

# THE DOMINARI REBELLION

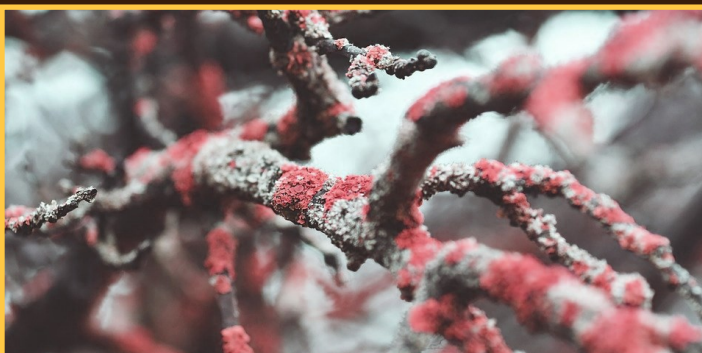


## THE GROWING DIVIDE

By the late 9th century, the Empire's golden age began to tarnish. A series of natural disasters on several planets strained imperial resources and slowed trade routes, leading to widespread supply shortages on many worlds. As the Guardians sent their best to remedy the crises, a new bacterial infection on Arbora devastated its flora and its populations. A series of scandals within The Order of The Light – all involving adherents who had fallen to the temptation of their Shadows – abruptly threw the immaculate reputation of the Order into question. Though the guilty parties were expelled, the scandals highlighted a growing ambivalence among the Guardians toward the threats The Shadows posed.

### THE HUNGRY DEATH

“THE ‘HUNGRY DEATH’ IS THE NICKNAME GIVEN TO THE BACTERIAL INFECTION THAT DEVASTATED ARBORA IN THE YEARS BEFORE THE REBELLION. NOW KNOWN TO BE A NATURAL MUTATION OF A NATIVE BACTERIA, THE RESULTING INFECTION DEVASTATED LIFE ON THE PLANET – ESPECIALLY ITS SHUMI POPULATION. WHEN THE EMPIRE AND THE GUARDIAN ORDER FAILED TO ACT WITH ANY MEANINGFUL RESPONSE (AFTER ALL, WHAT COULD WE DO?) MANY SAW THE EXPERIENCE AS PROOF OF THE EMPIRE’S WEAKENING STATUS AND THE ORDER’S GROWING INEFFECTIVENESS...”



RED LICHEN-LIKE GROWTHS – COMMON EARLY SYMPTOMS OF THE SO-CALLED “HUNGRY DEATH.”

Across the Empire, sizable uprisings began to protest the Guardian's exhausted responses to each of these matters. Peaceful demonstrations began across many worlds, calling for reform and action within the Empire. When these pleas went unanswered, some turned to violence. The most extreme voices called for the removal of the Guardians from interplanetary politics altogether.

For the first time, the Vindori leadership began to realize that the continuation of the Empire could only come with widespread political change. Setting aside their beloved traditions, the highest-ranking Vindori masters began to call for sweeping government reforms in order to preserve the Empire and its stability. Chief among the changes was the demand for greater political participation by those outside the Order. They further recommended greater influence of the Senate, pulling power away from the Dominari.

### A CHANGE IN PHILOSOPHY

“SAY WHAT YOU WILL ABOUT THE STUBBORN NATURE OF THE VINDORI, BUT THE FACT THAT WE WERE ABLE TO SET ASIDE THE NEED TO PRESERVE TRADITION AND STATUS-QUO IN THE NAME OF PRESERVING THE GREATER EMPIRE WAS TRULY A BIG DEAL. I’M NOT SAYING WE SHOULD ALL GET A MEDAL, BUT I MEAN... C’MON, IT’S LIKE THE FIRST TIME WE WEREN’T THE STICKS IN THE MUD...”

As a collective whole, the Dominari staunchly disagreed, arguing that the resolution of the Empire's concerns could only be remedied by an expansion of the emperor's power and trust in the longstanding Dominari leadership. The emperor — Lucius II — accused the Vindori of abandoning their own principles, forsaking centuries of tradition for the whims of the public. The two political factions quickly entrenched themselves in their positions, hampering further efforts to resolve the problems that still plagued the common people.

In 895, the emperor attempted to seize the opportunity for greater power. He issued an imperial decree which gave him and his successors absolute power and

subsequently stripped the Senate of its own. The Vindori leaders – rallying much of the Senate behind them – vetoed the decree almost immediately. Ignoring the emperor and with a firm majority of support behind them, the Vindori countered with a series of new laws. They asserted the emperor’s constitutional responsibilities, elevated the status of the Congress of Planets, and demanded the election of any future monarchs by the Senate itself. Lucius II was furious, but ultimately powerless to resist. While Dominari senators attempted to denounce the moves, their calls were widely ignored by all but their most devout allies.

## THE REBELLION BEGINS

When Lucius II died in 898, the first Imperial Election was held. The Dominari nominated Lucius’s chosen successor and former right-hand – Grand Master Ra’Vana – and expected the Vindori-led coalition to offer their support for the sake of historical tradition. They did not.

The Vindori instead nominated one of their own, Master Decius Sophia, a well-respected human with a strong history of service to the Guardians and the Empire. Decius was wildly popular both within the Order and outside of it. When the election was finally held, Decius controlled nearly two-thirds of the Senate’s votes. The first Vindori emperor had been elected.

### EMPEROR DECIUS SOPHIA

“DECIUS WAS A WELL-LOVED AND CHARISMATIC LEADER WITH A HISTORY THAT INVOLVED SUCCESSFUL ANTI-INSURGENCY CAMPAIGNS ON SEVERAL WORLDS. HE WAS A CUNNING POLITICIAN, THOUGH I WOULDN’T PUT HIM IN MY LEADERSHIP TOP TEN BY ANY STRETCH. FORTUNATELY HE PROVED EXACTLY THAT THE GALXY NEEDED WHEN THE REBELLION BROKE OUT...”

The Dominari were furious, immediately withdrawing their participation in the Senate and demanding that every member of their Sect denounce the new regime. Across the Empire, Dominari knights abandoned their posts while masters and students left their academies. The remaining Sects of the Order called an immediate meeting of the Master Council, concluding that the Ordo Dominari had – en masse – succumbed to their own Shadow of ambition and lust for power. They condemned the Dominari for their selfishness but still offered them the opportunity to make amends and return.

The Dominari leadership refused, instead seizing control of the human planet of Titus and its rich supply of resources. Master Ra’Vana quickly declared himself to be the First Emperor of the Dominari Empire and reorganized his supporters into legions of protectors. Needing to act, Decius summoned the five loyal Sects to Sellonae to prepare for a war unlike anything before it.

Much to the Order’s dismay, the Bellati were notably missing from the multitudes of knights and masters that rallied at the capital. Much as the Dominari had done, the Bellati had given in to their lust for destruction, falling victim to their own Shadows. Their new warships – the largest and most well-armed of the entire Imperial navy – rushed to protect their new Dominari allies. Even a sizeable population from the Ouiori School likewise abandoned The Order, swayed by the Dominari promise to rebuild the ailing world of Arbora even as conflict loomed on the horizon. The Shadow was growing.

### A BEND IN THE LIGHT

“SAGES STILL DON’T FULLY UNDERSTAND WHAT HAPPENED DURING THE REBELLION, BUT MOST WOULD CONCLUDE THAT THE LIGHT ITSELF SOMEHOW BENT, BRINGING BOTH THE BELLATI AND ESPECIALLY THE DOMINARI WITH IT. THEIR FALL TO SHADOW DOESN’T APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN A MATTER OF CHOICE (WHICH IS WHY THEY COLLECTIVELY TURNED) BUT RATHER A FORCE BEYOND ANYTHING THEY COULD PERSONALLY RESIST...”

Decius’s first invasion of Titus was a tremendous tactical failure. Thousands of Guardians perished, unable to counter the strength of Bellati prowess and a deeply defended position. His Venefari advisors urged patience and trust in The Light, which tested Decius’s own faith. Accepting his weakened state, he called for the fortification of the Empire’s Core Worlds, waiting to see Ra’Vana’s next move.

That next move proved to be swift and strong. Unable to accept the leadership of only a single planet, Ra’Vana hungered for the power he claimed was rightfully his. Coaxed by his own Shadows, Ra’Vana’s fleet began an aggressive campaign of conquest. Within months, twelve of the Outer Worlds had fallen, victims of brutally-efficient planetary invasions achieved through widespread mental manipulation. Though most of the populations were spared, infrastructure and defenses were left in ruin. The Dominari and Bellati invasions were only min-

imally opposed, with the bulk of Imperial forces having been recalled to defend the Core.

## THE TIDE TURNS

Maintaining patience proved valuable for Emperor Decius as the time for a bold counterattack soon presented itself. Having repaired the bulk of the Imperial Navy, the Vindori-led forces planet-hopped to strike at the heart of Dominari space – the planet of Titus. Ousting the invaders and restoring imperial leadership, they cut off key supply lines and arrested top Dominari leaders. Though Ra’Vana managed to escape, the liberation of Titus proved a decisive turning point.

Almost immediately, Decius turned his attention to the other planets of Human Space, reconquering them with relative ease. Despite the initial speed of their attack, the Dominari had overextended themselves considerably, leaving their defensive resources grossly out-matched by the united Imperial front. When the human systems were safely under Imperial control once again, they continued to push back Dominari borders, taking back planets one by one. Slowly but surely, the might of the enemy wore thin.

In the final month of 899, the Imperial Fleet engaged the remainder of the Rebel armada over Myssryn.

Though both sides were virtually matched in strength and numbers, the Dominari and Bellati warships were well-protected by the planet’s defensive orbital stations.

As both sides readied for open combat, Supreme Master Arn Tavar led a collection of Venefari mystics to reach deep into the power of The Light. The largest cruiser and flagship of the rebel fleet – *The Inevitable* – was commanded by the Bellati Admiral Lora Fa, a former Imperial hero. Concentrating on Fa’s own connection to The Light, the mystics were able to conjure an apparition of Master Arn aboard *The Inevitable’s* command bridge. Speaking as though the two stood beside each other, Arn encouraged Fa to abandon the Shadow that now engulfed her and regain her honor. The Supreme Master encouraged the Admiral to recall her oaths and beckoned her to once more defend the rightful Empire. As several of the mystics succumbed to exhaustion, the connection was severed. The results of Master Arn’s ploy seemed questionable at best.

Yet as the opposing fleets began to move toward each other, *The Inevitable* stood its ground. While Dominari ships continued to accelerate, the Bellati vessels slowed to match the flagship. Moments later, all of the Bellati vessels began to fire their weapons. To the surprise of both sides, their missiles and plasma fire rained down on the closest Dominari vessels, destroying them

**THE INEVITABLE, THE FLAGSHIP OF THE BELLATI FLEET AND COMMAND SHIP OF ADMIRAL LORA FA.**





within moments. The rebel fleet was thrown into instant chaos. With the Imperial Fleet before them and the Bellati cruisers behind them, the Dominari ships realized the futility of their position and moved to retreat. As quickly as they could, they began to jump away, leaving The Sellonian Empire in full control of the planet and the galaxy itself. The Battle of Myssryn was over, and the Dominari Rebellion had been utterly crushed.

## THE WOUNDS OF WAR

“MOST PLANETS ENDURED DAMAGES AND HORRORS DURING THE DOMINARI REBELLION, BUT FEW COULD COMPARE TO MYSSRYN. AS THE DOMINARI FLEET CRUMBLED AND RETREATED, ITS DAMAGED SHIPS RAINED DOWN ON THE PLANET AND — IN SEVERAL CASES — DETONATED OVER POPULATION CENTERS. THE PLANET STILL STRUGGLES WITH ECOLOGICAL DISASTERS AND RAMPANT POLITICAL DISTRUST...”

## THE VINDORI DYNASTY

Now in full control of a re-united Empire, the Vindored government could turn its attention to mending the wounds the Rebellion had opened. The Bellati were welcomed back into The Light with open arms, though a great number of their highest officials had resigned and exiled themselves in disgrace. An air of distrust would still be felt for a generation. Ouiori defectors were similarly welcomed back, instantly turning their attention to repairing the flora and fauna of war-torn worlds. Healing Arbora was of particular concern; despite promises to the contrary, the Dominari had never made any efforts to seek out a solution for the blight. With the return to peace, Medicari scientists successfully developed an effective cure, saving millions of lives and billions of acres of Arbora forest.

For the next twenty years, Decius ruled with great strength and dignity, showing The Empire that the path forward no longer depended on the Dominari. Though the galaxy was still far from a return to The Empire’s Golden Age, peace and prosperity had returned once more. Vindori reforms gave more power to the Senate — which now represented only the remaining Five Sects — and elevated the Congress of Planets as an equally-powerful legislative body. When Decius died in 919, his granddaughter — Laevinia — was elected to the Imperial Throne. Though Laevinia was also a member

of the Vindori school, she was elected purely for her skills and political savvy. While some bemoaned the beginnings of a new Vindori monopoly of power, few could deny the stability and success the new era had ushered in.

Almost immediately after the end of the Rebellion, Guardian academies began to notice a strange phenomenon across The Empire. As new initiates were sworn into The Order, none of them exhibited traits that called them into the Dominari School. Venefari sages declared that The Light had shifted and self-corrected, exiling the Dominari from its influence. With the whereabouts of the Dominari Fleet still unknown — with the false Emperor Ra’Vana presumably with them — this news presented a welcome relief. Without the power of The Light to guide them, the Dominari would be hard-pressed to exert their power once more. The Empire was safe once again.

The year is 923 OL, and Her Majesty Empress Laevinia IV rules over the Sellonian Empire.



*The new Official Crest of the United Sellonian Empire, as it has existed since 898.*