New Cov, meet Senator Bel Iblis, who has been fighting an independent war against the Empire. They try to convince him to join the New Republic and realize that he is flying three dreadnaughts from the long-lost Katana fleet. Luke leaves New Cov for Jomark, where he talks with an ancient Jedi Master, C'baoth, who wants to train him, sister Leia Organa Solo, and her unborn twins in the Force, to restore the Jedi order. Leia heads to Honoghr via Endor on a mission to free the native Noghri from Imperial servitude. She is pinned down there for a while by Thrawn, who has agreed to deliver her to C'baoth. Leia escapes to Coruscant, partially successful in her diplomatic mission, and leads the opposition to Councilor Fey'lya, who has framed Ackbar and now downplays the feasibility of salvaging the Katana fleet.

Karrde's assistant, Mara Jade, meanwhile, is captured by the Empire and reprises her wartime role as the "Emperor's Hand." Thrawn commissions her to talk Karrde into giving him the Katana fleet's coordinates, but betrays her by following her and arresting Karrde. Mara flies to Jomark to enlist Luke in a rescue mission, which proves successful. Two New Republic missions find the Katana fleet, arguing about jurisdiction, and are united when Leia unmasks Thrawn's ambition. The Empire appears in force to challenge them; Bel Iblis appears as an ally, and great battles are fought in space and aboard the decrepit Katana. Mara narrowly survives ejecting in space, and Luke and Han get a "really bad feeling" as they look down on the identical faces of the slain Imperials - clearly clones. Having gotten the lion's share of the dreadnaughts, Thrawn will have no trouble filling them with crews.



# Chapters 1-2

## Chapters 1-2 Summary

Grand Admiral Thrawn orders Gen. Covell's ground troops deployed from the Chimaera to raid smuggler Talon Karrde's base on Myrkr, chiefly to season them. Secretly alerted, Constrainer comes out of hyperspace slightly after Mara, second in command on the Wild Karrde senses danger and acts. Thrawn is recruiting allies with warships and building up the Mount Tantiss operation on Wayland. On Jomark, Jedi Master C'baoth feels an odd tremor in the Force, but senses no personal danger.

Meanwhile, at the Sluis Van Central space station, damaged in an Imperial attack, Luke waits for his X-wing fighter to be repaired and Lando Calrissian waits for medical care. Together they thwart the notorious spaceship thief Niles Ferrier's efforts to collect Thrawn's rich bounty on warships.

## Chapters 1-2 Analysis

The first two chapters establish Thrawn as a major character, with Pellaeon as his assistant and sounding board. The Grand Admiral is developing plans to rebuild the Empire and needs capital ships and seasoned ground troops. Something mysterious and crucial is underway beneath Mount Tantiss on Wayland. Ysalamiri, discovered during the raid on Myrkr, are of undisclosed interest to the Grand Admiral. The first hints are raised that a Jedi Master, Jorus C'baoth, is crucial to Thrawn's plans, and that each needs the other for specific purposes, but their personal relationship is at best strained.

The target of the Imperial raid on Myrkr, Talon Karrde, a smuggler now primarily interested in and dealing in information, is quickly sketched. More attention is given to his second in command, Mara Jade, who occasionally has Force-related premonitions and dreams. She senses danger just in time to get the Wild Karrde under way and escape ambush. In the past, employers have mocked her for her abilities, but Karrde seems to want to exploit them.

Thrawn's determination to build his fleet of warships is shown in the invasion of the Sluis Van space station and in the attempt of renowned thief Niles Ferrier to steal some surviving ships and sell them at 120% of their value. Ferrier is accompanied by a wraith whose body absorbs light and a verpines, a species said to have a genius for building and repairing technical equipment. Ferrier's attempt is thwarted by old friends and major characters in this novel, Luke Skywalker and Lando Calrissian.



# Chapters 3-4

## Chapters 3-4 Summary

Han Solo lands the Millennium Falcon on Coruscant and learns from his wife Leia about Admiral Ackbar's house arrest in conjunction with Imperial funds entering his bank account just as the ships he has concentrated at Sluis Van are attacked. Councilor Borsk Fey'lya is charging treason and is waiting cautiously in the wings to take over from Ackbar. As the first survivor of Sluis Van to return, Han must testify before the Council. He tells of Rogue Squadron engaging TIE fighters and mole miners smuggled inside to steal capital ships. The attempt failed when Han and Lando disable the ships. Han defends Ackbar, points to the information leak in Coruscant, and lets slip that a Grand Admiral heads the Empire. Mon Mothma orders an investigation. When Han and Leia visit Ackbar, he knows that Imperial records about the Grand Admirals have been purged and worries that the latest attack shows the late Emperor's goal of developing a cloaking shield has been realized.

Luke searches historical records for information about Joruss C'baoth, human, privately-trained Jedi Knight, who assumes the title of Jedi Master. C'baoth advised Senator—future Emperor—Palpatine, helped put down the Dark Jedi insurrection, resolved the Alderaan Ascendancy Contention, and was attached to the v. When Leia's assistant, Winter, interrupts, Luke takes advantage of her "perfect and indelible" memory to ask whether the old Jedi on Jomark could be C'baoth—now over 100 years old. Luke watches the changing colors of a ch'hala tree as Winter talks and decides he must go to Jomark.

Luke finds Leia and Han discussing the revelations at the Council meeting. Han suspects Fey'lya has set Ackbar up but cannot prove it, and the crisis is endangering the New Republic. Han believes it is worth checking out New Cov for links between Fey'lya and the money entering Ackbar's account. Leia has agreed to meet Khabarakh, despite two kidnapping attempts by Noghri. Khabarakh is impressed that Leia is Darth Vader's daughter, so she will use this to bring his needy people to the New Republic.

## Chapters 3-4 Analysis

These chapters bring Han Solo to Coruscant as the first survivor of the Sluis Van debacle. He reveals how he and Lando thwart the Imperial attack force by disabling the warships that were to be stolen. Han is surprised that this costly action is applauded but sees that the circumstances surrounding the Sluis Van attack have compromised the Supreme Commander of the New Republic military. The coalition of species that has long fought the humans-only Empire could unravel over this. Ackbar, his chief accuser, Borsk Fey'lya, New Republic President Mon Mothma, and Han and Leia Solo are introduced as characters. Han startles the Council when he announces he has seen an Imperial Grand Admiral at Sluis Van; all twelve are thought to have been eliminated.



Circumstances of the infiltration, debated in detail, suggest that this mystery Grand Admiral possesses one of the late Emperor's coveted secret weapons: a cloaking shield, which would render him quite dangerous. Several mentions are made that the Empire is learning classified New Republic information and the source of the leaks has not been discovered. Also arriving on Coruscant, Luke worries about rumors from the planet Jomark about a Jedi Master, C'baoth. Luke researches him in computer files and prints the results. Providing the full texts concentrates the information and allows Luke to wonder about specific elements, including C'baoth's self-promotion to Master and participation in the almost mythical Outbound Flight Project. At the close of Chapter 4, the principal New Republic figures are spreading out on separate missions, creating separate plot threads.



# Chapters 5-6

## Chapters 5-6 Summary

Wild Karrde lands on Rishi and the crew sets up headquarters in town. Karrde tells Mara about the Katana fleet (or "Dark Force"). Some 200 heavy cruisers were lost ten years before the Clone Wars when a hive virus drives the crew crazy before killing them, and the "full-rig slave circuitry" takes the whole fleet somewhere in hyperspace. Some 15 years ago, Karrde stumbled on the dreadnaughts and destroys the records after memorizing coordinates. The Empire and New Republic both want them. While on a mission outside, Mara spots a tail, alludes him, and is led to a bounty hunter, Dengar Roth, on whom she uses the Force for distraction and shoots him. Seeing a rich bounty on Karrde's head, they pack up and leave Rishi by nightfall.

Seeing through a convoy ploy, Thrawn has TIE interceptors in place early. Keeping an eye on the battle, Thrawn reviews for Pellaeon the subtlety of the bank job that will not only take down Ackbar, but also sow political chaos in the Rebellion as the Mount Tantiss campaign gets under way. Already, Ackbar's staunchest allies have left Coruscant. Death's Head will meet Han at Palanhi, and the "Delta Source" leak shows Luke bound for Jomark.

Thrawn cautions Pellaeon against being a stickler on C'baoth's obedience. They have the ysalamiri to protect themselves and C'baoth is too unstable to be a threat. He cannot sustain his use of power for long. Thrawn is giving the Noghri one last chance to kidnap Leia. Recalling the TIE fighters and allowing the convoy to escape to warn the Rebels—thereby tying up more warships as escorts—Thrawn orders Karrde to be found because if there are warships to be found he will know where, as well as Han and Leia. Meanwhile, on Jomark, C'baoth senses a messenger approaching. People here and the Imperials call him Master but do not mean it as people had on Wayland. When he wins over Luke, they will punish Thrawn for scorning him.

## Chapters 5-6 Analysis

Karrde narrates the loss of the Katana fleet - or "Dark Force"—before the Clone Wars and his finding of it, seemingly intact some 15 years earlier. He believes no one else knows its whereabouts and balances the value to him of selling to the Empire or donating to the New Republic, which he believes is likely to win the war. Thrawn has placed a rich bounty on Karrde's head, knowing he will know where warships are to be found, and this keeps Wild Karrde on the run.

Mara shows her ability to manipulate physical objects using the Force well enough to avoid an ambush. She is afraid of the nightmares that come whenever this ability returns. She recalls some of the tricks that the Emperor taught her while concentrating on long-distance communications with her. An attack on a New Republic merchant



convoy provides the backdrop for Thrawn to expatiate on the complex plot, not only to bring down Ackbar but to put the New Republic off-balance precisely as Thrawn is preparing a new offensive somehow centered at the still-mysterious Mount Tantiss on Wayland.

Earlier it has been seen that elite troops are being culled and sent there. C'baoth, whose interdependence with Thrawn is developed a bit but still left mysterious, longs for Wayland, where he once lived as a true Master, not just one receiving lip service. Thrawn downplays C'baoth's danger because he is too unstable mentally and physically to sustain the use of his vast powers for sufficiently long periods of time. Thrawn expects to soon capture both Han and Leia.





# Chapters 7-8

## Chapters 7-8 Summary

The Falcon enters orbit over the green moon of Endor a day early. While Chewie and 3CPO make repairs, Leia suddenly blacks out. When she comes to, she asks if their orbit has passed through the point at which the Death Star exploded five years earlier. She feels the Emperor's horror, anger, bitterness, and almost sadness, so alters their orbit to avoid the spot later.

Lady Luck, meanwhile, approaches the walled city Ilic on New Cov, a planet prospering on exports of biomolecules harvested from predatory plants. When they spot Fey'lya's assistant, Tav Breil'lya, Han tails him while Lando goes for Luke. As Breil'lya disappears into a warehouse, Han is disarmed by a short, slender woman, who is taking him in when suddenly a siren wails. Luke and Lando hear the siren after leaving the Mishra tapcafe, which reminds Luke of Mos Eisley cantina. When a Barabel and a Rodian face off with blasters, Luke is enlisted to mediate. Determining the facts but at a loss for how to convert Imperial and New Republic currencies, Luke smells Ferrier's smoke and asks his expert advice. The siren causes no panic, for this is a routine raid by the Empire, claiming tribute but not sovereignty.

Hans' captor, Irenez, hands his effects to a taller, authoritative woman, Sena. When Breil'lya enters, he claims that as an impostor and Imperial spy Han should immediately be executed, but this option is turned down. Luke is spotted and politely invited in. Their Commander is anxious to see Han again, but he and Luke must return to their ships. Conducted there by Irenez, they find that Imperial forces have put a restraining bolt on Artoo to prevent his activating the X-wing and have cut Lando off from Lady Luck. Han directs a double diversion that gets both craft unscathed into space—where an Imperial Star Destroyer looms. Luke battles its TIE fighters as Lady Luck falls into formation with Sena's ship. Suddenly, three antique dreadnaughts come out of hyperspace and engage the Star Destroyer. Han sees little choice but to accept the Commander's hospitality. Luke escapes and heads for Jomark.

## Chapters 7-8 Analysis

Leia chooses the lush, green moon of Endor for her rendezvous with Khabarakh. She is nostalgic about this place where the Empire died and the New Republic was born. Leia is less charmed when she is struck by the residual rage occupying the orbit spot where the the second Death Star exploded and Emperor Palpatine died. She almost mentions Luke's dream about facing Darth Vader on Dagobah but remembers in time he wants it kept secret.

Han and Lando meanwhile arrive on New Cov and quickly split up on the ground, Han getting quickly into trouble. Luke, who arrives separately, mediates a fight between



members of two ferocious species, calling on Ferrier's expertise in currency conversion. Luke observes that Master Yoda, whom he is remembering frequently, had neglected this aspect of Jedi service. It appears that the New Republic and Empire curiously coexist at New Cov, the Empire raiding the valuable exotic biomolecules from time to time but not incorporating the planet politically.

Han is disarmed and taken into a warehouse, where Fey'lya's aide demands his execution as a spy. Han's captors, Sena and Irenez, are not impressed with Tav Breil'lya's performance and set Han free. The Imperial raid normally is restricted to the landing area, but seeing Luke's X-wing, the raid is extended. Luke, Han, and Lando escape by executing an aerial ballet of feints, diversions, and blaster fire when needed. In space, they face an Imperial Star Destroyer and their fate appears sealed. When Han suggests that Luke control the minds of attacking TIE fighters, Luke states without explanation that he is no longer using that aspect of the Force. Sena and Irenez work for a Commander who claims to know Han. The appearance of three antique dreadnaughts suggests it might be Talon Karrde.

Seeing no alternative, Han and Lando dock with a dreadnaught and are swept into hyperspace. Cut out of this mission because it is unsafe to agree on a rendezvous point, Luke heads finally to Jomark and its Jedi Master. Leia's experiences refer extensively to Return of the Jedi, while Luke's encounter in the tapcafe and their narrow escape from the planet echo A New Hope.



# Chapters 9-10

## Chapters 9-10 Summary

Khabarakh arrives and reluctantly agrees to allow Chewie and Threepio to accompany Leia, for Noghris share the Wookiees' honor code. During the four-day voyage, Khabarakh keeps to himself and appears to have decided unilaterally to take Leia to his home planet. Chewie investigates the ship's systems and Threepio laments not numbering Noghri among his six million languages. Approaching Honoghr, Leia is shocked at its desolation, for which she knows the Rebel Alliance is as responsible as the Empire. When Chimaera looms on the horizon, Chewie senses betrayal and attacks Khabarakh, who tries to talk him down before stunning him. Leia believes that Khabarakh will defend her to his death and falls silent while he transmits a recognition signal and explains he has suffered computer troubles.

Rather than landing at Nystao City, where the clan dynasts are meeting with their Imperial Lord, Khabarakh sets down at his small village in the Clean Land. He explains to Leia about how Darth Vader, their protector, assigned a Grand Admiral as their lord and commander. Vader and the Emperor alone care for the Noghris' well-being. Leia grimaces, knowing he does so in exchange for their slavish service. Thrawn sits enthroned, receiving homage from a series of dynasts, while Pellaeon fidgets at the waste of time. He receives word of Khabarakh's irregular approach. Seeing the conversation, Thrawn demands the data pad and orders a shuttle prepared to take him to the landing site to greet the sole surviving member of Commando Team 22, which had failed to kidnap Leia on Kashyyyk. Thrawn wants details—and an explanation of his evasive behavior.

Khabarakh's village is built around a large cylindrical building with a flat, cone-shaped roof. Tradition dictates that he go alone to the clan dukha to announce visitors. Threepio lectures Leia about "nonspacefaring" cultures and Chewie wanders the ship, upsetting Khabarakh when he returns to present them to the "maitrakh." Five silent Noghri await. Khabarakh bows to the floor and addresses the one in the middle, who hushes the visitors for whispering to one another. Leia draws up her royal presence and demands how the Mal'ary'ush can be addressed in this manner. The Force offers Leia no insights into their alien minds. In understandable Basic, the maitrakh greets Leia but does not welcome her, for she is a threat to Honoghr.

Chewie strides in, warning of approaching Imperial shuttles. Reluctantly, the maitrakh honors her third son's vow and hides the visitors in the bake house, whose heat will hide their non-Noghri life-form indications. Thrawn orders the village's electronic equipment checked before heading into the dukha, where the whole village has turned out. Khabarakh kneels before Thrawn and nervously accounts for his month's absence after the mission's failure and his not landing at Nystao. Thrawn is not satisfied with the answers, but a technician says that tests on Khabarakh's spaceship are inconclusive. Annoyed at not catching Khabarakh red-handed, Thrawn orders him to Valrar for



reassignment and leaves. Alone with Pellaeon, Thrawn orders Khabarakh put under discreet surveillance and vows to stay on Honoghr as long as necessary since his presence causes useful fear.

## Chapters 9-10 Analysis

These chapters concentrate on the Noghri and their ecologically-devastated home world of Honoghr. Details on how the devastation occurs come out in later chapters, but at first view, Leia is shocked and in fairness has to acknowledge that the Rebel Alliance is as responsible as the Empire. Khabarakh explains how Darth Vader, their only protector, assigned a Grand Admiral as lord and commander when other duties pull Vader away. Leia's stature on Honoghr depends on being Vader's daughter and carrying his heirs in her womb—a thought at which she shudders in any but the genetic sense. She warns Threepio not to disparage Vader as he commonly does in telling his war stories.

Between Leia's concern for ecology and Chewie and Khabarakh's honor, a strong ethical theme is sounded, which will be further developed. Khabarakh also demonstrates on Chewie the fearsome speed and strength that attracts the Noghri to Vader in the first place as potential "death commandos." It is notable that Khabarakh first agrees, reluctantly, to take Leia to Honoghr after his team mates are killed on the Wookiee home world while trying to kidnap Leia. This makes her visit all the more noteworthy. Her altruistic hopes remain to be shown. Note Chewie's careful study of the ship's equipment and disappearance when time comes to enter the village.

Much of the chapter reads like an anthropological study of Honoghr, with Threepio lecturing professorially and struggling to fit the Noghri language into broader perspectives. His remarks about hierarchical structures in primitive societies mildly offends Leia, who reminds him Alderaan had such a structure in which she is a princess. As in many situations, Capt. Pellaeon is used as a neutral commentator on his commander's behavior, watching him enthroned and receiving obeisance from the Noghri clan leaders, and sees it as a waste of time. Like all good imperialists, Thrawn knows the value of "showing the flag." While Khabarakh's stories cannot be shown to be lies, Thrawn is not satisfied, so the young Noghri's ordeal is sure to continue.



# Chapters 11-12

## Chapters 11-12 Summary

"Accidentally" docked in a way that keeps them from visiting the dreadnaught, Han and Lando reach their destination. They detach and follow Sena's freighter to the planetary surface and an encampment that resembles old Alliance bases and houses a private army. Sena dodges questions as they ride to a plain administrative building where the Commander wants to see Han alone. Inside the fully-equipped war room stands Senator Garm Bel Iblis. Han is thunderstruck, meeting the legendary Corellian rumored dead at Anchoron. Bel Iblis has lost everything and become a lone rebel. He recalls Han as a schoolboy asking sharp questions, regrets that Han is dismissed from the Imperial Academy, but figures it keeps him from being purged with other young officers.

"Peregrine's Nest," Bel Iblis' headquarters, has moved 14 times in seven years and has been here a short time. Bringing Lando into the conversation, Han asks about Bel Iblis' relations with Breil'lya.

Meanwhile, aboard Chimaera, Pellaeon delivers to Thrawn's command room information about three dreadnaughts that rescue Han and Lando not above Palanhi but above New Cov, showing that they have more important business than restoring Ackbar's reputation. Ferrier, captured escaping with contraband, is given three months to capture the vessels intact or provide him their precise location. Next reviewing a report on Wookiee hairs in Khabarakh's ship, Thrawn assumes that this means a month's imprisonment and interrogation on Kashyyyk and flies to re-interview the commando—and to deliver a "suitable demonstration" to his village of what treachery earns.

Leia wakes up happy no to be in a detention cell. Escorted by three solemn children to the dukha, Leia sees that the building is intricately carved. A concave dish hangs in the center supported by chains, providing soft lighting. Threepio is telling stories to a group of children and Khabarakh is teaching Chewie fighting moves. The maitrakh credits Chewie's "gimmicking" of equipment with saving her "thirdson," but regrets that with the Noghri indebted to the Empire, Leia must leave before she sows discord. Leia argues that the Emperor and Thrawn use the Noghri, taking their sons off to war, but the maitrakh says they grow too little food to keep them home and they enjoy traveling among the stars.

The maitrakh recalls the night when the sky gods battle, the earth gods shake the ground, and fire-mountains burn everything. Leia realizes this describes the crash of an Old Republic warship laden with toxic chemicals. Vader is like a benevolent god, providing food, medicine, and decontaminating droids. Still, only kholm-grass grows and few animals survive. All clans share the Clean Land in a peace unprecedented in Noghri history—and must repay their debt by service. Leia sees that they are cleverly trapped in endless debt, but cannot prove the Empire's ill will. Admitting defeat, Leia promises aid if ever the Noghri want it. Her departure is thwarted by Thrawn's return.



## Chapters 11-12 Analysis

Senator Garm Bel Iblis enters the story as a swashbuckling character both in Han's giddy boyhood memories and in the private army he commands. Han explains to an unfazed Lando about the Peregrine in Corellian myth and Bel Iblis reminds Han how at age eleven Han questioned a visiting Senator in school about the anti-alien bias growing in the Old Republic. The grown Han does not generally behave as such a high-minded ideal. He also notes that Han escapes the Emperor's purges of junior officers by being expelled from military school before graduation.

Further detail is left for later as a sharp segue returns the story to Thrawn's private quarters aboard Chimaera, where a striking piece of Corellian art startles Pellaeon, making him worry if the Grand Admiral has come under the influence of C'baoth. It looks like the candles burning in the eerie crypt on Wayland over the graves of the thousands of offworlders whom C'baoth killed during his time there. C'baoth's story is still confusing at this point but begins growing clearer in Chapter 14, when Luke visits him. His craziness and his utility to Thrawn are reiterated here. Note that one of Thrawn's idiosyncrasies is studying enemy's fine art to discover clues to their mental processes. He is, thus, focusing on Corellia. Dealing summarily with hapless Ferrier, Thrawn learns that Khabarakh is lying to him and heads to confront him and teach his village a lesson. Thrawn is often contrasted with the vindictive Darth Vader, but in this case his methodology is the same.

Chapter 12 lets the mairakh describe to Leia why the Noghri owe a debt of honor to Darth Vader and his appointed successor, the Grand Admiral. Leia knows it is accidental that an Old Republic warship with toxic chemicals no longer used crashes on Honoghr during a battle. She wishes the Rebel Alliance had known about the Noghri's plight and wishes she could convince them that the New Republic would help them detoxify their land more expeditiously than the Empire and without strings attached, but she knows that it is all words. Darth Vader appears as a life-giving god in their time of need. The Grand Admiral still supplies the food they cannot grow domestically. He educates and employs the sons they cannot afford to keep home. Some Noghri want freedom, but all Noghri cherish the peace they have never before known. Leia is experienced enough to see she cannot prevail and is ready to withdraw honorably when Thrawn returns, raising the drama.



# Chapters 13-14

## Chapters 13-14 Summary

Grasping at straws, Leia considers cutting through the back of the dukha, but the Imperials are bombing. Chewie stows Threepio in the large hanging dish and scrambles into a booth that barely holds him and Leia. From Thrawn's voice she knows he is truly a Grand Admiral. Khabarakh sounds defensive and contradicts himself. His mother demands judgment by clan Kihm'bar and due process under Noghri law, but Thrawn proclaims Imperial law and himself supersede it. Turbolaser shots encircling the village suggest what continued disobedience will bring. Leia feels guilty for destroying Khabarakh and knows they are in trouble.

On Jomark, Luke feels that a volcanic lake on the south shore is right for a reclusive Jedi Master. Nearing, he sees a rustic village and a mansion perched on the rim. An alert, upright old man is watching. C'baoth welcomes Luke, who is late responding to the summons. Jedis must always be in control of the people and events and many have been in the wrong place at the wrong time. He fought the last Dark Jedi long ago. Luke worries about C'baoth's sudden topic and mood shifts. C'baoth wants to train Leia's twins personally and complete Luke's training, but soon will die. Luke must continue his work fully prepared. The Jedi must be restored as arbiters of true justice.

C'baoth leads Luke to the village for a real-life lesson, leaving Artoo behind, since droids are an abomination. C'baoth refuses at present to talk about the Outbound Flight mission, which he alone survived, laughs at the idea he might be a Dark Jedi, and has sensed another surviving Jedi (Mara). Reaching the village, Luke senses no fear or affection for C'baoth, but awe. C'baoth leads Luke to a building where Tarm and Svan are about to kill one another. Swiftly finding in favor of Svan in a conflict that Luke believes requires compromise, C'baoth cripples Svan when he dives for his weapon, and orders Luke not to heal the man's burns because pain is an unforgettable teacher. It eliminates the need to repeat lessons.

Luke visits Artoo that night, worried that as at Dagobah, things are not as he expects. C'baoth has a hard edge not seen in Yoda, but if he is a Dark Jedi, why not just kill Luke outright? Luke senses no evil aura and think it likely C'baoth is inexplicably insane. He confides to Artoo that he heard and saw Ben Kenobi after his death and sees both Yoda and his father. Perhaps stronger Jedi hold others more powerfully and the dead of the Outbound Flight are anchored to C'baoth. At any rate, Luke can not leave him without help. Luke recalls wanting to help Darth Vader as well and nearly dying. When C'baoth calls him back, Luke wonders if this is the best use of his time, given the state of the galaxy, but recalls a noble speech he had once before given about Jedi needed to be concerned with individuals.



## Chapters 13-14 Analysis

Leia, desperate to escape, gets cornered and witnesses the Grand Admiral Thrawn in action. He accords with what Han reports and with memories of other members of the Imperial High Command that she has encountered. It is chilling. Having heard the story of how a Rebel Alliance accident destroyed the planet, Leia feels guilty for destroying one of its native sons, as he is sent off to interrogation, public humiliation, and trial discovery.

Shifting to Jomark, Luke finally meets the Jedi Master Joruu C'baoth and gets off to an even worse start than he does with Master Yoda at Dagobah. Luke constantly compares C'baoth with Yoda. He sees no signs of evil in C'baoth but an inexplicable craziness, which Thrawn has also noted. Topics and moods shift abruptly. C'baoth wants to continue Luke's training—and Luke has always lamented not completing it—and to train Leia's children. At the same time, he complains he is old and dying, and then looks forward to founding a new Jedi order to mete out true justice. C'baoth only grows worse in the chapters ahead.





# Chapters 15-16

## Chapters 15-16 Summary

Bel Iblis recalls his raid on Tangrene, the first time the Empire paid attention. A month later, he meets Fey'lya, who does small favors and expects big gratitude. Fey'lya believes Mon Mothma has too much power. Lando is rude because Bel Iblis is not telling the whole truth. His camp has gotten soft and comfortable. Lando notices beneath gray seat coverings the blue-and-gold upholstery used only on the Katana Fleet. This explains why they are not allowed off Lady Luck and motivates them to look around.

Returning to the headquarters lounge, Han engages the bartender in a search for a specific vintage of liqueur to give Lando time to examine a repeater display for signs of slave-rigging. When they return, Lando is being guarded by Irenez, who then loads them into a land speeder with Sena. Sena asks Han to convince Mon Mothma to invite Bel Iblis to join the New Republic. Bel Iblis organizes the meeting with Mon Mothma and Bail Organa that starts the Rebel Alliance, for which Mon Mothma now takes credit. Bel Iblis has long planned to forestall her dictatorship. He cannot now swallow his pride.

Lando suggests a deal: his and Han's advocacy in exchange for information on the Katana fleet. Sena doubts if Fey'lya is planning a military coup as this is not the Bothan way; they rarely risk their necks, preferring to have others do their dirty work. Fey'lya will back off once Ackbar is vindicated. Bel Iblis does not know the whereabouts of the Katana fleet. They buy their ships from an anonymous gambler who stumbled on the fleet 15 years ago. Negotiations are held aboard the Coral Vonda. Sena will talk to Bel Iblis. Han warns that they are in a race with the Empire.

Bel Iblis is waiting by the Lady Luck. Sena briefs him on their discussion. Han says that more than fighting ships, the New Republic needs commanders. Bel Iblis laments having fallen short of building a great fleet and scoring the pivotal victories that would let him return with dignity, but Han is sure six dreadnaughts and Bel Iblis' reputation will delight the military. If the Grand Admiral discovers Peregrine's Nest, Bel Iblis loses everything. Bel Iblis arranges their departure to New Cov along with Breil'lya.

Thrawn reads the dispatch and Pellaeon vouches for the source's usual accuracy. The Falcon is at Endor, which shows a new Rebel subtlety, banking on Thrawn being too preoccupied with Khabarakh to notice Han and Leia undertaking secret errands. Considering that Leia may be seeking to retrieve information from the dead Emperor—such as vital secrets about Mount Tantiss—Thrawn orders Chimaera to Endor. He learns also that Adamant has captured one of Karrde's freighters in the Abregado system.



## Chapters 15-16 Analysis

Bel Iblis recalls Tangrene and talks guardedly and unaffectionately about Mon Mothma. He cites security concerns, still evident in "Delta Source," as his primary reason for leaving the Rebellion to freelance in the fight against the Empire. After catching Han and Lando seeking evidence of the Katana fleet, Sena fills in the early history of the Rebellion, showing how Bel Iblis' pride stands in the way of his return. Sena also provides psychological insights into Bothans as scavengers not predators and predicts Fey'lya will shrink once Ackbar is vindicated. Note that Ackbar's friends have been sidetracked from this project, which surprises Thrawn, who is actually behind the bank operation.

Sena does not know the name of the entrepreneur from whom they buy the Katana dreadnaughts but describes him clearly enough for Luke to recognize Karrde, were Luke not on his own mission. Enough people know that the Katana fleet has been discovered to set off a race to control the discoverer. Meanwhile, Thrawn receives two reports that draw him away from Honoghr. Millennium Falcon has been discovered orbiting Endor, which makes Thrawn suspect that Leia may be hunting for latent thoughts left by the late Emperor at the spot of his demise. This immediately makes Thrawn worry about preserving the secret of Mount Tantiss, his ultimate weapon for restoring the Empire. Next, he learns that one of Karrde's associates has been captured. Thrawn, of course, knows Karrde but does not know his prized secret. Chimaera heads toward Endor and away from Leia's current hiding place. Thrawn does not know that Leia has, indeed, been touched by the Emperor's evil memory shreds. Another person susceptible to that touch is about to re-enter the story.



# Chapters 17-18

## Chapters 17-18 Summary

Mara has always hated the Abregado-rae Spaceport and hopes she is not stepping into a trap, fetching Etherway from impoundment. Wedge introduces himself as Han's representative in handing the ship over. As soon as Mara is in space, TIE fighters and a Star Destroyer appear, and she is caught in the tractor beam. Mara demands to see the captain immediately to arrange a meeting with Thrawn. She gives a recognition code and identifies herself as the Emperor's Hand. She gets deferential treatment on the flight to Endor.

Mara resents meeting at the painful place where the Emperor dies. When Thrawn asks about her long absence, Mara hears in her head, "YOU MUST KILL LUKE SKYWALKER." Determined not to fall apart in front of Thrawn, Mara lays out a deal: Thrawn drops all bounties and credits Karrde three million in exchange for information on the Katana fleet. She explains Karrde's accidental discovery and is given eight days to bring back the location. Thrawn recognizes the New Cov dreadnaughts and knows that the renegade Corellian owner has dealt with Karrde. Intelligence is set to unraveling clues left by Karrde's botched mission and repair work; Ferrier is diverted to capturing Han and Lando, and Chimaera tails Mara.

Leia is surprised but relieved that Chimaera has departed. She wonders how long before the maitrakh concludes she (the maitrakh) must turn them in to the Empire. After broaching the subject of Thrawn's treachery on soil detoxification, Leia announces that they must free Khabarakh, steal a ship, and leave Honoghr. Leia knows that the Imperials will spare her life so Thrawn can take her children from her.

Winter calls Lady Luck to say that Luke has checked in and wants to rendezvous on New Cov. Lady Luck has no word from Leia. Lando reluctantly heads there to find Ferrier waiting. Apologizing for the deception, Ferrier suggests they talk about the Katana fleet, letting slip the name of the Grand Admiral. If given the location of the lost ships, Ferrier will give the New Republic half and sell them the remainder at a reasonable price; otherwise, the price will be steeper. Departing, Han and Lando detect a beacon. On the ground, Ferrier reprimands his Defel for standing in the open but is assured that the second beacon will not be found. They too depart, to find Karrde.

## Chapters 17-18 Analysis

Mara at Abregado takes delivery of Etherway from Wedge on Han's behalf, jumps into space, and is taken prisoner by Adamant. When fighting the tractor beam proves fruitless, Mara shifts into the persona of the Emperor's Hand, the prestigious job she enjoyed until the Emperor's death off Endor. The recognition code she gives in a haughty tone suffices to get her taken to see Thrawn who is, to her dismay, at Endor.



The feelings she experiences are less drastic than Leia's, but she again hears the Emperor's last command, ordering her to kill Luke. On behalf of Karrde, Mara suggests a deal for the Katana fleet, offering just enough detail for Intelligence to begin analyzing where it has been languishing for 55 years. Reassigned from searching for the Corellian owner of the dreadnaughts seen over New Cov to capturing Han and Lando, Ferrier lures them to New Cov and his invisible Defel plants two homing devices, one obvious and the other not.



# Chapters 19-20

## Chapters 19-20 Summary

Karrde watches Etherway's return, three days late. Before she can tell about her capture, Imperial attack and arrest Karrde, Mara sees his chagrin at being fooled. Facing Thrawn, Mara lunges for his throat, but Rukh restrains her. With the Force she tries to choke Thrawn, but is too weak. Mara vows to behave lest she be turned over to mad C'baoth. Karrde will be confined until he reveals the fleet's location; whether he is tortured is up to him. As feeling abandoned motivates prisoners talking, Mara may not see him. Warning Mara against mixed loyalties, Thrawn dismisses her for a flight to the surface. This act of betrayal convinces Mara that her Empire is dead.

Unable to bear letting Karrde think she has betrayed him, Mara risks breaking into the computer system using the Emperor's back-door password. She finds the prisoner list, upcoming shift changes, daily orders, destinations, and C'baoth's current location. Thoroughly covering traces of having used the terminal, Mara pretends to be lost and searching for the duty officer when she bumps into him. He has her dropped off beside Etherway, where Aves is slowly convinced that she wants to break out Karrde. She needs a Skipray blastboat and ysalamir on a nutrient frame. Within hours, Mara is in hyperspace heading to beg Luke, whom she has vowed to kill, for his help.

C'baoth announces that Luke will decide the last case and Luke climbs uncomfortably onto the ornate throne. He is permanently fatigued. When he has pronounced judgment, C'baoth criticizes it and tells him Jedis must accept and wield responsibility for the primitive people not in touch with the Force. Lesser beings have always hated the Jedi during the thousand generations that the Jedi brought them justice and peace. Luke has never felt this hostility. C'baoth asks if Luke has the wisdom and skill to train Leia and her children and reminds him of the risk of the Dark Side. C'baoth offers to protect her from the Empire, which has been hunting her. When C'baoth goes abruptly stiff and orders Luke to his chambers, Luke hears warning bells.

Mara dreams about Vader and Luke converging on the Emperor with lightsabers, with her unable to warn or defend him. The nightmare ends as it always has for five years: the doomed Emperor staring at her, demanding that she kill Luke. Now, gallingly, Mara must ask for his help. Mara pulls out of hyperspace at Jomark but falls half-asleep while entering the atmosphere. Averting disaster, she puts the craft on autopilot and fetches the ysalamir, and within whose bubble fatigue ends. Scanning the rim, Mara senses Luke's X-wing but no weapons or defense shields. Suddenly, a hail of rocks impact the Skipray, knocking out the repulsorlifts and sending it earthward.



## Chapters 19-20 Analysis

Thrawn does not give Mara eight days to persuade Karrde, but follows her and seizes him. Mara tries to use her rudimentary Jedi skills, but they are weaker than a trained Noghri's physical skills. Thrawn's betrayal sours Mara forever on the Empire, but she pretends to remain loyal until she can break out Karrde and redeem herself. The description of her hacking the computer system using the Emperor's back-door coding is nerve-tingling. Her reception on the ground is predictably cool and, having told her story, makes her colleague Aves decide to believe her or shoot her. Still skeptical, Aves provides what she needs to fly to Jomark to beg the man she has sworn to kill to help her save the man who recently tried to turn Luke over to Thrawn. Luke will have plenty of reasons to be cautious when Mara arrives with her proposal.

C'baoth forcing Luke to serve as civil judge reprises the theme of judgment already depicted twice, and provides an opportunity to lecture him on Jedi responsibilities for order. They provided this for a thousand generations before Dark Jedi annihilated them. C'baoth warns that normal creatures have always envied and hated Jedi, but Luke has never experienced this. C'baoth's views and attitude are straying further from those of Master Yoda and, secondarily, Ben Kenobi. C'baoth uses fear of losing Leia and her children to the Dark Side—as Kenobi loses his pupil Vader—to convince Luke to bring Leia to him. He will protect her from the Empire. Luke at this point has no idea that C'baoth is in league with Thrawn and has been behind the Imperial kidnapping attempts.

The scene shifts to Mara en route to Jomark, seeing again her horrible dream in which she helplessly watches her beloved Emperor die. She and Karrde have recently tried to capture Luke and turn him over to Thrawn but were thwarted by ysalamiri. Now she carries an ysalamir for protection against the mad Jedi. C'baoth's apparent seizure in front of Luke comes when he twice tries to kill Mara from afar: by making her fall asleep at the controls and then by hurling rocks at her space craft. She straps on the ysalamir when she realizes the first threat, and will have to work hard to get out of the mess she is in at the end of Chapter 20.



# Chapters 21-22

## Chapters 21-22 Summary

Mara chooses a harrowing vertical landing on a ledge and starts to climb toward the rim when Artoo arrives, piloting the X-wing, and offers her a ride. C'baoth declares that Thrawn is Mara's enemy and her goal is to take his Jedi away. She decides that C'baoth is ruthless, calculating, and unstable, but not mad and declares that she needs to "borrow" Luke. C'baoth mocks her blaster and the ysalamir she wears but refrains from destroying her, foreseeing that she will one day kneel before him.

C'baoth reprimands Luke for leaving his bed. Mara quickly explains Karrde's plight, sees that C'baoth is putting Luke to sleep, and moves to put him inside the ysalamir shield. C'baoth launches lightning from his fingertips, which Luke blocks with his lightsaber, but before Mara can fire, Artoo blasts the X-wing's laser cannons. Luke refuses to finish off the stunned Jedi, hoping to save him, and they set off to steal a supply shuttle to board Chimaera and create a diversion to slip Karrde out of detention.

Luke and Mara land and set off for the detention bay, Luke using his lightsaber to slice through the lower hull and deck below. Refusing to use mind control as at Nkllon, Luke uses the Force only to suppress the curiosity of three men in a pilots' lounge as he steals their uniforms. A turbolift car takes them meandering through Chimaera to an access door to the the garbage pits. As Luke enters and Mara activates the compression cycle, he worries that her hatred might bring betrayal. When the walls halt, Luke climbs to the maintenance chute, waits for the changing of the guard, and during that distraction, finds Karrde's cell, and spirits him away, retracing his steps. Karrde declares that the New Republic will benefit greatly from this.

Making a final survey of the ship before retiring, Thrawn takes in stride Pellaeon's report that the Falcon is being put into vehicle deep storage, but reacts to news that a Skipray has been found crashed with an ysalamir aboard. He orders not only an intruder alert but also the radical step of shutting down the main computer, figuring that it will hamper Mara—the logical rescuer—more than it does his crew. When word comes that Karrde is missing, Thrawn orders him captured alive; that is optional for his rescuers.

## Chapters 21-22 Analysis

Twice during Chapter 21 Artoo comes to the rescue, plucking Mara off the precarious perch where she performs a difficult landing that is narrated in great detail with plenty of suspense, and gunning down C'baoth as he lashes out at Luke and Mara. For his efforts, the poor droid is sent home, since the X-wing would raise suspicion where Luke and Mara are heading: to Chimaera to rescue Karrde from a detention cell, a situation strongly evoking a scene in *A New Hope*. As the characters continue analyzing C'baoth, Mara decides that he is ruthless, calculating, and unstable, but not mad, as Thrawn



contends. C'baoth continues to lecture and preach about the fate of the Jedi and Luke's part in restoring them to necessary glory for the good of the whole galaxy until, thwarted, he throws a most dramatic tantrum, using the power that the Emperor had unleashed on Luke and would have killed him, had Vader not intervened. At Luke's insistence, C'baoth is left alive. Luke and Mara will live to regret this.

Chapter 22 begins Karrde's rescue. Still troubled by how using the Force at Nkllon to confuse the minds of attacking TIE fighters (a second reference to this incident in *Heir to the Empire*) brings him perilously close to the Dark Side of the Force, Luke uses only minor tricks, which fortunately succeed. He knows they will not work on disciplined stormtroopers. The way in to Karrde's cell is deceptively easy, reversing the path that Luke, Han, and Leia use to escape the first Death Star in the memorable scene from *A New Hope*. Luke calls on old mountain climbing skills from his Tatooine youth to climb the slick walls.

The action shifts to Chimaera's bridge, where maintenance work is also going better than expected. The Chimaera will be able to return to duty attacking Rebel convoys earlier than expected. Two crucial events are noted in passing: the Millennium Falcon, rescued abandoned from orbit around Endor, is brought aboard, setting up the final escape, and Luke and Mara's Skipray is found crashed. Amateurishly, they leave behind the ysalamir, perched on a frame that is not standard Imperial design (Thrawn has been protecting his bridge with ysalamiri against C'baoth). This detail is all Thrawn needs to realize his ship has unwelcome visitor(s) and to deduce that Mara is one of them. He does not yet have reason to suspect Luke is aboard. Further suspecting that the Emperor's Hand has undetected top-level access to the main computer, Thrawn orders it shut down, shocking Pellaeon, who is always a step behind, allowing Thrawn's planning to be explained in detail. As will be seen in the following chapters, this shuts down the turbolift cars and forces the rescuers to alter their plans—and brings the Falcon into play.





# Chapters 23-24

## Chapters 23-24 Summary

When the turbolift car halts in the general alarm, Mara subdues the Imperial passenger, and flees carefully with Luke and Karrde down the electrified track. The computer can be down only because Thrawn is on to them. Rather than head to the obvious hanger bay, they make for the vehicle deep storage area. Stormtroopers slain by lightsaber offer clear evidence to Thrawn that Luke has escaped C'baoth as the escape route is steadily traced. Rukh is ordered to use his hunter's instincts to find the Jedi, ysalamiri are deployed, and all cars are moved to herd the fugitives toward the hangar bays. Pellaeon is certain the Falcon will draw them into a trap.

Falcon is being moved as the fugitives enter the storage area, and Karrde ducks inside to start the quick warm-up sequence while Luke and Mara set an ambush for a squad of stormtroopers and leap aboard as she departs. Finding their way to the hangar bay and fighting off TIE fighters, they escape into hyperspace, bound for Coruscant, wondering if it has been too easy. Karrde reveals that he intends to negotiate for the Katana fleet. Aboard Chimaera, Pellaeon expects Thrawn's wrath, but the Admiral accepts the loss philosophically. The political atmosphere at Coruscant will make Karrde's negotiations difficult, and Thrawn has learned who else know the dreadnaughts' location. Chimaera heads for the Pantolomin system.

At dusk on Honoghr, Leia and her rescue party are ready to set out, and she is too troubled to pay attention to Threepio's report of an excessively curious decon droid. As the maitrakh talks about losing her four sons in Imperial service, Leia realizes that "thirdson" means great-grandson, meaning the Noghri have been enslaved for nearly half a century, not 7-8 years. Incensed, Leia orders Chewie to test the holm-grass for genetic changes she can show to the dynasts as proof of the Empire's treachery. The maitrakh goes to prepare people to listen to Leia.

As they head for Nystao, hundreds of Noghri join the march, coming from every village. Before the metallic Grand Dukha stand the thirteen male dynasts, watching Khabarakh's public humiliation. Leia reminds Chewie they are not here to fight. The spokesman, Vor'corkh, declares Leia under arrest, but she will not be silenced. Mentally drawing her lightsaber and suspending it in mid-air to lend gravity to her words, she proclaims herself the Mal'ary'ush dedicated to returning prosperity and freedom to Honoghr. Vor'corkh also threatens the maitrakh when she demands that Leia be heard, but nine of thirteen dynasts support her call.

Leia tells two versions of how Honoghr is mistreated. In the first, after Vader offers aid and a foul-smelling rain falls, the Empire provides decon droids in exchange for the young men's service. The second—true—version adds that Imperial ships seed genetically altered, poisonous kholm-grass everywhere. Leia notices a decon droid spying from the periphery, which the Noghri capture. Split open, it produces a cylinder,



one drop of whose fluid causes kholm-grass to wither. Khabarakh, still in chains, calls for a convocation and rebellion. Vor'corkh argues the danger from the Empire, but concocts a cover story about Khabarakh's escape. Leia takes Khabarakh to Coruscant to expedite delivery of chemicals that will truly purify the land.

## Chapters 23-24 Analysis

Thrawn sees evidence of Luke's involvement and intensifies the search. The escapees see an "all too familiar" freighter being moved by lift and fight off a squadron of stormtroopers to effect an escape. They worry that it may have been too easy, as in *A New Hope*; on that occasion the Falcon carries a beacon that lets Vader pursue them. Pellaeon expects Thrawn's wrath, which is rarely seen, but the Admiral accepts the loss philosophically. He knows that in the coming race to control the Katana fleet the New Republic is at a disadvantage. The political atmosphere at Coruscant, which he has helped stir up, will make Karrde's negotiations difficult. This proves remarkably accurate in the concluding chapters. Furthermore, Thrawn knows of another person who has seen the dreadnaughts 15 years earlier. The search for him opens a new story line directly.

First, however, Leia prepares for her perhaps suicidal mission to free Khabarakh and leave Honoghr. She is distracted as they set out, but sees that the maitrakh has prepared the way for her. Thousands join the march and witness the confrontation with the stubborn, cautious pro-Empire chief dynast, Vor'corkh. Leia summons the Force to float her lightsaber before her to add drama to her words but struggles to focus her concentration enough to keep it there. The consequences of her neglecting her Jedi training is dramatized, but so, too, is the fact that the Force is strong in her family. She does not fail. Her story of how the Empire continues to poison Honoghr is compelling, but Vor'corkh does not relent in his kibitzing until an espionage droid disguised as a decon droid is captured and the poisonous chemical's actions are dramatically demonstrated. Thrawn's decision simply to record the droid's observations rather than risk transmitting them proves a boon for Honoghr. Leia promises chemicals that will truly purify the soil but agrees that the Noghri must not let the Empire suspect that they have shifted their loyalty. Her desire to expedite delivery of the chemicals takes her directly to Coruscant rather than to Endor to pick up the Falcon. This undoubtedly prevents her capture by Thrawn.



# Chapters 25-26

## Chapters 25-26 Summary

Han and Lando aboard the *Coral Vanda* scan the Tralla Room as the transparent submersible casino floats amidst the glorious coral reefs of Pantolomin. They spot Ferrier, but not their target, Capt. Hoffner, who they figure to draw out by losing money at sabacc. Hoffner has lost so much gambling that he will not be able to resist playing losers. As they follow Ferrier, *Coral Vanda* begins tossing as turbolasers hit the water around them. The Imperials have arrived. In the turmoil, Ferrier's wraith briefly gets the drop on Han, and Lando fails to convince a crew member that the Imperials are after one particular man. As they race to find Ferrier, Han and Lando come under fire from Ferrier's captors, who are hurrying Hoffner away. Hearing Imperial weaponry aboard, Han and Lando flee into an escape pod and, bobbing to the surface, bitterly accept defeat. The Empire has a head start in salvaging the *Katana* fleet, and the rebels find a way to prevent it.

On Coruscant, Mon Mothma finds revelations about the *Katana* fleet incredible, but Fey'lya is skeptical, hostile to Karrde, and his posturing is evident to all. Luke is exasperated. Karrde explains again that his assumption that he was the only one to record the coordinates 15 years ago is wrong; Hoffner is astute enough to have gotten them. Fey'lya discounts all the evidence presented and argues that a salvage expedition would leave the New Republic undefended. Leia proposes a small-scale investigation, and Mon Mothma orders Fey'lya to assemble ships and crews. Fey'lya needs overnight to arrange it. Karrde defiantly withholds the coordinates until then. Leia goes to talk with Karrde and Han catches up with a seething Fey'lya.

In the Grand Corridor lined with ch'hala trees, Han tells Fey'lya how trying to play politics by Bothan rules has backfired in Ackbar's case and advises him that he has time still to retract his charges with honor. Fey'lya has presented no proof and Breil'lya's actions on New Cov are suspicious. In turn, Fey'lya charges that Han wants the glory of presenting the *Katana* fleet to bring about his downfall and Ackbar's restoration. Han insists that he wants justice. Fey'lya is confident that he has sufficient supporters in the military to prevail. Han realizes only a gambler can realize when to fold.

In the Imperial Palace for the first time in five years, Mara is nostalgic. She tells the mental image of the Emperor that she is trying to kill Luke, but wonders. Karrde returns, complaining about Fey'lya, and dispatches Mara to the Trogan system with the *Katana* fleet's coordinates. Karrde wants the expert slicer Ghent sent to Coruscant to help prove Ackbar's innocence. Leia arrives, agrees to authorize a ship for Mara and to form a small, objective team to beat Fey'lya to the *Katana* fleet. Karrde is doing so in gratitude to Luke and is not giving up neutrality in the war. Luke enlists the Rogue Squadron, and Leia's authority gets it away by midnight. By morning, Fey'lya knows the details and charges Leia with treason. Karrde argues that the fleet is his property until he turns it over. Mon Mothma agrees, and Leia and Karrde join the furious Bothan's expedition.



## Chapters 25-26 Analysis

The mysterious second witness to the Katana fleet is revealed and promptly captured by the Empire, setting off a salvage race. Thrawn, the connoisseur of beauty regrettably puts military duty over aesthetics and destroys a reef. On Coruscant, Fey'lya is suddenly bellicose and stubborn, insisting that Karrde is lying about finding the Katana fleet and, if not, that the New Republic cannot afford to salvage it. Recall that even when slave-rigged, each of the 200 dreadnaughts needs a crew of 2,000. When ordered by Mon Mothma to arrange for a small expeditionary force to find and evaluate the situation, Fey'lya begs to have until morning.

By morning, Fey'lya has learned that Leia has authorized another expedition, which has gotten a head start. Fey'lya rants about illegalities and possible treason—he seems fixated on the theme—and calls for the arrest of Leia and Luke. Luke is already long gone. Mon Mothma does not agree. Leia and Karrde force their way into Fey'lya's expedition, which is sure to bristle with animosity. Note that Karrde is insisting he owns salvage rights until such time as he turns the fleet over to the New Republic. He also insists that he is not joining their side in the war, but maintaining neutrality. This detail, the bringing of Ghent to Coruscant, and the ch'hala trees lining the Grand Corridor have little bearing on the ongoing story, but are included to set up threads in the final novel in the trilogy, *The Last Command*.



# Chapters 27-29

## Chapters 27-29 Summary

Five days out of Coruscant, the first expedition comes out of hyperspace, spot dreadnaughts, and deploy the X-wing. The Force tells Luke to explore a specific ship, which turns out to be Katana, the flagship and master. The deserted vessel has been well-maintained by droids, but propulsion needs an overhaul. Suddenly, the Escort Frigate Quenfis appears, and Capt. Virgilio places the boarding party under arrest. Fey'lya gloats and suggests the X-wings be launched to prove Virgilio is serious. When Wedge speaks up, he is threatened with court martial. The argument is interrupted by the appearance of the Star Destroyer Judicator, which promptly deploys drop ships. Insisting he is in charge, Fey'lya orders a quick retreat and draws a blaster on Leia when she objects.

Capt. Brandei, commanding Judicator, detects Rebels aboard only one dreadnaught. He launches TIE fighters and informs Chimaera. With no time to evacuate and the appearance that Quenfis will flee, Han and Wedge ready Katana's battery to fire on the drop ships. They score a direct hit, destroying several, and the survivors are slowed by having to take evasive measure. Han and Lando race to set up defenses. Aboard Quenfis, Leia argues that they cannot abandon the boarding party, particularly with Han and Luke's classified information, but Fey'lya rejects sentiment. Karrde secretly gets Leia to turn on communications circuits so the crew overhears Fey'lya admit that troops are expendable and claim anyone not for him is his enemy. Hearing this, Quenfis goes to battle stations.

Aboard Chimaera, Thrawn is surprised that the battle is so quickly joined and orders a course to back up Judicator. The navigation officer, however, cannot move. When word comes that another frigate is approaching, Thrawn knows that C'baoth is aboard. Thrawn orders Peremptory to go as back-up and prepares to face the Jedi, who has been bragging about melding his abilities to send messages over long distances and to control people. Thrawn must reconsider his arrangement with C'baoth carefully.

Rogue and Gold squadrons unite in attacking the TIE interceptors escorting the surviving drop ships toward Katana. One drop ship gets through and disgorges stormtroopers. Having booby-trapped a section of roof and wall to slow them, Luke and Han race to avoid being outflanked, while Lando and Chewie go to defend the bridge. Luke and Han find a crippled mini-scout walker that is too large for Luke to lift using the Force, but whose blaster cannon is functional. They abandon it after decimating the stormtroopers.

Aboard Judicator, Brandei is not amused by the course of the battle and can wait no longer for Peremptory. As he moves to attack, 18 unidentified vehicles come out of hyperspace and Judicator turns on them. Karrde's forces go on the attack. Flying a Z-95, Mara targets Judicator's crucial lower-aft censor, effectively blinding her beneath,



and larger ships begin pounding her. Before the outgunned Rebels can withdraw, six dreadnaughts appear, whose services Bel Iblis offers. On behalf of the New Republic, Leia accepts. They encircle Judicator and begin bombarding. Karrde reports grimly that the Empire has already removed all but 15 Katana ships. Thrawn must have bribed Hoffner. Leia comforts herself in the knowledge it will take the Empire years to recruit and train so many crews. Imperial back-up arrives and as Mara is getting coordinates for an escape jump to hyperspace, her Z-95 is disabled. Before ejecting, she aims it into Judicator's hanger port but drifts into an ion cannon beam and loses life-support. Mara blacks out, envisioning the Emperor and knowing she has failed him again.

Luke senses Mara's plight, but Han focuses him on the crisis at hand. They have been backed into the bridge and Luke will not be able to ward off a full assault. Suddenly, Luke hurls his lightsaber at the wall and dashes into the bridge before the vacuum of space decompresses the anteroom. Until the hull is repaired, they seem trapped until Lando gets an idea: Katana may not be able to move, but if one of her sister ships can, she can be controlled from this bridge. Han takes the controls to accelerate a dreadnaught into Peremptory's side, causing a massive fireball. Brandei jumps Judicator to light speed, knowing Thrawn will return for vengeance.

Katana's hull is repaired in record time and the Force guides Luke through the debris to Mara's side. Thrawn is furious at C'baoth for costing him a ship. C'baoth announces a new arrangement: he will return to Wayland and command the Mount Tantiss project. Thrawn's efforts to hide it from him have been fruitless. C'baoth has grown in power and ability since leaving Wayland. The force that binds the galaxy is C'baoth's servant and the circle has turned: the Jedi are in charge. C'baoth is the only thing in the Empire that is not dispensable.

As Luke looks down on the identical faces of the Imperial troops whom he has killed, he understands the odd feeling he had gotten while being pursued. They are clones. Somewhere, Spaarti cloning cylinders are at work. Crewing the captured dreadnaughts could take not years but months. Luke and Han have a really bad feeling about this.

## Chapters 27-29 Analysis

The finale of Dark Force Rising occurs five days out of Coruscant at the coordinates that Karrde and Captain Hoffner have disclosed to the New Republic and Empire respectively. Bel Iblis, it turns out, has also been alerted and shows up on the Rebels' side. Fey'lya has assembled a team of loyalist aboard Quenfis and a miniature civil war appears imminent until Leia opens communications lines to allow the crew to overhear Fey'lya's crass talk about the limited value of soldiers to politicians. Captain Virgilio overthrows Fey'lya on behalf of those who believe in honor—and despite Mon Mothma's written orders. Leia has already noted that these fail to take the current situation into account, and Wedge has been marginally insubordinate.

Ancient Katana, unable to maneuver, gets off a single blast of its laser cannon, reducing the size of the Imperial boarding party approaching. As in the movies, Han does not



want to know the actual odds. As the actions accelerates, Rogue Squadron dogfights its way to victories; Luke and Han mount dramatic defenses using available resources, and, backed up to the bridge and facing annihilation, Luke hurls his lightsaber through Katana's hull, causing an explosive depressurization, which kills the enemy. Through Lando's inspiration and Han's expertise, they send a slave-linked sister ship into the side of the newly-arrived Imperial back-up ship. The skipper of the first ship on the scene—and badly damaged, thanks to Mara—wisely withdraws, knowing that while the battle may be lost, Thrawn will return and win the war. Recall that the Empire has already removed the lion's share of the Katana Force, so this confrontations has largely been about prestige.

Mara, who appears lost in space, is rescued through the Force, and hurried to recovery, to play a major role in *The Last Command*. There Karrde becomes even more determined to remain neutral between New Republic and Empire, and C'baoth's megalomania increases. He declares his supremacy over Thrawn and everything else in the Galaxy. He intends to supervise Thrawn's operation at Mount Tantiss, which is not said outright to be a massive cloning project but can be deduced to be such from the fear that Luke and Han feel, looking down on a squad of identical, dead Imperial soldiers. The New Republic's only hope, having lost most of the dreadnaughts—time—is no longer on their side. Mad C'baoth will continue seeking to dominate Luke, Leia, her children, and Mara Jade.



# Characters

## Grand Admiral Thrawn

The novel's most central character but by scarcely its protagonist, Thrawn is the last survivor of the twelve white-uniformed Grand Admirals named by the late Emperor. With light-blue-skin and glowing red eyes, Thrawn is obviously "not-entirely-human-heritage," but by demonstrated military genius transcends Imperial prejudice and for five years has commanded the Empire since the Emperor and Darth Vader's deaths. Thrawn lacks Darth Vader's lethal temper, but can be brutal. Most of the time, standing on the bridge of his flagship, the Imperial Star Destroyer Chimaera, he appraises his assistant, Captain Pellaeon of what he is doing and often why, in a courteous, modulated voice. Visiting the planet Honogrh, Thrawn is Lord of the Noghri, heir to their savior, Darth Vader, and broaches no opposition.

Thrawn studies the artwork of peoples he is about to attack, looking for psychological clues to their weaknesses. During Dark Force Rising, Thrawn's major concern is to acquire large numbers of warships and to divert premier troops to his Mount Tantiss Project on Wayland. Only by inference can this be linked with the dead clones found at the end of the novel: Thrawn is worried about ships, not crews and foresees a rapid restoration of the Empire's fortunes. From the Sluis Van attack, it is evident that Thrawn has perfected a cloaking technology, but this alone cannot make so radical a change. Luke and Han instantly see the danger confronting the New Republic.

## Han Solo

Princess Leia Organa's husband and her brother Luke Skywalker's best friend for years, Han is the most stereotyped of the novel's characters, little developed since the Star Wars movies whose actions took place five years earlier. Han inevitably wears a "lopsided smile," ignores or mistreats the droids, and recklessly jumps into action. He continues to own the Millennium Falcon, flying with co-pilot Chewbacca, although in this novel he often flies with Lando Calrissian while Leia takes the Falcon on her own missions. Han is troubled at Admiral Ackbar's disdain for him and Lando Calrissian after they resign their commissions as general officers.

Han is the first survivor of the Sluis Van fiasco to testify before the Council in Coruscant. He strongly defends Ackbar and provides the first eye-witness to the survival of an Imperial Grand Admiral, name as yet unknown (Thrawn). Han flies with Lando Calrissian to the planet New Cov, looking for clues that Councilor Fey'lya has framed Ackbar, and are taken to meet Senator Bel Iblis on an undisclosed planet. Bel Iblis recalls Han at age eleven questioning him, a visiting Senator, in school about the anti-alien bias growing in the Old Republic. Bel Iblis is sorry that Han is dismissed from the Imperial Academy, but figures it keeps him from being purged with other young officers by the Emperor. Han and Lando continue flying together, culminating in the unofficial





investigative team hunting the Katana fleet. Han flies the slave-linked dreadnaught that takes out an Imperial Star Destroyer to conclude the battle.

## Luke Skywalker

A Jedi Master, Luke is the brother of Leia Organa Solo and best friend of her husband, Han Solo. At the start of the novel, Luke is at Sluis Van space station, awaiting repairs on his damaged X-wing fighter so he can race home to Coruscant to help ward off a political crisis. There, Luke researches the Jedi Master Joruu C'baoth, and flies roundabout to Jomark, where C'baoth is supposedly staying. C'baoth wants to capture Luke and the pregnant Leia and bend them to his will. Before flying to Jomark, Luke is called upon in Ilic's Mishra tapcafe on New Cov, to to mediate a deadly argument between a Barabel and a Rodian. Luke enlists thief Niles Ferrier's expert advice rather than resort to arbitrary decisions, and is relieved when all agree to his decision, never having before thought of this aspect of Jedi duty.

On Jomark, Luke has difficulty accepting C'baoth's contention that the galaxy hates the Jedi. His experience has always been acceptance, as in the tapcafe. Luke realizes, however, that his education has been partial and haphazard after the deaths of Ben Kenobi and Yoda, and he has grown loath to use mind control on humans, feeling that this moves him towards the Dark Side of the Force. On Jomark, Luke is recruited by Mara Jade, who has vowed to kill him someday, to break Talon Karrde out of confinement aboard the Imperial Star Destroyer Chimaera. Crawling through the garbage compactor, Luke gets Karrde free, and they fight their way off the ship. Luke finds himself in the thick of battle aboard the besieged Katana, fending blaster shots away from his friends before hurling his lightsaber to cut through the hull and kill the pursuers by rapid decompression. Through the Force, Luke is able to find Mara, adrift in the debris of battle, and rush her to medical care. Seeing that the Imperials he kills are clones, Luke worries about the near future.

## Princess/Counselor Leia Organa Solo

A native of the destroyed planet Alderaan, the daughter of an original leader of the Rebel Alliance and his successor on the High Council, Leia begins this novel married to Han Solo and pregnant with twins. The Jedi Master Joruu C'baoth is intent on kidnapping Leia to train her and her offspring as dark apprentices (along with Leia's brother, Luke Skywalker). Two attempts have been made before the novel begins. Leia has agreed to meet with the sole surviving member of the second commando team at Endor and accompany him to his home world of Honoghr, where she hopes to be able to convince the enslaved natives to side with the New Republic. The Noghri revere Leia's biological father, Darth Vader, so she adopts the titles "Lady Vader" and "Mal'ary'ush." The Wookiee Chewbacca, who has sworn to protect Han to the death, has extended it to include Leia, and he is constantly at her side and often needs to be calmed.



Leia has been kept too busy with matters of State to develop her powers of the Force, but on Honoghr, needing to impress the natives as she tells them about the Empire's deceit in dealing with them, and Leia is able to draw and ignite her lightsaber and suspend it between her and the tribal leaders while she speaks. She admits the New Republic's inability to offer blanket protection, but promises to do all she can for the Noghri. Before flying to Honoghr, while in orbit around Endor, Leia feels residual anger and hatred at the spot where the second Death Star exploded and the Emperor died. After Honoghr, Leia stands up forcefully to Councilor Fey'lya in the matter of assessing the Katana fleet, and flips on the communications system so the whole crew hears his negative views on their kind. The mutiny that Leia begins becomes universal.

## **Admiral Ackbar**

Supreme commander of New Republic forces, the fish-headed, swivel-eyed Ackbar faces challenges from a group headed by Councilor Borsk Fey'lya. When Han and Leia visit Ackbar and tell him about the Grand Admiral, Ackbar knows the investigation will reveal nothing. Ackbar worries that preliminary battle data suggest the late Emperor's goal of a cloaking shield has been realized. Leaving. The Mon Calamari is uncomfortable being drawn into a military role that goes counter to his species' culture.

## **Wedge Antilles**

The commander of the legendary Rogue Wing of X-wing fighters, Wedge is at the vast Sluis Van Central space station following an Imperial attack, unable despite his rank and reputation to expedite repair of Luke Skywalker's X-wing or medical care for Lando Calrissian. Later, he represents Han Solo in a spaceship deal with Mara Jade representing Talon Karrde, and comes close to mutiny when flying with Luke and Han at the site of the Katana fleet's remains. Wedge finds life boring when not involved in Luke and Han's adventures.

## **Garm Bel Iblis**

An Old Republic Senator from Corellia, Bel Iblis is reputed to have died at Anchoron. Instead, he merely loses home, family, and friends and becomes a lone rebel, moving his base, "Peregrine's Nest," 14 times in seven years to avoid Imperial detection. Having his assistants, Sena Leikvold Midanyl and Irenez (no last name), fetch Han Solo and Lando Calrissian to his current location, Bel Iblis recalls Han at age eleven questioning the visiting Senator in school about the anti-alien bias growing in the Old Republic. Bel Iblis is sorry that Han is dismissed from the Imperial Academy, but figures it keeps him from being purged with other young officers by the Emperor. Later, he tells of dreams to build a massive fleet, win a string of victories, and present himself to the New Republic leadership with dignity as he requests to rejoin. His successes have been minor. At the end of the novel, however, as the Empire is about to use its superior firepower to destroy the Rebels assessing the Katana fleet, Bel Iblis comes out of



hyperspace and volunteers his services. Leia Organa Solo accepts officially on behalf of the New Republic. Bel Iblis' saga continues in *The Last Command*.

## Tav Breil'lya

Council-Aide to Borsk Fey'lya, Breil'lya appears on New Cov and accuses Han Solo, who is tailing him to Amethyst Shipping and Storage, of being an impostor and Imperial spy, and demanding his immediate execution.

## Lando Calrissian

A gambler and entrepreneur turned hero of the Rebellion, Calrissian is at the beginning of the novel confined to the medical wing of the Sluis Van Central space station after being lightly injured in a massive Imperial attack. He is worried about falling prices on hfredium, which he has been stockpiling at his Nomad City complex. Old friend Luke Skywalker promises help getting Lando's mole miners returned promptly. As usual, Lando gets drawn into Han's adventures and, as usual, proves a brave and resourceful ally, twice on New Cal, and in the defense of the crippled dreadnaught *Katana* in empty space. It is Lando who first notices *Katana* upholstery in Senator Bel Iblis' camp and thinks of using the "full-rig slave circuitry" to steer a mobile sister ship into the side of an Imperial Star Destroyer, effectively ending the stand-off. Lando longs to get back to his peaceful business practice.

## Joruss C'baoth

A Dark Jedi Master, C'baoth works in a tense relationship with Grand Admiral Thrawn to rebuild the Empire. C'baoth has failed once to capture Jedi Master Luke Skywalker and is single-mindedly dedicated to bending Luke, his sister Leia Organa Solo, and her unborn twins to his service. At the beginning of the novel, C'baoth is awaiting Luke on the planet Jomark, where Luke feels odd flickers in the Force but senses no threat. On Coruscant, Luke finds C'baoth's full record, which includes advising Senator—future Emperor—Palpatine and participation in various sensitive missions. He is the sole survivor among the six Jedi attached to the Outbound Flight Project. C'baoth is average height and build, but muscular for a Jedi.

Before being exiled to Jomark, C'baoth lives happily on Wayland, where he slaughters thousands of offworlders who come there and lights candles on their graves in the eerie crypt. At the end of the novel, C'baoth has developed and melded his powers of long-distance communication and mind-control so that he can stop an officer on one ship from carrying out a command while on another ship, barely in sight. C'baoth informs Thrawn that a new age of Jedi ascendancy has dawned. He, C'baoth, is the only thing in the galaxy that is not dispensable. The Force is at his command. He is no longer Thrawn's servant.



## Chewbacca

Han Solo's Wookiee partner flying the Millennium Falcon, Chewie guards the pregnant Leia Organa Solo while Han is on missions. Chewie feels that he owes a "life debt" to Han, Leia, and Luke Skywalker. Chewie accompanies Leia on the mission to Honoghr by way of Endor.

## General Covell

Commander of AT-AT, AT-ST, and hoverscout attack vehicles carried by Grand Admiral Thrawn's flagship, Chimaera, Covell resents the fleet's supercilious attitude towards the army, but hides his feelings from Thrawn. The raid on Talon Karrde's headquarters on Myrkr, with which the novel opens, reveals the need for the green troops to receive true-life battle experience.

## Niles Ferrier

A dark, stocky, sometimes bearded smuggler specializing in stealing spaceships, Ferrier appears at the vast Sluis Van space station with a crew hours after an Imperial attack ends, intent on stealing warships to collect the rich bounty being offered by Grand Admiral Thrawn. The distinctive smell of his spiced cigarra gives him away to Lando Calrissian, who accompanies Luke Skywalker on the mission to thwart the theft. Ferrier's crew includes an insectoid verpine and a wraith or "Defel," whose body absorbs light. Ferrier, each time given away by his cigarra, appears again on New Cov in the Mishra tapcafe, and aboard the Coral Vanda floating amidst the glorious coral reefs of Pantolomin. Like Han Solo and Lando, Ferrier is hunting for the second person who knows the coordinates of the Katana fleet. Ferrier orders his men to kill Solo and Lando, but they narrowly escape, Han besting the wraith by dousing him in fine liquors and setting them on fire.

## Borsk Fey'lya

A New Republic Councilor from Botha, Fey'lya leads an attempt to fire Admiral Ackbar as head of the military forces. Fey'lya has violet eyes and cream-colored fur that bristles as his emotions change. He grows up on Kothlis, a Bothan colony world, joins the Rebel Alliance after the Battle of Yavin along with a contingent of Bothans, who serve mostly in support and reconnaissance. The only fighting they see is around New Cov. This datum and Fey'lya's background in shipping, merchandising, and mining, some of which attract the suspicion of Luke Skywalker and Han Solo as they seek to clear their friend, Ackbar's, name. Imperial Grand Admiral Thrawn is actually pulling Fey'lya's strings, quite expertly.

When smuggler Talon Karrde offers the High Council the coordinates of the long-lost Katana fleet, Fey'lya is at first skeptical and then insists that salvaging will strip the New



Republic of its defenses. He submits to Mon Mothma when she supports a small-scale expedition, and puts together a crew loyal to him. Foreseeing this, Leia Organa Solo dispatches a more objective team hours earlier. For this Fey'lya demands her arrest for treason, but is voted down. Arriving at the Katana fleet, Fey'lya tries to arrest the earlier team but an open microphone broadcasts his contempt for soldiers, and they all mutiny. Fey'lya pulls a blaster on Leia, but in the end has to surrender.

## Mara Jade

Second-in-command to Talon Karrde on the Wild Karrde and in his vast smuggling and intelligence organization, Mara has a weak Jedi sense and periodically suffers nightmares in which the late Emperor orders her to kill Luke Skywalker. In the course of her work, Mara is intercepted by an Imperial Star Destroyer and taken aboard. She demands to see the captain and be taken to deliver crucial information to Grand Admiral Thrawn. She identifies herself as the "Emperor's Hand" and convinces Thrawn of her authenticity.

Mara's first assignment since leaving the Imperial Palace on Coruscant when the Emperor is killed at Endor, is to obtain from Karrde the coordinates of the long-lost and invaluable Katana fleet. Thrawn has Mara's spaceship bugged, and Imperial forces take Karrde into custody. Mara tries to attack Thrawn physically, but is restrained and convinced to give up dual loyalties. Before leaving Chimaera, Mara obtains all the information from the computer she will need to plan Karrde's escape. She flies to Jomark to "borrow" Luke from the Jedi Master C'baoth, whom she believes is mad, and fights alongside Luke during the successful break-out. Mara summons Karrde's allies to the site of the Katana fleet to back up the New Republic teams dispatched there. During the battle, Mara has to eject from her crippled fighter and is hit by ion cannon fire. She blacks out, seeing the Emperor's face and knowing that she has failed him again. Luke uses the Force to find her amidst the rubble and rushes her to hospital facilities.

## Talon Karrde

The universe's premier smuggler, Karrde largely is by the time of this novel restricting himself to commerce in information. He and the crew of the Wild Karrde narrowly escape Imperial capture on the planet Myrkr, flee to a secondary base on Rishi, where they discover that the Empire has placed a 20,000 bounty on Karrde's head, and on to yet another site. Karrde accidentally reveals to his second-in-command, Mara Jade, that 15 years earlier he discovered the long-lost Katana fleet ("Dark Force") and memorized the coordinates.

Imperial Grand Admiral Thrawn wants to capture Karrde because Thrawn is in dire need of warships and is sure that Karrde better than anyone will know where to find them. Thrawn finally captures Karrde and confines him aboard Chimaera, intending to actively interrogate him after a few days hunger and loneliness soften him up. During the wait, Mara—formerly the "Emperor's Hand" with back-door access to the computer system—



enlists Jedi Master Luke Skywalker to help break out Karrde. They succeed, following a harrowing chase, and Karrde realizes Mara has not betrayed him to Thrawn. At Coruscant, Karrde offers the Katana fleet to the New Republic, as thanks to Luke for rescuing him, and not as any indication that he is dropping his neutrality in the war.

## **Khabarakh clan Kihm'bar**

A Noghri commando, sole survivor of Team 22, the last mission to kidnap Leia Organa Solo on Kashyyyk, home world of the Wookiees, Khabarakh agrees to rendezvous with Leia at Endor and then convey her to his planet. En route, Khabarakh angers Chewbacca, who attacks him. Khabarakh tries to talk Chewie into his senses, but then stuns him into unconsciousness. Later, on Honoghr, Khabarakh teaches Chewie some of his lightning-quick attack moves. When the Grand Admiral Thrawn arrives at Honoghr, he suspects Khabarakh's story of survival and month's absence from duties, and orders him held for Imperial interrogation. The Noghri insist on following their own traditional methods, and Khabarakh is chained to a stake for days of public humiliation. Leia goes to rescue him, convinces the Noghri that the Empire has been cheating them, and Khabarakh declares he is honored to have suffered for the truth. He accompanies Leia on her return to Coruscant.

## **Mon Mothma**

One of the three original founders of the Rebel Alliance, Mon Mothma rises to unchallenged leadership after the destruction of Alderaan and Senator Garm Bel Iblis' departure to fight the Empire independently. Han Solo resents that Mon Mothma overworks Han's pregnant wife, Leia Organa Solo, but believes that Mon Mothma has the interests of the New Republic at heart. Councilor Fey'lya and Bel Iblis worry that Mothma might want to make herself Empress.

## **Captain Pellaeon**

The captain of Grand Admiral Thrawn's flagship, the Imperial Star Destroyer Chimaera, Pellaeon admires his superior but is confused by most command decisions. Pellaeon hates the Jedi Master Joruss C'baoth, whose talents Thrawn needs.

## **Winter**

Leia Organa Solo's long-time assistant, Winter is a graceful, white-haired woman whose memory is "perfect and indelible."



# Objects/Places

## Chimaera

The Imperial Star Destroyer serving as flagship of Grand Admiral Thrawn, Chimaera is commanded by the cautious Capt. Pellaeon. Many scenes occur on the bridge, set between two bays of crew members that keep her operating efficiently. Other scenes are set in Thrawn's private quarters, where he enjoys studying artwork from the peoples he is conquering. He sees it as keys to their personalities. This and current battle maps are available in holograph. Finally, when Talon Karrde is arrested and locked in the Chimaera's detention ward, Luke Skywalker and Mara Jade sneak in to get him out, Luke crawling through the ship's garbage compression hold. After battles in storage facilities, they fly the captured Millennium Falcon to freedom.

## Coruscant

The center of the New Republic as it was formerly for the Empire, Coruscant is seen most selectively in this novel. The normal layout for High Council meetings is modified to cover up the fact that Admiral Ackbar is under house arrest and to divide the various species and sow discord. A number of offices are seen in passing, and Han Solo several times walks up and down the Grand Corridor, past color-changing ch'hala trees whose part in Imperial espionage ("Delta Source") is not learned until the end of *The Last Command*. In the meantime, loose lips busily sink ships in this area of the Palace. Mara Jade, the former "Emperor's Hand," returns to Coruscant for the first time since the Emperor's death and recalls its splendor and personalities nostalgically.

## Jomark

The planet on which Dark Jedi Master C'baoth expects to again to meet Luke Skywalker and this time bring Luke under his control. Jomark has a small continent that closely resembles maps. On the southern shore is C'baoth's High Castle beside scenic volcanic Ring Lake. C'baoth dislikes this place where he has lived since long ago wresting the planet Wayland from the Emperor's Dark Jedi, but C'baoth has become a local celebrity and judge. He uses the Force to attack Mara Jade when she arrives on Jomark to "borrow" Luke Skywalker, whom C'baoth has summoned.

## Katana Fleet / Dark Force

A half-century before *Dark Force Rising* and ten years before the infamous Clone Wars, the Old Empire's fleet of Katana-class dreadnaughts is lost in space when a hive virus infects the crews, driving them mad before killing them. Some 200 heavy cruisers have been linked by "full-rig slave circuitry" so crews of 16,000 can be reduced to 2,000. Fifteen years before the novel, a young navigator named Talon Karrde by mistake finds



the Katana fleet and notes its coordinates. He does not at the time realize a colleague has also noted the information. As Dark Force Rising opens, Empire and New Republic are both desperate for warships and Karrde is ready to capitalize on his good fortune. A small New Republic expedition finds the ships in good repair, thanks to service droids, but not in battle order. The bodies of the dead have been disposed of by droids. Katana, the flagship, is able to get off one shot of its weaponry and to direct the course of a sister ship whose propulsion is working into the side of an Imperial Star Destroyer.

## Mount Tantiss

A prominent mountain on the planet Wayland, Mount Tantiss houses the Spaarti cylinders of Grand Admiral Thrawn's ultra-secret cloning facility. Its nature is merely hinted at in this novel. Jedi Master Joruus C'baoth lived on Mount Tantiss for years before being moved into exile by Grand Admiral Thrawn. There are suggestions at the end of the novel, in the context of cloning, that Mount Tantiss might hold uncomfortable memories for C'baoth. He rejects the thought. In *The Last Command*, which focuses heavily on Mount Tantiss, it is revealed that C'baoth was cloned there.

## Myrkr

Talon Karrde's favorite hideaway planet, Myrkr is covered by the dense, metallic-leaved Great Northern Forest. Grand Admiral Thrawn raids the planet at the beginning of the novel, knowing Karrde will have slipped away. Myrkr is home to the Force-nullifying ysalamiri and vornskrs, predators who use the force to hunt. Karrde keeps two of these as pets. Thrawn assumes that Karrde has security contacts in distant Hyllyard city, whom Thrawn wants to smoke out. Myrkr is seen no more in this novel after Wild Karrde escapes the trap.

## New Cov

The only place in the galaxy for which Borsk Fey'lya and fellow Bothans fight actively during the war, New Cov seems to Luke Skywalker, Han Solo, and Lando Calrissian a likely place to begin looking into Fey'lya's finances and politics as he frames Admiral Ackbar. They land in the walled city Ilic, a planet prospering by exporting exotic biomolecules harvested from predatory plants. Han and Lando are to meet Luke at the Mishra tapcafe. Spotting Fey'lya's assistant, Tav Breil'lya, Han decides to follow him, while sending Lando after Luke. As Breil'lya disappears into a warehouse, Han is apprehended and taken inside the Amethyst Shipping and Storage. An Imperial raid sends them fleeing the planet accompanied and protected by two women working for a "Commander" who claims to have met Han before.





## Noghri

A short, warlike species native to the planet Honoghr, the Noghri have for generations served as Imperial assassins throughout the galaxy. First recruited by Darth Vader, they are personally loyal to Grand Admiral Thrawn, whose personal bodyguard is Rukh. Noghri have gravelly, catlike voices and are accomplished hunters before wildlife on Honoghr is virtually wiped out. Their gray bodies darken with age. They share the Wookiees' sense of honor and have a well-established legal system. A council of male "dynasts" rule the planet as viceroys for the Empire, while villages are headed by females called "maitrakh."

When Leia Organa Solo tries to convince the Noghri to throw off the Empire's tyranny, their spokesman, Vor'corkh, tries to silence her by threats, but Leia accepts the prestige of being the Mal'ary'ush, Lady Vader, in order to return the Noghri's prosperity and freedom. They will proceed slowly, so as not to attract the Empire's attention.

## Peregrine's Nest

The supposedly mobile base of operations for the independent rebel Senator Bel Iblis, Peregrine's Nest shows signs of having been settled for years. Earlier, Peregrine's Nest moves 14 times in seven years to avoid Imperial detection. Bel Iblis' assistant, Sena Leikvold Midanyl, urges Han Solo to intercede with New Republic leader Mon Mothma, to invite Bel Iblis back into the organization. Without invitation, Bel Iblis flies the Peregrine and other dreadnaughts to help save the Dark Force from the Empire.

## Sluis Van Central Space Station

A massive New Republic facility, Sluis Van is at the beginning of the novel recovering from a massive Imperial attack. Luke Skywalker has been unable to get repair of his X-wing fighter expedited or medical care for the wounded Lando Calrissian. Some 40 TIE fighters and 50 mole miners are smuggled inside Sluis Van using a newly-developed cloaking technology. The attempt fails when Han Solo and Lando disable the ships. Han defends Admiral Ackbar, who concentrates the fleet at Sluis Van and who receives a large influx of cash in his bank account at the same time. Ackbar spends the whole novel under house arrest during the investigation.

## Ysalamiri

Long furry animals that live on trees on the planet Myrkr, ysalamiri are able within close range to create a bubble within which the effects of the Force is nullified. Grand Admiral Thrawn and Mara Jade both use them for protection against the mad Jedi Master Joruu C'baoth.



# Themes

## Power

Running through all the Star Wars stories is the great power of the Force. In *Dark Force Rising* it is examined closely in two ways. Luke Skywalker, a haphazardly-trained Jedi Master, has come to fear that using the power to control human minds could move him towards the Dark Side, which consumed his father, Darth Vader, and the Emperor Palpatine, so Luke restricts its use. Another Jedi Master, the aged Joruus C'baoth, claiming long ago to have done battle with the Dark Jedis, is intent on restoring the Jedi to their rightful place as judges of the galaxy, enjoyed for a thousand generations before the Dark Jedi virtually exterminated them. He is desperate enough to build a following to kidnap Leia Organa Solo, whose own abilities in the Force are limited by her other duties which precluded systematic training. More importantly, C'baoth wishes to gain control of the twins growing in her womb. C'baoth insists he wants to train them personally, augmenting Luke and Leia's education. It comes to a head when C'baoth mentally summons Luke to his exile on Jomark and reminds Luke of his limitations. C'baoth warns Luke against limiting his potential by not imposing his will on lesser beings, who hate the Jedi for their power.

Luke does not recall his mentors, Yoda and Ben Kenobi, looking at the galaxy in this way and his own limited experience has not included being hated for his efforts to help. While he vividly recalls diminutive Yoda being able to lift his X-wing fighter out of the swamp at Dagobah, Luke is unable to budge a miniature disabled Imperial walker. Leia strains to hold her lightsaber in midair before her as she argues with the Noghri about their need to break free from the enslaving power of the Empire. C'baoth, by comparison, hurls boulders at Mara Jade's spaceship, forcing it to make an emergency landing, brings fatigue on her and Luke, hoping to destroy them, and launches lightning bolts at them from his fingertips, as the late Emperor had been able to do. He fails to see the droid Artoo's actions to stun him, however. C'baoth hates droids because they think without reference to the Force.

At the end of the novel, C'baoth demonstrates to Grand Admiral Thrawn his ability to coordinate long-distance communications and comprehensive mind-control. He insists that the Force is now his to command and that he will use it to rebuild the Empire under his own command. The results are dramatically seen only in the sequel, *The Last Command*.

## Exploitation

Running through all the Star Wars stories is the fact that the Empire exploits subject people, while the New Republic encourages freedom and cultural autonomy. In *Dark Force Rising*, this is examined specifically in the case of the planet Honoghr and its native species, the Noghri. Leia Organa Solo naively and idealistically travels there in



the company of her would-be kidnapper, the Noghri death commando, Khabarakh clan Kihm'bar.

Long ago, during a titanic battle over Honoghr, an old Rebel warship is disabled and crashes to the surface. It is assumed that toxic chemicals aboard are strewn over the planet, resulting in terrible natural phenomena that destroy the ecology. Darth Vader is remembered as the planet's savior, delivering food and medicine and deploying droids to clean up the soil. In return, he enlists the young male Noghri as assassins and assigns them throughout the galaxy. The Noghri have an intense sense of loyalty and continue their service under Grand Admiral Thrawn, whom Vader named as his viceroy. Leia determines that Thrawn is allowing the land to be purified at a rate that prevents the Noghri from ever attaining self-sufficiency in their food supply, making them perpetual slaves.

Leia discovers scientific proof that the Empire (she dares not indict Vader personally, for she is exploiting the fact that she is his biological daughter to claim the Noghris' loyalty) has genetically altered native plants to continue the poisoning of the soil. She also realizes that the spaceship crash was not a recent event, but occurred during the Clone Wars, meaning that three generations of Noghri have already suffered, and the Noghri accept her argument that their debt for the help they received from Vader is more than repaid. She struggles against the Noghri mindset to convince them that she and the New Republic do not want to become new overlords, but desire the planet's freedom and self-determination.

## Loyalty

In *Dark Force Rising* virtually no one on the Imperial side of the war holds any loyalty to its cause. The officer corps is, of course, obedient to the chain of command, but there is animosity between ground troops and the naval elite. The only partial exception is the Noghri, who believe themselves beholden to the late Darth Vader for helping them partially overcome the ecological devastation of their planet. Leia Organa Solo is able, however, as "Lady Vader," to shake their loyalty to his viceroy, Grand Admiral Thrawn.

On the New Republic side, by contrast, the loyalties are numerous and interlocked. The old friends, Han Solo, Luke Skywalker, Lando Calrissian, and Leia, will do anything for one another and for the New Republic's lofty ideals. When Councilor Fey'lya creates a rift in the leadership, they rally around Admiral Ackbar, the supreme military commander, and spread out looking for evidence to vindicate him. When Fey'lya grows intense in his insistence on doing things his way—to the point of drawing a blaster on Leia—the friends refuse to abandon one another and are willing to face charges of mutiny and treason (which do not materialize).

Other strong loyalties are more complex. Mara Jade is dedicated to her commander, Talon Karrde, who is determined to remain neutral in the war, but ends up offering his find of the Katana fleet to the New Republic in gratitude to Luke, who helps Mara rescue him from the Empire's clutches. Through the Emperor's continuing presence in her



nightmares, Mara is commanded to kill Luke, but refrains while she still needs him. Luke, who knows the threat, has an inexplicable loyalty to her, mourns her like a sister when it appears she has perished in deep space, and uses the Force to find her in time to rush her to a hospital. Mara, who has served as the "Emperor's Hand," traveling the galaxy to enforce his will, sees The Emperor through rose-colored glasses and great nostalgia. The New Empire is not what she recalls or wants. Bel Iblis, one of the founders of the Rebel Alliance, remains loyal to Alliance principles and fights independently, fearing the current leadership, but comes to the rescue when the Empire moves in on the Katana fleet. Finally, C'baoth remains loyal to the Jedi tradition of judging the lesser beings of the galaxy. It worked for a thousand generations before Dark Jedi virtually exterminate the other Jedi Masters. In the end, however, C'baoth's idealism degrades into a lust for personal power. The balance, it seems, between power to do good and abusing that power until it is tainted, is always fine.



# Style

## Point of View

Dark Force Rising is told in the third person past tense omniscient. Considerable use is made of present-tense conversation and italicized silent thought processes. The novel draws heavily on the rich mythology of the three original Star Wars films and novelizations by George Lucas. Author Timothy Zahn offers not even bare-bones characterizations of the iconic hold-overs Luke Skywalker, Leia Organa Solo, Han Solo, Chewbacca, Artoo, and Lando Calrissian, but uses their various catch phrases, gestures, and poses to paint pictures before the readers' eyes. Zahn is also continuing the saga begun in Heir to the Empire, without providing much of a summary of what has occurred there. This can be disconcerting, as the reader realizes that words or phrases or events have significance not immediately discernible. Most are not resolved by the end of the third novel, The Last Command.

Thrawn is often contrasted with the barbarous Darth Vader and is viewed by his opponents as infallible. For most of the novel, the survival of an Imperial Grand Admiral is considered myth among the Rebels. Leia Organa Solo is a witness to some of his actions and presumably fills in colleagues later. She, enigmatically, visits Honoghr, where the Noghri revere Vader as their savior. She assumes the role of Lady Vader to try to win the Noghri over to the new Republic and restore their freedom. The strict dichotomy of the movies is preserved only in the person of the Jedi Master Joruss C'baoth, who is developing his powers and wants to restore Jedi control to the galaxy. He goes on to rival the late Emperor and Darth Vader for evil in the sequel to this novel. Here, it is not yet clear whether he is insane or merely disturbed.

## Setting

Dark Force Rising takes place five years after the Battle of Endor, during which both the Emperor and Darth Vader perish and the last surviving Grand Admiral, Thrawn, takes control of the Empire. Rumors leak out to the New Republic of his existence, but his name is not generally known. Further back, a half-century, the Old Empire's Katana fleet, also known as the "Dark Force," disappeared and a warship crashed on the Noghri planet Honoghr and pollution from it ostensibly poisons the planet. In exchange for the Noghri's service as assassination commandos, the Empire provides necessities and detoxifies the soil. Fifteen years ago, a young navigator named Talon Karrde by mistake finds the Katana fleet and notes its coordinates. He is now ready to capitalize on that discovery.

The action begins aboard Thrawn's flagship, the Imperial Star Destroyer Chimaera. Many scenes take place on the bridge or in the admiral's dimly-lit private quarters, where he enjoys fine art as a window on perspective enemies' psyches. Thrawn is preparing for the Empire's renaissance and uses a raid on Myrkr to season the troops.



The object of the raid, Talon Karrde, flees and bounces to several hideouts. When he is finally arrested and put in the detention ward, Luke Skywalker and Mara Jade sneak in to get him out by Luke crawling through the ship's garbage compression hold. After battles in storage facilities, they fly the captured Millennium Falcon to freedom.

The former Imperial Palace on Coruscant also provides a setting for many scenes in the novel, showing the malfunctioning of government as Councilor Fey'lya deposes Admiral Ackbar for treason, and concerns about limited resources abound. Thrawn exiles Jedi Master Joruu C'baoth to Jomark, to which he briefly attracts both Luke Skywalker and Mara Jade. The finale occurs somewhere unspecified in deep, black space, as New Republic factions fight one another and the Empire for the sad remnants of the Katana fleet.

## Language and Meaning

Dark Force Rising is told through an impersonal narrator. As the middle volume in a "Thrawn Trilogy," it draws heavily not only on the mythology of the original Star Wars films but also Heir to the Empire. Author Timothy Zahn clearly assumes that readers have seen and imbibed the films, for he offers not even the barest of characterizations of the characters that appear on screen: Luke Skywalker, Leia Organa Solo, Han Solo, Chewbacca, Artoo, Threepio, and Lando Calrissian, but uses their various catch phrases, gestures, and poses to bring up pictures before the readers' eyes. Anyone reading Dark Force Rising without having read Heir to the Empire is at times at a loss as to what is going on, because the references are brief. Without having seen the films, the reader is lost, as innumerable scenes are set up and/or evaluated by brief allusions to famous scenes.

Dark Force Rising is filled with the odd names of solar systems, planets, cities, species, exotic gadgets, and colorful practices begun in the movies. Such specifics give the writing a sense of reality and grounding. Zahn is irregular in the amount and kind of detail he offers when setting up new scenes. Most of the dialog is derivative from the movies and predictable. Dark Force Rising is an engaging adventure story that burdens the reader with deep meaning only in the sections about the destruction of Honoghr's ecology and Fey'lya's political tricks.

## Structure

The second novel in Timothy Zahn's "Thrawn Trilogy," Dark Force Rising consists of twenty-eight numbered but untitled chapters of varying lengths. Most chapters contain multiple scenes dealing with events taking place simultaneously in diverse locations. There are few segues. Generally, additional leading is introduced between paragraphs and the new topic begins. There are no marked differences in tone as the novel moves forward, but the pace picks up in the last four chapters, which also begin setting up for the final novel, The Last Command.



The threads that intertwine in the book include: 1) Imperial Grand Admiral Thrawn's preparations for a final battle against the Rebel Alliance, requiring many new warships; 2) Jedi Master Joruss C'baoth's growing megalomania and determination to have Luke Skywalker, Leia Organa Solo, and her newborn twins as apprentices in order to restore Jedi rule to the galaxy; 3) scandal and division in the New Republic as Councilor Borsk Fey'lya has charged Admiral Ackbar with treason and is taking over control of the military; 4) Leia's desire to restore the ecology of ruined Honoghr and her guilt of the Rebels' part in its demise; 5) Mara Jade's implanted obsession with killing Luke but her need to ally with him to rescue her boss, Talon Karrde; 6) the desire of proud Senator Bel Iblis to rejoin the New Republic, ending with dignity his independent fight against the Empire; and 7) the race to find and salvage the 200-ship Katana Fleet, also known as the "Dark Force."



## Quotes

"Karrde's gaze defocused, his eyes flattened with the memory. 'It was just over fifteen years ago,' he said, his voice distant, the thumbs of his intertwined hands rubbing slowly against each other. 'I was working as navigator/sensor specialist for a small, independent smuggling group. We'd rather botched a pickup and had had to shoot our way past a pair of Carrack cruisers on our way out. We made it all right, but since I hadn't had the time to do a complete lightspeed calculation, we dropped back to real-space a half light-year out to recalculate.' His lip twitched. 'Imagine our surprise when we discovered a pair of Dreadnaughts waiting directly in our path.'

'Lying dead in space.'

Karrde shook his head. 'Actually, they weren't, which was what threw me for those first few days. From all appearances, the ships seemed to be fully functional, with both interior and running lights showing and even a standby sensor scan in operation.

Naturally, we assumed it was part of the group we'd just tangled with, and the captain made an emergency jump to lightspeed to get us out of there.'

'Not a good idea,' Mara murmured." Chapter 5, pgs. 71-72.

"Thrawn turned his glowing eyes on Pellaeon. 'I understand your concerns, Captain,' he said quietly. 'What you fail to grasp—what you've always failed to grasp—is that a man with C'baoth's mental and emotional instability can never be a threat to us. Yes, he has a great deal of power, and at any given moment he could certainly do considerable damage to our people and equipment. But by his very nature, he's unable to use that power for any length of time. Concentration, focus, long-term thinking—those are the qualities that separate a warrior from a mere flailing fighter. And they're qualities C'baoth will never possess.'" Chapter 6, pg. 89.

"Leia shook her head. 'I don't know what it could have been One minute I was sitting there, and then the next—'

She broke off, a sudden horrible thought striking her. 'Chewie—where does this orbit take us? Does it ever pass through the position where the Death Star blew up?'

Chewbacca stared at her a moment, rumbling something deep in his throat. Then, shifting the medpack to his other hand, he reached past her to key the computer. The answer came almost immediately.

'Five minutes ago,' Leia murmured, feeling cold. 'That would be just about right.'"

Chapter 7, pgs. 97-98.

"Leia shook her head. 'It's not right,' she told the maitrakh as the children filed out of the dukha. 'No people should have to sell their children in return for life.'

The maitrakh gave a long hiss. 'It is the debt we owe,' she said. 'How else shall we pay it?'

Leia squeezed her thumb and forefinger together. How else, indeed? Clearly, the Empire was quite happy with the bargain it had made; and having seen the Noghri





commandos in action, she could well understand its satisfaction. They wouldn't be interested in letting the Noghri buy out of their debt in any other way. And if the Noghri themselves considered their service to be a debt of honor to their saviors... 'I don't know,' she had to concede." Chapter 12, pg. 184.

"'Cozy,' Lando commented.

'Probably can be packed up and shipped offplanet on three minutes' notice, too,' Han said.

'I agree,' Lando nodded. 'This is exactly the sort of feel that lounge should have had, only it didn't.'

'Maybe they figured they ought to have at least one building around here that didn't look like it came out of the Clone Wars,' Han suggested.

'Maybe,' Lando said, squatting down beside one of the chairs and peering at the edge of the seat cushion. 'Probably pulled them out of that Dreadnaught up there.'

Experimentally he dug his fingers under the gray material. 'Looks like the didn't even add any extra padding before they reupholstered them with this—'

He broke off, and abruptly his face went rigid. 'What is it?' Han demanded.

"Slowly, Lando turned to look up at him. 'This chair,' he whispered. 'It's not gray underneath. It's blue-gold.'

'Okay,' Han said, frowning. 'So?'

'You don't understand. The Fleet doesn't do the interiors of military ships in blue-gold. They've never done them in blue-gold. Not under the Empire, not under the New Republic, not under the Old Republic. Except one time.'

'Which was?' Han prompted.

Lando took a deep breath. 'The Katana fleet.'" Chapter 15, pgs. 227-228.

"Thrawn's expression hardened. 'She's not part of the Empire anymore, Captain,' he said. 'She may want us to believe that she's coming back—she may even believe it herself. But she isn't. No matter. She's leading us to Karrde, and that's the important thing. Between him and our Corellian renegade we have two leads to the Katana fleet. One way or another, we'll find it.'

Pellaeon nodded, feeling the stirrings of excitement again despite his best efforts to remain unemotional about this. The Katana fleet. Two hundred Dreadnaughts, just sitting there waiting for the Empire to take possession...

'I have the feeling, Admiral,' he said, 'that our final offensive against the Rebellion may be ready to launch a bit ahead of schedule.'

Thrawn smiled. 'I believe, Captain, that you may be right.'" Chapter 17, pg. 260.

"The Lady Luck disappeared smoothly through one of the ducts in the transparisteel dome, and Ferrier shifted his cigarra to the other side of his mouth. 'You're sure they won't find the second beacon?' he asked.

Beside him, the oddly shaped shadow between a pile of shipping crates stirred. 'They will not,' it said in a voice like cold running water.

'You'd better be right,' Ferrier warned, a note of menace in his voice. 'I didn't stand there



and take that garbage from them for nothing.' He glared at the shadow. 'As it was, you almost gave the game away,' he said accusingly. 'Solo looked straight back at you once.'

'There was no danger,' the wraith said flatly. 'Humans need movement to see. Not-moving shadows are of no concern.'" Chapter 18, pg. 274.

"There wasn't anything to be gained by blacking out. She relaxed her struggle, felt the pressure ease. Thrawn was still standing there, regarding her with amusement. 'That was very unprofessional of you, Emperor's Hand,' he chided.

Mara glared at him and lashed out again, this time with the Force. Thrawn frowned slightly, fingers moving across his neck as if trying to brush away an intangible cobweb. Mara leaned into her tenuous grip on his throat; and he brushed again at his neck before understanding came. 'All right, that's enough,' he said, his voice noticeably altered, his tone starting to get angry. 'Stop it, or Rukh will have to hurt you.'" Chapter 19, pg. 279.

"Luke nodded and set off, striving to look like he belonged there. His footsteps echoed on the metal deck, bringing back memories of that near-disastrous visit to the first Death Star.

But he'd been a wide-eyed kid then, dazzled by visions of glory and heroism and too naïve to understand the deadly dangers that went with such things. Now, he was older and more seasoned, and knew exactly what it was he was walking into.

And yet was walking into it anyway. Dimly, he wondered if that made him less reckless than he'd been the last time, or more so.

He reached the door and paused beside it, pretending to study a data pad that had been in one of the flight suit's pockets until the corridor was deserted. Then, taking one last deep breath of clean air, he opened the door and stepped inside.

Even holding his breath, the stench hit him like a slap in the face. Whatever advancements the Empire might have made in the apst few years, their shipboard garbage pits still smelled as bad as ever." Chapter 22, pg. 321.

"It was, Leia judged, the right moment. Glancing down at her belt, she reached out through the Force with all the power and control she could manage—

And her lightsaber leaped from her belt, breaking free from its quick-release and jumping up in front of her. Her eyes and mind found the switch, and with a snap-hiss the brilliant green-white blade flashed into existence, carving out a vertical line between her and the line of dynasts.

There was a sound like a hissing gasp from the crowd. The two Noghri who had been moving toward the maitrakh froze in midstride ... and as the gasp vanished into utter silence, Leia knew that she'd finally gotten their complete attention. 'I am not merely the daughter of the Lord Vader,' she said, putting an edge of controlled anger into her voice. 'I am the Mal'ary'ush: heir to his authority and his power. I have come through many dangers to reveal the treachery that has been done to the Noghri people.

She withdrew as much of her concentration as she could risk from the floating lightsaber



to look slowly down the line of dynasts. 'Will you hear me? Or will you instead choose death?'" Chapter 24, pg. 361.

"And suddenly there was an agonized squeal from the ejection seat's electronics, and the violent crackle of arcing circuits... and with a horrible jolt Mara realized that she had made what might very well be the last mistake of her life. Intent on aiming her crippled Z-95 at the Star Destroyer's hanger bay, she had drifted too close to the giant ship and ejected directly into the path of the Dreadnaughts' ion beam bombardment.

And in that single crackle of tortured electronics she had lost everything. Her comm, her lights, her limited maneuvering jets, her life support regulator, her emergency beacons. Everything.

For a second her thoughts flickered to Skywalker. He'd been lost in deep space, too, awhile back. But she'd had a reason to find him. No one had a similar reason to find her. A flaming TIE fighter roared past her and exploded. A large piece of shrapnel glanced off the ceramic armor that wrapped partially around her shoulders, slamming her head hard against the side of the headrest.

And as she fell into the blackness, she saw the Emperor's face before her. And knew that she had again failed him." Chapter 28, pg. 430.

"Luke looked down at the bodies of the Imperial troops who had died in his sudden decompression of the Katana's bridge anteroom. Understanding at last why they'd felt strange to his mind. 'I don't suppose there's any chance of a mistake,' he heard himself say.

Beside him, Han shrugged. 'Leia's got them doing a genetic check. But I don't think so.' Luke nodded, staring down at the faces laid out before him. Or rather, at the single face that was shared by all of the bodies.

Clones.

'So that's it,' he said quietly. 'Somewhere, the Empire's found a set of Spaarti cloning cylinders. And has gotten them working.'

'Which means it's not going to take them years to find and train crews for their new Dreadnaughts,' Han said, his voice grim. 'Maybe only a few months. Maybe not even that long.'

Luke took a deep breath. 'I've got a really bad feeling about this, Han.'

'Yeah. Join the club.'" Chapter 29, pg. 439.

## Topics for Discussion

Does the school boy Han Solo's concern about alien species' rights square with his general adult character?

How does the character of Niles Ferrier help hold the story together?

Do specific references to the Star Wars movies help advance the plot and develop characters or hinder it? Discuss the event that most impresses you in this way.

How do Leia Organa Solo and Mara Jade's experiences at Endor compare and contrast?

How does the myth of Darth Vader's care for stricken Honoghr match up with his general reputation? Do you believe Leia Organa Solo's contention that the poisoning of the planet occurs after his regime, or does that merely fit her political purpose?

What purpose is served by the three instances of Jedi judgment in the novel?

Are Councilor Borsk Fey'lya's actions vis-a-vis Admiral Ackbar and Mon Mothma consistent with descriptions of the Bothan character and psychology?

Is Garm Bel Iblis a heroic figure in this novel?