Dark Crusade – Phase 5 – Fiction

Sith Battlemaster Archangel

Pin: 7589

SBL Archangel (Sith)/P:F-M:HRLD-PROF-FM/Scholae Palatinae [TOR] [GMRG: VIII] [ACC: VI]

SB / GC / SC-SoH / AC-ToSC / DC-PP / GN-AgL / SN-AuL / BN-AuL / Cr-9R-23A-16S-21E-12T-10Q / PoB-PL / CF-AF / CI-GC / DSS-AuL / SI / SoF-AuL / LS-PL / SoL-BE / S:-2D-1Dk-7Rm-9P-14U-7B-15De-28Dec-16Aff-18Rn / LoR

{SA: MVS - MVL - MVF - MVC - SVS - SVTC - SGW - SGG}

**Learning Curve**

“I am no hero.”

The green-tinged smoke roiled heavenward from the tip of the cigarra in the man’s hand, as it rested on the pazaak table. Well-used and worn, the table had seen its fair share of life, wear and blood, but it had never had such a figure sitting at it. The hand rose lethargically into the shadows around the man’s face, disappearing from view for a moment, before flaring bright as an explosion in space.

“Nasty habit,” a female voice muttered disapprovingly under her breath to the side. The man’s features, demonic in the orange flare of his cigarra, twisted slightly at the jibe, his lungs filling slowly with the caustic smoke. The flame slowly diminished as his hand pulled away from his face once more. He blew the smoke away in a stuttered puff, directed up and away from the table’s occupants. The man was not used to his new vice, but it still gave him moment of disquiet.

“You’re a nasty habit, but I keep you around,” he replied, with a tone which waylaid what anger which might have accompanied them. Simply, they were a moment of affection, an acknowledgement of the woman’s presence, her point made, and a familiar response. A smile creased his weathered face.

“What do you mean, Master?” a timid voice spoke up. It would have been lost in the cacophony of the cantina they currently frequented, if it weren’t for the dampening fields in their booth. The voice belonged to an Apprentice, a peon of little renown or consequence, which had been thrust upon the older man as a penance of some kind. The Quaestor, Xen’Mordin, had always had a vile and wicked sense of humor.

“The statement, Apprentice, is a simple one, and leaves little room for misinterpretation,” the female voice replied, echoing the words the man would’ve voiced, without the frustrated meter she had come to expect from him when dealing with the lower ranks. The apprentice, cowed by the woman’s voice, shot her a seething glare, her lower lip threatening to pout, but never making it that far. At least she had enough self-control to stop such obvious displays of weakness.

“Apprentice,” the man murmured, running his tongue across parched lips, and smiled, “You are too young and new to our world to fully understand the statement, but, perhaps, I can put it into terms you can understand”

The apprentice perked up at the man’s words. She had only been in his service for a standard week, and already she’d been shot at three times. The man’s infamy, both warranted and not, would be the death of her if she did not learn quickly. Such was the Sith way: learn on the job or die trying.

“Tell me, how many planets have we acquired in this little sojourn of ours?” he asked, taking another slow draw from his cigarra to punctuate his sentence. The apprentice looked from his face, to the other woman at the table, whose expression she couldn’t read.

“One, Master. Korriz,” she replied cautiously, expecting a trap hidden in the benign wording of the question. The man nodded at the response.

“And tell me now, how many planets have we fought over? Eight? How many thousands of lives have we lost in fodder and troops? In trained Dark Jedi?”

The apprentice looked confused for a moment. Her master’s voice had remained calm and poised through the questioning, but it had acquired an edge of… what… anger? She did not wish to see her master’s rage, reputed throughout the candidate ranks as both legendary and deadly.

“Too many,” the other woman replied, sipping at a fluted glass in her hand. She was a beauty, full of figure and completely remarkable, and yet, unapproachable. Such a woman could only be a Sith of the highest caliber.

“Too many,” the man echoed, his presence in the Force flaring with a moment of anger. He quelled it, letting it slip away. It wouldn’t do to fly into a rage in the middle of a crowded cantina.

“Far too many. And for what? Korriz? A planet of little renown, unappealing beauty and redundant resources. A pittance for the lives lost. WE ARE A GREAT HOUSE!” he continued, the volume of his voice rising with every word, “WE ARE SCHOLAE PALATINAE! We do not grovel at the feet of other Houses, nor do we pander to the Dark Council. We are our OWN House. We may not be as strong as Taldrayn, or as numerous as Arcona, but we are the most noble, and proud. We cannot fall. We will not fall. But one planet of the entire Sith Empire? Can we really only be worth such a paltry reward?”

The rage slowly subsided, helped along by a calming hand placed on his shoulder. The woman, her face allowing a shadow of concern to fall upon it, leaned into her husband and whispered a few words into his ear. He nodded at her, and their foreheads touched for a moment. The apprentice, her eyes looking everywhere but at the husband and wife, stuttered a reply.

“But Master, why are you not a hero? Did you not take the Super Star Destroyer for the Dark Brotherhood? Did you not assault each planet in the name of the House and come away alive with more dead Sith to your name?” she reasoned, her voice replete with conviction. She was a fiery one, and expected her Master to see it.

“Yes, my dear, he is,” the woman replied, her expression returning to a neutral state, “But a hero for himself is not a hero for the House. Far too many Sith are looking out for their own, not the House. My husband is not one of those fools.”

The apprentice pulled back into her seat, running the woman’s words through her mind. It was not the standard view of a Sith to look to the collective before the self. But her master was an unusual man, to say the least.

“Now run along, child,” the woman continued, draping her arm around the larger man’s neck, “the adults have more important things to discuss”