



Star Wars: Legacy of the Force: Invincible

By Troy Denning



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No war can last forever. Now, in the long and punishing battle between the defiant champions of the New Jedi Order and the juggernaut that is the Galactic Alliance, the endgame is finally at hand.

The rebel cause is losing ground under the twin blows of Admiral Gilad Pellaeon's assassination and the death of Mara Jade Skywalker. At the same time, the Galactic Alliance, with the extraordinary power and dark brilliance of newly ascendant Sith Lord Darth Caedus at its helm, may be unstoppable. Tormented and torn between the call of duty and the thirst for vengeance, Luke has searched the Force and beheld an unspeakable vision of the galaxy enslaved under tyranny more monstrous than even Palpatine's. Now it seems that the last, best hope lies in mobilizing the scattered Jedi for one decisive search-and-destroy mission. The objective: eliminate Darth Caedus.

It's a plan that will be as difficult and dangerous to execute as it is daring. For Caedus is a scion of both the Skywalker and Solo bloodlines whose command of the Force surpasses even that of his grandfather Darth Vader. There is only one who is bound by destiny to stand against him in what will surely be a duel to the death, only one with an outside chance of bringing down the dark lord who was once Jacen Solo.

The furious final moments between power and peace are here, and whoever confronts Darth Caedus will decide the outcome—and the fate of those left standing.



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Editorial Review

About the Author

Troy Denning is the New York Times bestselling author of Star Wars: Tatooine Ghost, Star Wars: The New Jedi Order: Star by Star, and the Star Wars: Dark Nest Trilogy, as well as Pages of Pain, Beyond the High Road, The Summoning, and many other novels. A former game designer and editor, he lives in southern Wisconsin with his wife, Andria.

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What's the difference between a lightsaber and a glowrod? A lightsaber impresses girls!

—Jacen Solo, age 14 (shortly before he cut off Tenel Ka's arm in sparring practice)

HE HAD MADE A FEW MISTAKES. CAEDUS COULD SEE THAT NOW.

He had fallen to the same temptation all Sith did, had cut himself off from everything he loved—his family, his lover, even his daughter—to avoid being distracted by their betrayals. He could see now how blinding himself to his pain had also blinded him to his duty, how he had begun to think only of himself, of *his* plans, of *his* destiny . . . of *his* galaxy.

Self-absorption.

That was the downfall of the Sith, always. He had studied the lives of the ancients—such greats as Naga Sadow, Freedon Nadd, Exar Kun—and he knew that they always made the same mistake, that sooner or later they always forgot that they existed to serve the galaxy, and came to believe that the galaxy existed to serve *them*.

And Caedus had stepped into the same trap. He had forgotten why he was doing all this, the reason that he had picked up a lightsaber in the first place and the reason that he had given himself over to the Sith, the reason that he had taken sole control of the Galactic Alliance.

To *serve*.

Caedus had forgotten because he was weak. After Allana had betrayed him by sneaking off the *Anakin Solo* with his parents, his pain had become a distraction. He had been unable to think, to plan, to command, to read the future . . . to *lead*. So he had shut away his feelings for Allana, had convinced himself that he was not really doing this for her and the trillions of younglings like her, that he was doing this for destiny—for *his* destiny.

It had all been a lie. Even after what Allana had done, Caedus still loved her. He was her father, and he would always love her, no matter how much she hurt him. He had been wrong to try to escape that. Caedus needed to hold on to that love *whatever* it cost him, to cling to that love even as it tore his heart apart.

Because that was how Sith stayed strong. They *needed* pain to keep the Balance, to remind them they were still human. And they needed it so they would not forget the pain they were inflicting on others. To make the galaxy safer, *everyone* had to suffer—even Sith Lords.

And so there would be no angry outbursts when he confronted the Moff's over their unauthorized adventures, no demonstration killings, no Force chokings or threats to have his fleets attack theirs, no intimidation of any sort. There would be no consequences at all, for how were they to know of the worrisome things he had been seeing in his Force visions lately—the Mandalorian maniacs and the burning asteroids, his uncle's inescapable gaze—if he failed to *tell* them? Whether blunder or master stroke, the taking of the Roche system was as much his doing as the Moff's', Caedus saw now, and he was beyond punishing others for his mistakes. Starting today, Darth Caedus was going to rule not through anger or fear or even bribery, but as every true Sith Lord should, through patience and love and . . . pain.

Caedus finally crested the winding pedramp he had been ascending and found himself looking down a long tubular tunnel coated in the gray-yellow foamcrete the Verpine reserved for their royal warrens. At the far end—guarding one of the shiny new *beskar*-alloy blast hatches that had done absolutely nothing to stop the Remnant's aerosol attack—stood a squad of white-armored stormtroopers. Their gray-striped shoulder plates identified them as members of the Imperial Elite Guard, and the two tripod-mounted E-Webs set along the walls suggested they were serious about preventing unauthorized access to the chamber beyond.

The stormtroopers were still turning in his direction, no doubt trying to decide whether the single black-clad figure striding toward them was anything to be alarmed about, when Caedus raised a gloved hand and made a grasping motion. The squad leader raised his own hand as though returning the greeting—then was knocked off his feet as both E-Web supply cables tore free of the power generators and came flying down the corridor with weapon and tripod bouncing along behind them.

The remainder of the squad swiftly moved to firing positions, dropping to a knee in the middle of the corridor or pressing themselves against the tunnel wall, and brought their blaster rifles to their shoulders. Caedus sent a surge of Force energy sizzling down the corridor, reducing the electronic opticals inside their helmets to a blizzard

of static. They opened fire anyway, but most of the bolts went wide, and those that did not Caedus deflected with the occasional flick of a hand.

He was still ten paces away when the squad leader pulled his helmet off and, bringing his weapon to bear, began yelling for the others to do the same. Caedus raised his arm, catching the leader's bolts on his palm and deflecting them harmlessly down the tunnel. As the second and third man prepared to open fire, he flicked a finger toward the leader's blaster and sent it spinning into them. It slammed the second man into the wall and knocked the third's weapon from his hands.

Caedus summoned the leader forward with two fingers, using the Force to bring the astonished soldier flying into his grasp.

"I have no intention of harming anyone beyond that door," Caedus said, making his voice deep and commanding. "But I have no time to waste, so I won't hesitate to kill *you* or your men. I trust that won't be necessary?"

The sergeant's eyes bulged as though his throat were actually being squeezed shut—which it was not—and his face paled to the color of his armor.

"N-n-no, sir. N-not at all." The sergeant motioned for his men to lower their weapons. "S-s-sorry."

"No apologies necessary, Sergeant," Caedus said. "Obviously, you haven't been informed of the new chain of command."

Caedus set the sergeant's boots back on the tunnel floor, then turned to look at each of the others in the squad. He made it appear that he was requiring each man to look into his yellow eyes, but actually he was Force-probing their emotions, looking for any hint of anger or resentment that suggested there might be a hero in the group. He was down to the last two when he sensed a fist of resolve tightening inside one.

"Don't do it, trooper," he said. "There aren't enough good soldiers in the Alliance as it is."

The fist of resolve immediately began to loosen, but the trooper wasn't too surprised to say, "With all due respect, *Colonel*, we're *not* Alliance soldiers."

"Not yet." Caedus gave him a warm smile and turned toward the blast hatch, presenting his back to the entire squad. "My escorts will be along shortly. Don't start a firefight with them."

When he felt the squad leader motion the hero and everyone else to lower their weapons, Caedus nodded his approval without turning around. Then he circled his hand in front of the blast door, using the Force to send a surge of energy through its internal circuitry until a series of sharp clicks announced that the locking mechanisms had retracted. A moment later, a loud hiss sounded from inside the heavy hatch, and it slid aside into the wall.

Caedus stepped through without hesitation and found himself looking down on a sunken conference pit where a couple dozen Imperial Moffs—most of the survivors of the slaughter aboard the *Bloodfin*—were rising to their feet, some reaching for their sidearms and others looking for a place to take cover. Across from them, a small swarm of insectoid administrators from other Verpine hives squatted on their haunches, their shiny heads cocked in confusion and their mandibles spread wide in an instinctive threat display.

“No, please.” Caedus extended his arms toward the Moffs and motioned for them to return to their seats—using the Force to compel obedience. “Don’t get up on my account.”

The Moffs dropped almost as one. Most landed in the chairs they had been occupying, but a couple missed and landed on the floor. Several of the aides standing behind the Moffs’ chairs were pointing holdout blasters in his direction, looking to their superiors for some hint as to whether they should open fire or stand down. Caedus swept his arm up and sent them all flying out of the conference pit onto the surrounding service floor.

“I’m afraid this will be a confidential conversation,” he said.

“Leave us.”

When the aides did not instantly obey, he gestured at one of those who had been pointing a blaster at him and sent the man tumbling out the hatch.

“Now.”

The remainder of the aides scrambled for the door, many without bothering to stand. Caedus watched them go, his attention divided between them and the Moffs, ready to pin motionless anyone who even thought about raising a weapon. Once the aides were gone, a simple glance was all it took to send the Verpine administrators scuttling after them, leaving him and the Moffs alone with a single huge Verpine with age-silvered eyebulbs and a translucent patch on her thorax where the carahide was growing thin. She showed no inclination to rise from her position at the far end of the conference table, where...

Users Review

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