The Academy Saga:

Books Two: Hardened Virtues

By Brogan Pryor

A despraxic who can’t spell, barely use grammar but still tries. Although he knows he did something right, or this would have never happened. Keep going strong, fools!

Prologue: Change of Inconvenience

**IP3 30, Day 245**

Selturn Geraa was seated in his decaying swivel chair, the sort that usually seen behind office desks. Not elite military operatives. With one tanned hand he was stroking his greying goatee, while the other was busy with a modified holopad that had several antennas poking out the sides.

The top of the hologram read:

**The 63th Unification Election**

Below the title was small text, stating on how to vote. Geraa ignored this, he knew what he was doing as he moved straight to the three dropdown boxes right at the bottom. He activated each one, which showed several names for the three very important positions in the Mustaran Government. One for the office the Head of Military, Civilian and Foreign Affairs.

The change of government heads only changed every one hundred years, so this was an important choice for any Mustaran. Geraa however was fixed upon one name on the Civilian box. He nodded approvingly and finalised his choice, pressing the send button. A sudden chill swept over Geraa, like someone had opened a door and let out all the heat.

“I don’t understand why you change your government once every one hundred years.” The collected, and expected voice asked. This sudden appearance did not alarm Geraa; in fact he just kept scrolling through his holopad, now navigating to a news site that showed the tally of votes for the election.

“Mustarans hate the inconvenience of change, epically when it comes to the government. Which is why we still have a Monarchy who still have a lot of power. Unlike you Terrans; from which I’ve noticed seem to enjoy the chaos of it.” He stopped using the pad and looked up to face a well-balanced Terran with a blunt face and beady eyes, supporting himself with a stylish cane. Somthing which he really didn’t need to do.

“So Eoworian, my friend. What can I do for you today?” The Terran moved forward with an urgent purpose to the Seltrun’s desk and held out a data crystal for the old Farian.

“Well….your kind may have some ‘inconvenience’ it seems in the near future.” The Selturn took the crystal and placed on his holopad, as a small amount of content appeared on the screen. While reading, Geraa’s tanned skin turned very pale, and once he finished; sat back in his seat which threatened to collapse on him.

“By Amethyst….” He was visibly shaken, wiping sweat from his brow.

“There’s more, it seems the group we have been monitoring is on the move.”

“I see…well we shall need someone on the planet and key colonies we can trust to gain more information.”

“Already done, but we need someone closer.” Geraa scratched his chin, then looked back at his holopad and quickly changed the page back to the voting page he had sent and stared at the Civilian dropbox.

“I have an idea on how, and whom.” He took out a form, and filled it quickly out and passed it to Eworian. “Take this to Thanatos immediately, and share your information. He’ll agree to the proposal without a doubt.”

“Rodger,” Eworian took his leave, using a teleport to make himself look liked he vanished. The same cold chill returned, but this time in liquored in the air like an unwanted insect.

“So the flame nears the frozen gears of war…” Geraa took out an old fashioned key and unlocked a drawer next to his legs. Taking out a bottle of amber liquid, he drunk deep from the bottle.

Chapter one:

**IP3 30, Day 249**

I’m currently playing the galaxy’s worst game of hide and seek, mixed with blind Farian’s bluff. Finding and eliminating a cult of possible insane necromancers was something I really hoped would have been, (and I shall point out) should have been given to someone more…qualified in these sorts of dealings. Like my trusty friend Radon, a magic specialist…who just simply laughed at my misfortune when our missions where assigned this week.

Sangas.

Although this is what I sighed up for, and compared to last year’s grand adventure I was glad I hadn’t been frozen or burnt to something close to death by now. That’s a plus, I guess. But I have in the past fourteen hours gained a suspicious, almost paranoia for the darkness. And trees….oh the trees. Trust necromancers to choose the darkest, devoid of life forest they could find on Iehastovorkia. My friend Alayna’s home world, whom seemed rather bitter that she wasn’t given this assignment.

And I wish she had, for what really unnerved me most though was the infamous Ghost Tower. Proudly standing some good miles to the north. I had spotted it when I climbed a steep hill, to gain my bearings when I was dropped off by the shuttle. The stories I had heard from friends and colleagues never justified what I saw.

A great spire of a pure jet black, which seemed to glimmer somehow making me believe it was made of some form of metal. Modified drakanian perhaps? But it also moved in a way, shimmering and morphing the longer I looked at it, giving it a blurred mirage effect if you were in a desert, or heat haze.

Think of an optical illusion that challenges you to find hone in on a black dot, but only ever appears in the corner of your eye. But this is the opposite. It *stayed* in your view, you just wanted to look away. I’m not easily scared, but that place was oozing terror and latching itself on to anything that gazed upon it.

So, I went the opposite direction. Which was thankfully the way I had to go anyway. But since seeing the tower, I couldn’t stay calm and I was over reacting at everything; feeling like a single burning gaze was constantly bearing down on me. Moving in reference to where I thought the tower was.

It wasn’t helping that the dead forest behind me had turned more into a marshy quagmire of mud and water. My least favourite type of terrain.

And they said Selturn training was going to be difficult. None of us expected to be thrown in the deep end and sent on real live missions. A baptism of fire it seems. Luckily I had nearly futhilled the pass quota given to us. I know of a few people who were still stuck on their first one.