



Thrawn: Alliances

Timothy Zahn

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Grand Admiral Thrawn and Darth Vader ally against a threat to the Empire in this new novel from bestselling author Timothy Zahn.

The sequel to *New York Times* bestseller *Thrawn*, *Thrawn: Alliances* will continue to follow the rise of Grand Admiral Thrawn to the heights of Imperial power—and accompany him into the past, witnessing his first encounter with the man who will one day become Darth Vader.

Thrawn: Alliances Details

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From Reader Review Thrawn: Alliances for online ebook

Landry says

I felt Zahn spread himself too thin on this one. The multiple timelines hindered the progression of the overall story, and I never felt really invested in the Thrawn/Vader present timeline. It was also heavy on filler content that wasn't all that consequential - drawn out battle scenes, figuring out how to escape from a cell, etc.

All in all, a considerable step down from the first book--one of my favorites in the new canon--and simply not up to par with the quality we're accustomed to with Zahn.

Daniel says

I miss the Expanded Universe. This reads like a cartoon script. When measured against the four Expanded Universe Thrawn books it is disappointing.

When you walk in to a library you have around four different types of fiction: Young Children's, Grade Schooler novels, Young Adult and Adult. Previously, Star Wars had appropriate books for all the different ages of its fans. Now, novels that are below the level of current YA are being sold to adults. Disney needs to get wise that high level readers can tell the difference between what they were receiving prior to its acquisition of Star Wars and what is being published now.

Disney is killing fans slowly. In their first Canon Thrawn book, we find the character is now a really nice guy. In the last book of the Expanded Universe Thrawn trilogy, we see the Noghri Rukh in an ending worthy of "The Godfather." In this book, non cartoon watchers, meet the new Rukh- an annoying comic sidekick. What happened?

Strangely, Disney will sometimes continue to receive my money for books- and Mr. Zahn too'- but for "Legends" labeled books. I can't stand the simplistic writing of Canon.

EvilWebBoy says

Thrawn: Alliances (Star Wars: Thrawn #2) by Timothy Zahn

Timothy Zahn does a great job of keeping us guessing while building up Grand Admiral Thrawn's reputation as a master tactician!

He also keeps the tension between Emperor Palpatine's top 2 Agents of The Empire continuous through the novel.

Thrawn is always a couple of moves ahead of his opponents, and finds a way to keep Darth Vader from going on murderous rampages, while discovering a threat to the Empire.

Eric Allen says

I'm having an extremely hard time getting into this one. The majority of the book, thus far, has been made up of flashbacks about Anakin Skywalker looking for a disappeared Padme Amidala... Okaaaaaaay, why am I

reading about Anakin Skywalker in a book about Grand Admiral Thrawn? I don't particularly like Anakin Skywalker as a character outside of the Clone Wars TV series. No one ever portrays him as, in any way, likable. The tragedy of Darth Vader is that Anakin Skywalker was supposed to be the best of the best. He was supposed to be the greatest hero of the Republic. We never see that supposed hero in any of the movies. He's a whiney, self-absorbed douchelord, so when he falls to the dark side, it's really no surprise. It's not shocking. You know exactly why he fell to the dark side. It's because he's a whiney, self-absorbed douchelord. (and for the record, both Firefox and Grammarly recognize "douchelord" as an actual word) It's not because the best of the best was tempted, it's because one of the worst was tempted, and didn't have very far to fall. That, in my opinion, was George Lucas' biggest mistake with the prequels. This mistake was rectified in the Clone Wars TV series. Anakin in that series is charming, charismatic, heroic, brave, loyal to the Republic, his fellow Jedi, and the clone troopers under his command, has a sense of humor, and he's often selfless. He IS the best of the best, but he's also shown to have flaws. He has a bit of a temper, and he sees nothing wrong with killing an enemy to remove the threat that enemy poses forever. Which kind of freaks out the rest of the Jedi around him sometimes. It comes as a HUGE shock that THIS Anakin would fall to the dark side. Unfortunately, NONE of the authors that write books about his character use THAT portrayal of Anakin. They usually use the character shown in the movies, and unfortunately, THAT Anakin is a completely unlikeable crybaby.

When you don't like or don't care about the characters, it is VERY hard to enjoy a story about them. I do not like Anakin as he is portrayed in the movies, and that is the portrayal that Timothy Zahn is using for his character in this book. I was SO into the first book of this trilogy. Learning about how Thrawn worked his way through the ranks to become a Grand Admiral. Watching a young woman work her way up in the Imperial hierarchy to become a very terrifying, and believable villain. Watching Thrawn's buddy, through loyalty to Thrawn, finally, reach what he's dreamed of all his life. These were things I loved and wanted more of. That was what I was looking forward to. This book has none of those things, so far. It has been about 70% flashback to a completely unlikable character, and 30% not all that great a portrayal of Darth Vader sort of messing around with Thrawn on a completely pointless mission thus far. There is a reason that I have read one, and only one, book from the Clone Wars era of Star Wars. I just don't find the period of time to be very interesting. Outside of the Clone Wars series, which is awesome and every Star Wars fan should watch, it's kind of a very boring part of Star Wars lore, that is rife with contradictions and stupidity, because George Lucas was so set on making a combined homage to Asimov's Foundation and End of Eternity, that he didn't really stop to think about how all of the elements fit together.

I don't know, I might not even finish this one. It is VERY hard to care when the majority of the book has focused on characters that I don't like, in a time period I find boring. I'll give it a few more chapters to figure out what it's doing. I really hate to dump a Star Wars book by Timothy Zahn, but man, this one really isn't doing it for me.

Uhg, taking a break from this one to reread some Asimov, maybe then I can come back and plow through the terrible characters in this book.

Dennis Keithly says

Thrawn Alliances is a hard book to judge. I've always enjoyed Zahn's plots when it comes to novels featuring Zahn. This book has some rather interesting developments for Thrawn, Anakin, and the Republic during the Clone Wars. Plus, there is a second time line that takes place during the time of the Rebels television show

between the third and fourth seasons. As one might expect, each plot line holds clues for the other.

However, as great as the plot and some of the twists are, some of the other parts of his novels aren't as great. When I started this book, I mentally noted that at some point main characters will get captured, and they will construct an elaborate method of escape. This is kind of a hallmark of Zahn's work. Sure enough, it happened. In addition, the story occasionally bogs down with scenes that take pages where a few sentences or a paragraph would suffice. For instance, at one point, Padme is floating down a river and attempting to evade detection by the enemy. This goes on too long.

Speaking of Padme, I liked her portrayal in this novel. She has the "get it done" attitude Star Wars fans come to expect from the prequels and The Clone Wars. I also liked Thrawn. He is famous for his intellect and powers of deduction. I felt many of his observations were warranted. There were some where he need not have made Anakin, Darth Vader, or Padme play the guessing game of how he knew what he knew. Darth Vader was a mixed bag. In parts, he was the fierce Sith warrior readers would expect. In other places, he wasn't as impressive as one would hope. Frequently, he was caught off guard by Thrawn's intellect. It seems like he should be more of an equal to Thrawn in his own way.

As for Anakin, he was about as impulsive as one would expect. He was also brash. However, I felt that he too suffered in Thrawn's shadow. As cool as Thrawn is, a novel that features Anakin/Darth Vader as prominently as this one did should have made the Dark Lord of the Sith a little less a Watson to Thrawn's Holmes. In addition, it would have been enjoyable to see Anakin simply unleash with his saber in combat instead of frequently rely on tricks and McGuyver like tactics so often.

This book was marketed as featuring Batuu and Blackspire Outpost. This is the setting of Disney's new Star Wars theme park opening in 2019. While Batuu was in the book, it didn't really get a chance to shine. Most of the truly important action occurs elsewhere. It didn't seem like the Blackspire Outpost really had a chance to develop character.

One of the strengths of the book was the First Legion. These were troopers pulled from the 501st to work with Vader. Rukh, Thrawn's Noghri assassin, is also featured. These characters shined. Their combat scenes were a lot of fun. There were also some space combat scenes that I enjoyed.

Overall, this is a worthwhile read. It is hard to grade. I'd say 3.5 stars is about right with the high point being the overall plot and the low point some of the action scenes.

Khurram says

A very good book and continuation of Thrawn's legend/legacy. If I am a little disappointed it is because as good as this book was, it is simply with Timothy Zahn writing Thrawn and Vader I did not want good I was expecting great. However Very good is very good.

This book is set in two time periods. Going back to the line in the first book where a meeting between, then General Anakin Skywalker and Thrawn, during the Clone Wars was mentioned. The majority of this book takes place in that era, as well as the current problem. One thing I like very much in this book is Zahn's writing the differences between Anakin and Vader, and how Vader refers to the memories of Anakin as "the Jedi's". Zahn also did a great job of showing the precognition powers the Force sensitive use. As the story progresses I saw the reason for this.

The second era that this book is set in is right after Season 3 of Star Wars Rebels, right after Thrawn's biggest defeat to date. So his standing and loyalty is in question. There is a lot of verbal sparing and jockeying for the number 2 position in the Empire between Thrawn and Vader. Usually with Thrawn coming out on top. However there is a great deal of respect between the two the telling point of that is Thrawn was still alive as Vader is not known for his patience.

There are elements taken from other Star Wars pre-Disney era books. One of the ideas come from the Golden Age of the Sith comic series where a couple of Force sensitives found another way to earn a living out of their talents, and a material that has not been used in the Disney era as of yet, as well some more of the behind the scenes of Order 66.

A very good book, that is slightly slow in places. I think this was the only stumbling block for me as with Vader in the book I was expecting a lot more action in the book. Though the lack of fights did show Vader's other skills that are sometimes forgotten because of his fearsome reputation and displays of power.

Nicole Pramik says

[Update 7/1/18] And...we have some awesome new artwork!

Thrawn fangirls, you're most welcome. ;)

I'm so glad that Timothy Zahn has decided to continue penning more Thrawn novels, especially with the Grand Admiral serving as the books' star. Grand Admiral Thrawn is my number one favorite fictional villain, so naturally I can't wait for this! Summer 2018 will be #BlackandBlue - blue for Thrawn, of course, and black for...well, another famous *Star Wars* baddie. ;)

Aristotle says

The Force Is Not Strong With This One

This was ultimately a disappointment.

My 5th Timothy Zahn book, this was the only one i didn't give four or five stars.
To put it simply it wasn't a good story.

The relationship between Darth Vader and Thrawn was a big let down.

"Your actions are treasonous" Darth Vader

"Trust me" Thrawn

This was said over and over.

Vader acted like a whiny child. " I'm telling the Emperor your allegiance doesn't lie with the Empire" Na na na

Thrawn was his typical Sherlock Chiss, Vader and Anikan were his Watson, always trying to figure out what Sherlock sees.

Thrawn/Anikan/Padme part of the story was underwhelming.

What's with Anikan's 'Double Vision'? Fill my eyes with that double vision. No disguise for the forces double vision.

It was too slow and the relationship between Anikan and Thrawn wasn't fully fleshed out.

Always nice to visit the Star Wars world but this trip wasn't as much fun as the previous ones.

DiscoSpacePanther says

What can I say? My favourite Star Wars author given another round with the best villain of the Empire era - and not only that, he's allowed to play with the best spaceship in all of Star Wars!

A brief rundown: we have two timeframes. First, towards the end of the clone wars, Anakin Skywalker and Thrawn must team up to find Padmé, who has failed to check in whilst on a covert mission on the planet Batuu. Second, Darth Vader and Thrawn must work together to overcome a threat that the Emperor has foreseen originating from the planet Batuu.

This is the first time I've read a book where Timothy Zahn has tackled either Anakin or Vader, and he manages to get to the crux of their characters very well: Anakin is impetuous, with conflicted loyalties between his overwhelming concern for Padmé and his duty towards the Republic; Vader, on the other hand, remains solidly obsessed with his loyalty to the Emperor.

Thrawn is, well, *Thrawn*! He is as Thrawnlike as ever, and it is as enjoyable as ever.

Also, Padmé gets an opportunity to shine in this story. I was worried that it would be a plot element where Anakin has to rescue her, but that never actually happens - she is capable and resourceful and gets a crowning moment of awesome when she uses her personal weapon against an apparently impervious foe.

The only real flaw in this book is perhaps the fact that Thrawn's deductions are again always flawless. It would have been nice to see him tentatively starting out on his Holmsian career, and making the odd mistake - but he never really does, so we get to miss out on that potential character element.

That one small niggle aside, I can say that I really enjoyed this Star Wars novel. Zahn's usage of the TIE Defender is wonderful to read, partly because I've wanted to see this happen since I first played the TIE Fighter game way back in the '90s, and partly because the TIE Defender is just awesome - no need to say more. Except there is more - we even get to have Darth Vader piloting a TIE Defender, just like in the *Treachery at Ottega* missions from the game. I was solidly in uncritical fanboy mode when that happened! And then we have Darth Vader stating that these early production TIE Defenders need to be faster and more heavily armed (let's hope they eventually get given ion cannons in canon, too)!

The rest of the Zahn trademarks were there (except Mara - she's still not re-canonised!) - Rukh the noghri assassin; capable stormtrooper squads; mysterious and threatening aliens from the Unknown Regions. Zahn even manages to get Anakin to say "Point!" at one moment in the story.

I enjoyed that so much - and I hope Zahn gets to write some more Thrawn Star Wars. Highly recommended to all Star Wars fans.

Casey Trowbridge says

I was very excited for this novel when it was announced. Perhaps that is part of the problem. I admit that I haven't been the biggest fan of the new canon novels up to this point. I have enjoyed those written by Claudia Gray and last year's Thrawn novel but in general I've found the new canon lacking something. For the first time since I've been reading Star Wars literature I could not get invested in a novel written by Timothy Zahn and featuring Thrawn as a character. That's why I say perhaps high expectations are to blame.

I tried to care about the story and I just couldn't I found the portion set during the Clone Wars to be particularly boring. The stuff with Thrawn and Vader was a little more interesting but that wasn't a high bar to clear.

I guess I'm tired of stories that feature Imperials with competing interests. It was a thread in last year's Thrawn novel and has been a subplot in a lot of the new canon novels including: A New Dawn, Tarkin and 'Lords of the Sith'. It is getting to the point where I start to wonder why the Rebel Alliance didn't just wait for the Empire to fight itself out of existence.

I will say that I enjoyed the sections that showed the Storm Troopers in action. The Empire did have capable troopers, who knew?

I listened to the audiobook and Marc Thompson is a hero. This is hardly the first Star Wars novel I have only managed to finish because of his performance and talents. Sadly, I don't expect that this will be the last Star Wars novel that I finish only because of the performance of Marc Thompson.

Perhaps in a couple of years I will listen to this novel and enjoy it more but for right now it is just okay. I don't think that reading this book is essential to appreciate either Vader or Thrawn as characters.

Anne says

Mood: checking this page almost every day to see if the release date has come yet. I really just need to put it on my calendar. hahaha

Taylor says

How the flying fuck did I not know about this book?? I NEED IT NOW.

Scott says

Since I read the first book before I started using Goodreads, for some context I would like to add that the first book would have been a four star review for me, with the general feeling that it was a great start in the same vein as the Hornblower books.

Zahn really has a tough job in a number of ways:

1. He has to "reimagine" his own character in a way that's not strictly beholden to the old EU portrayal and distinct enough to stand on its own in new canon... all the while without confusing or alienating fans.
2. He has to work within the confines of the new canon and Lucasfilm's continuity plans -- this is made somewhat more difficult since he's:
 - a. Working within the timeline between Rebels and Rogue One/ANH
 - b. Working with Darth Vader and also the Clone Wars-era Anakin Skywalker
 - c. Juggling with portrayals of Thrawn in Rebels
3. Zahn, as an author, also has to deal with the inevitable problem of being a normal person attempting to write about a super genius.

With respect to items 1 and 2, I actually wrote "I do want to recognize that books will often not present revolutionary storylines simply because they can't damage the prime canon" in my review of Moebius Squared and I still think that's a good summation of the basic issue with modern Star Wars literature.

I think -- until proven wrong, hopefully! -- that modern Star Wars literature under the aegis of a Lucasfilm actively developing the property can, at best, only hope to deepen the appreciation of certain events in films and live-action TV (if it comes). So that's one of my primary criteria for looking at this book with a critical eye.

The other is, of course, the eponymous character of Thrawn -- how is he written? How does he develop? Is he used compellingly enough to support a third volume?

This book has two storylines that are used to demonstrate the dichotomy of the Force in a lot of ways; the first storyline follows Anakin Skywalker in the Clone Wars era, while the second follows Darth Vader just after the Rebels era.

Already there is an immediate dichotomy being set up, and it's only reinforced by Anakin's (or Vader's) actions in each timeline.

Additionally, the storylines themselves also physically intersect, providing Vader with the proper stimuli to encourage him to react and speak about past events, reinforcing the intersection for the reader.

Now, at this point in the review, you might be saying "Well, Anakin Vader Vader Vader, that's fine, but this is a Thrawn book, so what about Thrawn?"

That's the essential problem I have with this book and the reason it only gets three stars: Thrawn functions mainly as a foil for Vader and a poor one at that. There's very little development of Thrawn as a character or for his background.

Additionally, this book is ostensibly a continuation of Thrawn's storyline from Rebels, but that leads to another issue -- the book generally hinges on knowledge of Thrawn's appearances in Rebels to deepen interest in itself. Rather than standing on its own (or on the shoulders of the previous book), it's a "sequel" to

the TV show. So if you haven't seen his appearances in Rebels, many of the references made to them in this book will fall flat.

Thrawn's portrayal is diminished compared to the first book because of this, but also because he's essentially become an embodiment of the omniscient third-person narrator.

In the first book, Thrawn's perception and deductive abilities were portrayed much like Sherlock Holmes's in both the Robert Downey Jr. and Benedict Cumberbatch versions, with italicized passages summing up clues and flashes of perception.

Here, it's the same, but the passages are generally what a third-person omniscient narrator would use to describe people and what they're doing if the narrator were a poor author -- which I know for a fact that Zahn is not.

But it does come across as a narrative shortcut and crutch. Thrawn's observations in this book generally seem to fall into three categories:

1. Omniscient: he sees something and makes an observation to introduce knowledge the reader does not know and could never have known
2. Obvious: he sees something not shown to the reader and comes to an obvious conclusion
3. Narrative: he sees something and that observation is used as narration to introduce the reader to an obvious conclusion

You'll notice that none of these three types of observations are genius-level or even entertaining, but rather different narrative tools, which is why I think of Thrawn in this book as a simple third-person omniscient narrator made into a character.

One of the most common examples of 3 is the "present" (post-Rebels) storyline Thrawn observing some character revealing their nervousness or lack of knowledge. It's boring, it's not genius, and it really doesn't add much to the story compared to normal narration of someone sweating nervously or twitching.

So what we end up in this book is a story about Anakin Skywalker, how his actions foreshadow the birth of Darth Vader, how Darth Vader thinks of Anakin Skywalker, and what kind of person the man behind the mask is. This story is driven by Thrawn's narration and bloodhound-like chase after a mystery in both timelines.

After reading this book, I know a lot more about Darth Vader, and not much more about Thrawn. This deepens a lot of the things that Darth Vader appears in, but that's really not the point of a series about Thrawn. The only bright light here is that I can only hope that Thrawn's story and character have become a bit "untouchable" because he's due to appear in the cinematic universe... which is unlikely.

I would have liked this book a lot more if it had been released as a stand-alone under the title Darth Vader: Alliances.

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

4 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum <https://bibliosanctum.com/2018/08/07/...>

A Grand Admiral Thrawn and Darth Vader team-up? Yep, definitely one of the best ideas in the history of best ideas.

A typical buddy story though, this is not. Thrawn: Alliances is the sequel to the Thrawn, at the end of which our eponymous character meets the Dark Lord of the Sith himself. Following his defeat in season 3 of the animated Star Wars: Rebels, Thrawn is summoned by Emperor Palpatine to his throne room along with Darth Vader, where they are given a joint mission to investigate a force disturbance on the far-flung planet of Batuu. It would be a good learning experience for both of them, the Emperor reckons knowingly, watching his powerful apprentice and accomplished admiral comply reluctantly to his orders. Frequently at odds when it comes to matters of the Empire, Vader and Thrawn don't exactly make a picture-perfect partnership, but Palpatine also knows something no one else does: the two of them have worked together before.

Flashing back to a period set during the Clone Wars between Attack of the Clones and Revenge of the Sith, Anakin Skywalker says good bye to Padmé Amidala as she prepares to embark upon a clandestine diplomatic mission. After she goes missing, Anakin takes off in search of her, on the way encountering a mysterious officer of the Chiss Ascendancy named Commander Mitth'raw'nuruodo—Thrawn. Desperate to find his wife, Anakin decides to team up with him for the sake of efficiency, even though Thrawn's shadowy purposes in the system have yet to be figured out.

I confess, when I first discovered the duo timeline format of this novel, I groaned a little inside. I'm not a big fan of multiple timelines in books, and the last Star Wars book I read that utilized this device did not go so well. I've got to hand it to Zahn, though; the flashbacks sections were woven neatly through the narrative and he managed to juxtapose past and present smoothly, mirroring certain events and bringing important themes to the forefront. Speaking as someone who isn't all that enamored with the author's past work and thought the original Thrawn trilogy was a little overrated, I was actually quite impressed with the ingenious way the story of Thrawn: Alliances played out.

I also loved the dynamics between our two main characters. Readers got to experience the evolution and growth of Thrawn in the preceding volume, watching him rise through the ranks to become one of the most powerful figures in the Empire. This puts him nearly at the same level as Darth Vader in terms of influence and the attention he receives from Palpatine, resulting in a palpable undercurrent of resentment between the two powerhouses who are in constant competition for the Emperor's favor. Thrawn is still in repentant mode following his recent defeat, and Vader knows just how to twist the knife, using the incident to question the Chiss's loyalty to the Empire. Thrawn, however, is well aware of his own clout and is unconcerned with the accusations, proving himself to be one of the few people in the galaxy who can question the Sith Lord's orders without being immediately force-choked for his insolence.

In the Clone Wars timeline, the relationship between Thrawn and Anakin is a lot different. Young, brash, and impatient, Anakin is solely driven by his main objective to finding Padmé, and calm, logical Thrawn is the counterbalance to this impulsiveness. Though Anakin often chafes at Thrawn's more levelheaded suggestions, there is also a sense of grudging respect from the young Jedi for the Chiss commander's tactical thinking and strategic brilliance. The only aspect I didn't like about these past flashbacks is Padmé POV, which I thought got in the way of the relationship development between the two protagonists. Though I understand why her perspective would be needed, her chapters were slower comparatively to the action-

packed sections featuring Thrawn and Anakin who are like secret agents on a fact-finding mission to get to the bottom of her disappearance.

Following the recent trend of Star Wars novels exploring the world of the “bad guys”, Thrawn and Vader’s story also presents readers with an interesting point of view with regards to the inner workings of the Empire. Both characters have their own team of underlings, showing stark differences between their management styles and how they are viewed through the eyes of their respective subordinates. I also feel that this new Thrawn is more nuanced than his now-Legends counterpart. In the new canon, the grand admiral is portrayed as less evil, with good intentions and laudable qualities such as loyalty and respect to the men and women who work under him. While it would be a stretch to call him a good person since he still works for the Empire while admitting they are tyrannical, I can see how he could be considered a lawful neutral character—a respected opponent rather than a true villain. It’s a testament to Zahn’s skill, for he’s able to make Thrawn relatable and admirable, even if you don’t agree with his every move.

In sum, if you enjoyed the first Thrawn book of the new canon, then you’ll probably wish to pick up Thrawn: Alliances for the continuation of the character’s story arc. It’s a worthy sequel which I would also recommend to Star Wars fans, especially if you followed either Star Wars: Rebels or The Clone Wars animated series (the latter of which is going to be returning with a new season, as was recently announced). And of course, if you love the characters of Thrawn or Darth Vader, then this book is an absolute must-read.

Audiobook Comments: Another fantastic performance by the very talented Marc Thompson. His Darth Vader voice isn’t the best I’ve heard from a Star Wars narrator (that distinction would probably go to Jonathan Davis) but his Thrawn is pretty spot on. Listening to a Star Wars audiobook is always a treat.

Grace says

Just as fantastic, iconic™, and enjoyable as the first one.

ALRIGHT. Now for the spoilers. ??

As expected, there are two stories here: Anakin and Thrawn's team-up, probably set somewhere in season six of *The Clone Wars* after Ahsoka leaves the Jedi Order, and Vader and Thrawn's team-up, set shortly after the season three finale of *Star Wars: Rebels*. Both stories send them to the same Unknown Region planets, uncovering two halves of the same mystery decades apart.

Also as expected, Anakin and Thrawn are the absolute height of enjoyable ridiculousness together. The "Mitth'raw'nuruodo." "Mitth'raw'nuruodo." excerpt made it obvious that it was going to be so, and really what can you expect when you put two such extremely melodramatic people in the same room. They honestly make a great team, with Thrawn solving every scene like Sherlock Holmes and pointing Anakin exactly where he needs to go in order to inflict maximum damage.

Vader and Thrawn are a little harder to get a bead on. Ostensibly they are rivals, but Thrawn doesn't really participate in the rivalry. Vader starts off ready to FIGHT but over the course of the mission actually chills out as he realizes that he is the only one here with an axe to grind. It's actually enormous fun to watch them spar, and all their subordinates posture and compete. The transition from Thrawn chiding Anakin about his divided priorities, to Vader doing the same to Thrawn is a great contrast.

Also just I have to mention that, frankly, Thrawn is the best. He's just great. There's no two ways about it. He's amazing. Stunning. Incredible. Show stopping. Spectacular. Somehow he's ruthless and morally upright at the same time? Somehow he's uncompromising and demanding and yet simultaneously generous and patient? One of my favorite parts of this book was getting to see the up close contrast in the way Thrawn runs his command versus the way Vader does. It's fantastic and I love Thrawn so much.

There is only one real downside to this book: I miss my son Eli Vanto.

Some other highlights:

- Padme! She was awesome. She and Anakin make so much sense together honestly; they have the same way of going straight for a problem's throat.
- All of Anakin's fight scenes here were impressively cool, especially when half the time it's like Thrawn puts him in place and turns him on and he just *goes* like an unstoppable death whirlwind. And especially when we get to see Vader do some of the same things (puppeteering the body, puppeteering the suit) later, only BETTER.
- Thrawn constantly dragging Anakin. "You must be a Jedi. We know of two types of Force users, but the Sith are supposed to be skilled warriors." WOW. ICE COLD.
- Commodore Faro. Honestly, I loved seeing her and all the rest of the crew's interactions with Thrawn — how they all have complete faith in him and loyalty.
- Vader starting out hating the TIE Defender project just out of spite and then he flies one of them and is like HM. ACTUALLY. POWERFUL SHIPS GOOD.
- THE CHISS PERFORM SPACE NAVIGATION LIKE THE SPACING GUILD IN *DUNE*? EXCEPT USING THE FORCE INSTEAD OF SPICE? WHAT? Getting to see Vader doing this, also, was *hype*.
- Thrawn pretending he doesn't know all of Anakin's secrets, in both timelines. "Remember when we—" "I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT" "Oh, sorry, right, I meant when *Anakin Skywalker* and I—"
- "You must be Ambassador Padme. Is that a grappler on your gun?"
- INSIGHT INTO THE SITUATION AT THE CHISS ASCENDANCY. Are the Aristocra seriously in such conflict that civil war is a possibility? This not anything I expected. Honestly I am WILD to know what is happening at the Ascendancy. How is Eli? What is he doing there? How is he navigating the politics? Does Thrass exist in this version of canon? PLEASE TELL ME, I'M BEGGING.
- The whole skit Anakin and Thrawn play out to infiltrate the factory.
- Thrawn is always right. Hearing him warn Anakin about Order 66, and then Anakin going "yeah, yeah, whatever" killed me.
- I mentioned Thrawn's divided priorities. He toes the line between his Chiss loyalties and the

oath he swore to serve the Empire with a skill and finesse only he could manage. *"We can do both."* Did I mention... that I... love Thrawn.
