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While whatever means necessary to retrieve the hostages, and Thrawn adds the sky-walker constitutes an attack on the Ascendancy. Convinced that this is all a set-up to get the Aristocra to order the Nikardun, Thurfian hopes that Thrawn has finally outsmarted himself. Yiv speaks to Thalias and Che'ri onboard the bridge of the Deathless, telling them that he will miss Thrawn's ability to read his opponent. Yiv asks Thalias what was in a container they confiscated from her belt, and she identifies it as tava. Yiv asks Thalias if she knows what Thrawn's message was, and she says she doesn't. Yiv pulls out the envelope and tells Thalias that Thrawn was offering the Vaks an alliance with the Ascendancy in exchange for the opportunity to challenge Yiv. Yiv reveals that he sent a letter to the Vaks which he claimed to be from Thrawn, in which he simply asks for forgiveness for the stolen fighter. Yiv asks Thalias and Che'ri to get some rest, as he wants them there when he meets with Thrawn. Yiv explains that Thrawn will want to hire a navigator, and that his navigator (Qilori) is likely boarding the freighter now. Onboard the freighter, Thrawn gives Qilori a cup of Galara tealeaf to celebrate their last voyage together. Pretending to be confused, Qilori asks for clarification. Thrawn explains that he is traveling to Primea for a confrontation with Yiv, and that he doesn't expect it to go well. Qilori asks Thrawn if he is planning any tricks, and Thrawn assures him that he isn't. Having previously checked the ship's hull, Qilori is convinced, but there is still something odd about the freighter's shape he can't quite put into words. As he prepares to lead the freighter through the final leg of the journey, Qilori reminds himself to thank Yiv later for allowing him to watch Thrawn die. Chapter Twenty-One[] As they approach Primea, Wutroow reminds Ar'alani that they are trusting Thrawn's assumption that the Vaks haven't completely sided themselves with the Nikardun. If the Vaks have joined the Nikardun, the Vigilant will be unable to fire on their ships until they are attacked directly, which would make the likely battle even more complicated. Wutroow asks Ar'alani about the Republic shield, and she replies that she has no idea how strong it is. Wutroow then asks permission to run one last weapons check, which Ar'alani grants. Thrawn and Qilori arrive at Primea, and Thrawn remarks that Yiv has one final surprise for them. Yiv had decided to bring three additional Battle Dreadnoughts to his meeting with Thrawn, but Thrawn is referring to the fact that the Nikardun ships aren't at the coordinates Yiv gave him. While they were supposed to meet in orbit above the planet, it appears that Yiv has changed the location of their meeting (and given Qilori the new coordinates). Thrawn hails Yiv, and Yiv shows Thrawn that Thalias and Che'ri are unharmed. Thrawn explains that he has placed Yiv's ransom money in a shuttle, and will send it over when Thalias and Che'ri are on their way back to him. Yiv informs Thrawn that he, not the money, is the ransom, and Thrawn asks if he plans to shoot him down. Yiv explains that he would rather bring Thrawn onboard the Deathless and kill him there, but if Thrawn insists, he can shoot him down. Thrawn asks Yiv if the other provisions of their agreement are no longer in effect, and Yiv replies "probably". Thrawn commends Yiv for his insight in moving the meeting away from Primea, and Qilori notes the sudden hesitation in Yiv's voice when he replies. Thrawn tells Yiv that he wants to revisit the part of their agreement where he agreed to come to Primea alone. The Springhawk, Vigilant and Picket Force Six arrive at Primea. Ar'alani contacts Primea Command and asks them if they've received Thrawn's message. They reply that they have, and are merely waiting for Ar'alani to locate and identify the Nikardun vessels orbiting the planet. After running the sensors, Dalvu reports that she detects thirty-two ships, which matches the analyses from the Vigilant, Grayshrike and Whisperbird. They also notice that the Nikardun ships are deployed in a blockade formation to prevent any ships from stumbling upon Thrawn and Yiv's meeting. Ar'alani sends the analysis to Primea Command, and they agree to hold their ships back while the Chiss clear out the blockade. Having received their orders, Samakro orders Azmordi to move them towards their first targets. Surprised by the arrival of the Chiss fleet, Yiv states that Thrawn is not important enough to be rescued by that large a force. Thrawn explains that it is more likely the Vak Combine called for aid from the Ascendancy. Yiv scoffs at Thrawn's suggestion, and Thrawn tells him that his lack of understanding of the Vak will prove his undoing. Thrawn asks Yiv if he wants to know what his message was to the Vaks, and Yiv replies that he already knows because he swapped the messages. Having anticipated this, Thrawn reveals that he left an additional copy of the message in the computer of the returned fighter. He informed the Vaks that if the message they receive from Thalias differs from the message on the fighter, then they should assume that General Yiv conspired to keep the message from them, denying them access to an important thought line. Yiv then curses, as he screams that the Vaks consider all thought lines. When Thrawn moves to correct him, Yiv disconnects, and Thrawn states that Ar'alani must have finished her negotiations and opened fire on the blockade ships. When Qilori feigns surprise at the mention of a blockade, Thrawn explains that the Vaks will view the blockade as Yiv denying them important thought lines. Thrawn asks Qilori if he believes Yiv will stand by and watch the fleet be destroyed. Qilori reasons that it depends on if Yiv can afford to lose the ships, but Thrawn replies that Qilori has asked the wrong question. Thrawn says that the true question is whether or not Yiv can afford to have the Vaks see him bow to the Chiss. Thrawn explains that Yiv cannot afford to show weakness, and Qilori looks out the viewport to see the other three Nikardun Battle Dreadnoughts heading towards Primea. Yiv reconnects and threatens Thrawn with the total destruction of the Chiss Ascendancy, but Thrawn merely suggests that Yiv restart his conquest in a different part of the Chaos away from the Ascendancy. Yiv looks down at Thalias and Che'ri, and tells Thrawn that he will show him what he has planned for the entire Chiss species. As the Springhawk destroys its third Nikardun patrol boat, the three Nikardun Battle Dreadnoughts arrive. Ar'alani orders the Springhawk to keep one of the Dreadnoughts occupied, and Samakro tells Kharill that he has a plan to keep it distracted. Chapter Twenty-Two[] As Yiv threatens Thrawn, Che'ri begins to worry that she will be hurt. However, she is reassured by the fact that Thrawn still seems to be in control. Yiv continues to freak out onboard the Deathless, and they listen in on Samakro communicating with another Dreadnought. Samakro notifies the Dreadnought that he is in command of Thrawn's personal ship, and Yiv angrily disconnects. As Thalias begins to smile, Che'ri realizes that the Nikardun are scared of Yiv. Thrawn informs Yiv that if he doesn't surrender, he will be destroyed. Yiv calls Thrawn arrogant, as he believes his Battle Dreadnought will easily defeat Thrawn's freighter. Thrawn invites Yiv to come and finish things, and Che'ri notices that Thalias is still smiling. On Thrawn's freighter, Qilori still has no idea what Thrawn is planning, but he is disturbed by the fact that Thrawn is smiling. Qilori then realizes that Thrawn is keeping Yiv focused on him, leaving the rear of the Deathless open to attack. As Qilori tries to think of a way to contact Yiv, Thrawn assures him that he does not have another force lined up to attack. Thrawn tells Qilori that he knows he substituted the coordinates for the ones Yiv gave him, and that he also knows that Yiv has been using the Pathfinders to coordinate his attacks. Qilori tries to deny it, as direct cooperation with a military force is a violation of the Navigator's Guild Code. Thrawn offers to keep the Pathfinder's involvement a secret if Qilori agrees to forget everything he sees from that point on. Qilori agrees, as Yiv would also likely want him to forget the day's events. Thrawn explains that he has no reason to launch another attack, as Yiv has been left with only two options. He can either stay and try to destroy Thrawn (making it appear that he is hiding from the battle over Primea) or he can head to Primea to reinforce his other ships (making it appear that he is fleeing from Thrawn). As they wait to see what Yiv will do, Qilori still thinks that Thrawn will soon be dead. The Springhawk continues its battle with a Nikardun Battle Dreadnought, and disables two attacking gunboats. As they swing around to use the gunboats as temporary shields, Samakro formulates a new plan: get as close to the Dreadnought as possible and fire breacher missiles at the viewport. If they get close enough, the acid contained in the breachers won't have time to dissipate, hopefully destroying the viewport. They approach the Dreadnought and fire the missiles, and the acid speeds towards the viewport. However, a Nikardun patrol craft maneuvers itself in front of the acid. While it isn't big enough to block all of the acid, the Battle Dreadnought destroys the patrol craft, and the debris clears the acid. Their plan having failed, Ar'alani arrives and asks Samakro if he remembers the maneuver Thrawn used against the Paataatus. Samakro replies that he does, and Ar'alani orders him to head towards low orbit. As they approach the planet, Ar'alani orders them to go dark, rendering them practically helpless. Ar'alani contacts the Vaks and asks for humanitarian aid. Initially hesitant, the Vaks agree to send two ships to aid the Springhawk. As Ar'alani and the Vak tell the Nikardun not to fire on the incoming Vak ships, the Dreadnought shoots them down. In response, the Vak ships begin to attack the Nikardun ships. Samakro orders the Springhawk to remain offline so the Vaks don't realize they were manipulated. Samakro and the rest of the Springhawk's crew watch as the Vak continue to attack the Nikardun Battle Dreadnought. Onboard the Deathless, Yiv angrily asks Thalias what Thrawn's plan is. Thrawn replies that his plan was to put Yiv in a box, and he has succeeded. Thrawn explains that Yiv has spent enough time away from the battle for the Vaks and Nikardun to conclude that he didn't want to join. If Yiv decides to run, they will think that he is fleeing Thrawn. Thrawn tells Yiv that he has succeeded in permanently damaging his reputation. Thrawn explains that the only way for Yiv to salvage his reputation is to bring Thrawn's ship aboard with a tractor beam, face Thrawn, and return Thalias and Che'ri. Yiv replies that he would rather have Thrawn onboard to watch him dismember Thalias and Che'ri, and begins to lock onto Thrawn's freighter. Thalias signals Che'ri, and they begin tearing off their thick hostage makeup. As they break off their makeup, the tava mist that was compressed inside is released, and Thalias begins to lose consciousness. As she begins to drift off, she is able to make out Thrawn's freighter breaking free of the tractor beam, and it begins to accelerate towards the viewport. While the Nikardun are under the effects of the tava mist, they still manage to hit the ship with a barrage of lasers. Normally the ship would have been destroyed, but the freighter is protected by the Republic shield Thrawn brought back from Mokivj. Thrawn crashes his freighter into the viewport, using the customized nose on the freighter to seal off the vacuum. Thalias notices Che'ri holding onto Yiv's arm, as he has pulled out a blaster. Thrawn appears, disarms and disables Yiv, and gives Thalias and Che'ri breath masks. Thrawn asks Thalias to retrieve Yiv's questis, and Thrawn works to copy as much data from the ship as he can before the rest of the Nikardun crew arrive. As Thrawn binds Yiv and brings him onboard the freighter, he explains that he never intended to destroy Yiv's ship, as all he needed to do was destroy Yiv. Thalias asks Thrawn if the bridge crew will die once the freighter leaves, and Thrawn reminds her "no witnesses". Memories XIII[] Thrawn and Ar'alani have a meeting about the incident at Solitair, and Thrawn says that he should have seen the signs that they were being manipulated by the Garwians. Ar'alani tells him that it was her who should have noticed the signs, and she explains that Thrawn doesn't get politics. Thrawn agrees, and asks Ar'alani why he can't understand politics, which he describes as a different form of warfare. Ar'alani explains that military warfare is straightforward, while in politics, goals and allies are constantly shifting. Thrawn vows to master the art of politics, but Ar'alani knows that he will never succeed. Ar'alani hopes that Thrawn remains in the military, as that is where he will be of lasting value to the Ascendancy. Thurfian speaks with Mith Speaker Thistrian, who informs him that Thrawn is being elevated to Trial-born. Despite the fiasco with the Lioaoi and Garwians, the Irzi have been trying to steal Thrawn from the Mith, and are preparing to offer him ranking distant. Thurfian believes that the Irzi are bluffing, hoping that the Mith draw Thrawn closer to themselves so they will be damaged by the political fallout of his next mistake. Thistrian reminds him that Thrawn could bring glory to the Mith, and they can't afford the Irzi getting that glory instead. Thistrian informs him that while Thrawn has been demoted to Mid Captain, he has been given his own ship, the Springhawk. There is also talk of giving Thrawn command of Picket Force Two. Thurfian asks who is behind Thrawn's good fortunes, and Thistrian replies that it must be someone close to the Patriarch, maybe even the Patriarch himself. Thistrian notes that being assigned to Picket Force Two would put Thrawn on the outskirts of the Ascendancy, away from the Lioaoi and Garwians. Thistrian encourages Thurfian to look on the bright side, as whatever Thrawn does next will be entertaining to watch. Thurfian hopes he will live through it, and resolves to work with Zistalmu to bring Thrawn down. Chapter Twenty-Three[] Thrawn has dinner with Thalias and Che'ri, and Thalias tells him that some of the Aristocra want to bring charges against him for putting a sky-walker at risk. Thrawn explains that it was Yiv's decision, not his, that put them at risk, and he has already explained this to the Aristocra. The Aristocra are also grateful that he returned Yiv alive for questioning, so it is unlikely that Thrawn will be charged with anything. Thalias congratulates Thrawn for beginning to understand politics, but he explains that Ar'alani and Ba'rif are handling the Aristocra. He also states that his plan with the Vaks was never strictly about politics. Che'ri expresses confusion, as she thought the Vaks liked to see all sides of things. Thrawn explains that the solution came from Ar'alani, who had noticed something that Thrawn missed. Thrawn explains that while the Vaks like to see all thought lines, not all thought lines are given equal weight. He explains that the Vaks prioritize the thought lines that they trust, and when he exposed Yiv as a liar (by sending them a different message) the Vaks lost their trust in Yiv. Thalias asks what Ar'alani saw, and Thrawn explains that she had been looking into Vak history and noticed that their neighbors were always careful to never kill a Vak in combat. Killing a Vak would remove their thought line forever, which robs the Combine of information. Thalias realizes that an attack on an individual Vak would be seen as an attack on the Vak Combine, and Thrawn explains that by luring the Nikardun to fire on Vak ships, Ar'alani was able to get the Vaks to focus on the most important thought line: protecting their planet and people. With the battle coordination plan they received from Thrawn, the Vak and Chiss were able to efficiently defeat the Nikardun. Thrawn explains that while he sees non-Chiss as assets, Ar'alani sees them as people. Thrawn believes this makes Ar'alani a better commander than he is, as her officers follow her with confidence and eagerness. Thalias suggests that Thrawn change to be more like Ar'alani, but Thrawn doesn't believe that he can. Che'ri reminds Thrawn that he taught her how to fly, and Thalias tells him that he has been helping her learn to observe and think. Thalias assures Thrawn that they are confident in his abilities, and Thrawn tells her that the Ascendancy owes her and Che'ri. Thrawn calls Thalias Trial-born of the Mith, and Che'ri congratulates Thalias on her accomplishment. As Thrawn prepares to leave to speak with the blueedock foreman, Thalias thanks him for speaking with them. As Thalias begins to prepare more food, she hopes that she will be allowed to remain Che'ri's caregiver. Two months after Yiv's capture, Qilori exits the Great Presence, noticing that the ship he is navigating has powered down. As he notices that the bridge is deserted, Qilori is greeted by an unidentified voice coming through the speaker. Qilori asks the speaker's name, but he refuses, instead asking Qilori about Yiv. While Qilori feigns ignorance, the voice tells him that Yiv disappeared. There are rumors that he was killed in action, that he defected to the Chiss, and that he retired to the far reaches of the Chaos. The voice wants to know what Qilori thinks, and when he remains hesitant, the voice threatens to kill him. Qilori tells the voice that Yiv was captured by Thrawn and the Chiss, and the speaker asks about the current state of the Nikardun Destiny. Qilori explains that Yiv was the undisputed ruler of the Nikardun, and that there was no one to take his place. Uncertainty over Yiv's fate prevented any remaining Nikardun from acting, and the Vaks started telling nearby systems that the Nikardun had fired on them, causing the Nikardun Destiny to collapse. While some chiefs want to restart their conquests, Qilori believes that it will just lead to more in-fighting. The voice asks Qilori if he wants to continue to have a bright future, and Qilori replies that he has already answered the voice's questions. The voice states that the Nikardun were fools, and Qilori asks if the voice is Yiv's master. The voice states that if they were guiding Yiv's efforts, he would have been much more successful, and remarks that since a frontal attack on the Ascendancy has failed, they will need a more subtle plan. The voice asks if Qilori approves going after the Chiss, and he replies that he wants revenge, as the Chiss have taken his life away from him. The voice tells Qilori to continue their journey, and the ship powers back up. Qilori asks what he should call the voice, and the voice introduces himself as Jixtus, the one who will finally and completely destroy the Chiss Ascendancy. Continuity[] Media[] Editions[] Cover gallery[] US hardcover, Barnes & Noble Exclusive EditionBarnes & Noble Exclusive Edition insertOut of Print Limited Collector's Edition cover art Appearances[] Sources[] Explore all of Wookieepedia's images for this article subject. Notes and references[] External links[]

