

THE DARK LORD RISES

ACO Anahorn Dempsey (Sith) / Battle Team Dorimad Sol of House Scholae Palatinae (# 14057)

PROLOGUE

58 ABY

A bleeping alarm awoke Anahorn Dempsey from her sleep. It took her a few moments to shake off the drowsiness, and she shuddered. She hated to admit it, but her advanced age was slowly starting to get to her. Drawing upon the Force for prolonged periods of time exhausted her a little bit more every time. Still, this time it was more than worth it. She raised herself from the bed, and looked at the piece of art standing in the corner. She could sense the Sith holocron's presence inside it. Finally, she had all she needed to claim her rightful place in the universe. She closed her eyes and concentrated. The time had come to begin the ritual. And she only had one chance to get it right.

SIXTEEN DAYS AGO

JWEAB SYSTEM

Dempsey's first steps on Jweab VII were a bit hesitant. Somehow she always was a bit hesitant whenever setting foot on a planet she'd never been to. Especially this one. For as far as they eye could see, she saw nothing but a surface resembling a desert. But instead of the usual yellow/brown color of sand, this desert was covered in a blueish substance. She crouched, and picked it up, studying it as it slipped through her gloved fingers. No wonder this place was uninhabited. An extensive scan prior to landing had revealed no cities of any size on the planet. Her Force sense picked up vague traces of life, but nothing of real substance. On the one hand she was relieved. On the other, it worried her. Why would one of the most powerful Sith Lords ever hide things on this planet, unprotected? The answer was simple: he wouldn't. She assured herself that her lightsaber hung at her side, and put some distance between her and her transport. Then she sat down, closed her eyes, and focused all her senses on that one point of Dark Side energy she knew had to be here.

For two hours she sat motionless, hardly breathing, and concentrating. It had taken her no effort at all to pick up the scent, but figuring out where the feeling originated turned out to be harder. *That's why he picked this place,* she thought. *It dissipates the Dark Side energy. Makes is impossible to get your bearings right.* And so, all she could do was try harder and harder to pinpoint the energy's origin.

Finally, she opened her eyes. She had to get closer to get a more accurate sense of its location. Fortunately, however weak her feelings had been, they had given her a sense of direction. She smiled. She was worthy, and she would claim this artefact.

For two days, this is how things went. She sat down, focused for several hours on locating the source of the Dark Side energy, and then travelled for a few hours. And everytime she sat down again, she could feel she was getting closer. Until one afternoon, she sat down again. She closed her eyes, and immediately felt an intense surge of Dark Side energy flow over her. She opened her eyes and screamed. She stood up, and fell down again, writhing in pain as the unexpected wave of energy hit her completely unprotected. She struggled to put up the usual barriers in her mind, the ones she had lowered so she could concentrate on the weakest traces of the artefact. And now, she was virtually on top of it.

Darkness had come and gone by the time Dempsey woke again. For a few minutes, she looked around, wondering where she was, aching all over her body. The she smiled. She got up, and looked around. There was nothing different here from anything she'd seen over the past few days, just the endless desert of the blue stuff, in every direction as far as the eyes could see.

Dempsey sat down, and slowly lowered the barriers in her mind, slowly allowing the massive waves of Dark Side energy to enter her mind. Little by little she allowed the energy in, as she visualized the waves of energy and imagined herself looking at those waves. Studying them, finding something that set one aside from the other, looking for a clue on how to proceed. Wave after wave entered her mind, and at this rate, she had no trouble handling the energy. And as her mind slowly filled with visions of energy, something else crept in alongside. She recognized it immediately, and imagined herself going towards the aberration. Once there, she stared intently, focusing her own powers. And she envisioned a cave system, deep underground. A cave system with a single entrance. A chill went down her spine, and she opened her eyes. The blue goo covering the ground was no longer there, as she sat on barren rock. No longer was there a blue sky above here. There, too, was only barren rock. A small glimpse of light in the distance was the only link to the outside world.

THE CAVES OF CAAR

JWEAB VII

Dempsey smiled as she looked into the darkness of the cave system she had entered. A long and narrow cave lay ahead of her, with countless paths to choose from. One after the other, without exception, they would lead to certain death. All except one. One path would lead into darkness, deep into the cave. One path would lead her to what she had come here for. As worthy of a true Dark Lord, whoever had built this cave system had designed it so that only a true connection to the Dark Side would show the right path to take. And so Dempsey once again closed her eyes and concentrated. She envisioned the caves, all the paths before her, and slowly one of them grew a little less dark than the others. She smiled. Without a doubt, she stepped forward, and followed the glow into a narrow cave. She walked for fifteen minutes, taking turn after turn deeper into the caves. Any mere mortal would undoubtedly end up lost, but not a Sith Lord. Well, she wasn't a Sith Lord just yet, but that was only a technicality.

After she turned yet another corner, the small path expanded into a clearing. In the middle of the clearing, atop a small pedestal, sat the source of the glow and the energy she had felt. A small pyramidal shape. A Sith holocron. And if everything she had learned was correct, and she no longer had any doubt of that, this was a holocron created by Darth Plagueis himself, and hidden out of reach of his apprentice. Despite what historians thought, the Muun had indeed not completely trusted his apprentice. Secrets had been kept. And now, those secrets were hers.

She took a step forward to reach for the holocron, when a drumming sound quickly grew inside her mind. Moments later, a voice boomed through her head.

"Who is it that dies in this place tonight?"

Dempsey looked around, but saw no one. The holocron still emitted its faint glow. No one was there. The resonation of the voice in the cave that she had expected to be there wasn't to be heard. She wondered. Then the voiced spoke again.

On instinct, Dempsey knelt down on one knee and bowed her head.

"No one, my Master," she whispered. "I have come to learn."

The voiced was silent for a moment, then spoke. "You are unworthy. The secrets contained here are not for you."

A chill went down Dempsey's spine as her mind raced for a proper response. She had shown her prowess in the Dark Side by finding these caves, and again by picking the one path in the maze to lead to this chamber. How else was she to show she was indeed worthy.

Unless she was indeed unworthy. After all, Darth Plagueis had been a true Dark Lord of the Sith. She was not. The Brotherhood was led by another who had claimed the title. She grimaced. She would not be denied after all these years, and now that she was this close. She stood to her full height, opened her eyes and defiantly ignited her lightsaber. The yellow blade lit up the room like a torch.

"I am Darth Coeus," she said with a steady voice. "I have come here to claim that which is rightfully mine - the accumulated knowledge of Darth Plagueis the Wise, as the true and only heir to his heritage."

The name had come to her in a flash. Almost, she had exclaimed to be the Dark Lord of the Sith, but just before uttering those words she realized a true Dark Lord wouldn't announce herself that way. A name held more power than a title. This is how it had to be.

She waited for a few moments, but no response came. Without losing grip on her lightsaber, she moved forward until the holocron was within her grasp. She reached for it, and felt the cold as her fingers touched its surface. The voice she anticipated stayed silent. She took a firm grasp of the holocron, and lifted it off the pedestal. Again, nothing happened. She smiled. Apparently, her answer had been accepted.

JUDECCA

Private castle of Anahorn Dempsey, 50 miles outside Teyr

Dempsey's transport touched down on the landing pad with a soft thud. She looked out the transparisteel viewport upon the castle that she had build over the past decade. For the first time in her life, she had found a place on the surface of a planet where she felt more comfortable and at home than on a starship. For someone born and raised in space, whose very first real experience living on a planet was bad as hers, this was quite the achievement.

She shut down the engines, lowered the ramp and stepped off the *Andromeda*. An uncomfortable feeling came over her, and she spun around. On the far side of the landing pad stood a lone figure.

"What are you doing here?" she asked. She couldn't help the hatred overflowing her words.

"You look well," the figure said. "If I didn't know any better I'd say you were looking years younger than you were the last time we met. Have you found new ways to hide your old age?"

Dempsey smiled at him. "I am a Sith. The Force will keep time at bay. It will keep me and restore me. It will not let me perish as some old crone. I shall live on long after you are dead and forgotten. Long after this Brotherhood is nothing but a memory from days long past."

"You serve the Brotherhood, Dempsey," the figure said. "Never forget that. And as such, you serve me."

Dempsey chuckled. "I serve myself, Terifan. Not you. Not your Deputy Grand Master, not your Dark Council, and most definitely not you. I serve the Force, and it serves me."

"As I thought you would say. Too bad. You were a fine Sith in your day, but you are causing unrest with your refusal to accept the supremacy of your Grand Master. I think the time has come for you and the Brotherhood to go their separate ways."

With that, Terifan, Grand Master of the Dark Jedi Brotherhood, ignited his lightsaber. The crimson blade of his saber illuminating the twilight.

Dempsey reached for her own lightsaber and ignited it. "Are you sure about this, Terifan? You come to my home uninvited and threaten me. That is never wise."

"But it is the way this has to be," Terifan responded. "There is only one Dark Lord of the Sith, and I will not tolerate anyone trying to usurp my power."

"Then you are too late," Dempsey replied. "I have already done so. I am the new Dark Lord of the Sith. You shall kneel before me and beg for your life."

Terifan laughed loudly. "You are an old woman, Dempsey. Do you really think you can defeat me with the lightsaber? You may have a few years of experience on me, but your body will be your downfall. You are almost over seventy years old! There is no chance you can defeat me."

Dempsey's smile turned into a grimace. "Darth Plagueis has shown me how to overcome the problems of old age," she bit him. "I retain the experience, but my body is no longer as old and frail as you expect it to be. You had your chance to destroy me several years ago and you didn't. Now you will feel pain and agony at the hands of Darth Coeus."

Before she finished speaking her name, she leapt into the air and rushed Terifan. Inside she smiled as she saw the look of surprise he couldn't hide on his face. She brought down her blade, and the red and yellow clashed as he blocked her strike. Dempsey looked straight at Terifan. Terifan saw a face he barely recognized. Not the old woman who had left the planet almost a week ago, but the face of a woman not much older than thirty. He felt her press her blade against his with more force than he had ever expected. And slowly, a hint of fear trickled through his mind. In an instant, he realized the outcome of this fight was not the easy victory he had anticipated. In an instant, he realized it was not her life that was in danger, but his own.

He drew upon all the rage he could muster, pivoted and swung his lightsaber at Dempsey. She easily parried his attack, and brought her own blade down upon him. Again, the lightsabers clashed, sparks of red and yellow color shooting through the air. For several minutes, the clashing of blades could be heard throughout the entire castle, assuming there had been anyone there to hear it.

Dempsey drew upon the Dark Side of the Force as she had never done before. She felt the power flow through her in ways she had barely imagined. The secrets of Darth Plagueis had done more than rejuvenate her body. She smiled as she saw sweat on Terifan's face. And fear. She jumped, feigned a lightsaber blow to his left shoulder, and as he moved to block, she delivered a bone breaking kick to his right shoulder. With a cry of pain Terifan dropped his lightsaber, the blade extinguishing before the weapon hit the ground. Dempsey landed on her feet, and in a fluid movement sliced her lightsaber through the air, and through his legs. Terifan cried out again as he fell over onto his back. With surprise on his face, he looked at the two feet that had remained standing, and realized it was over. He closed his eyes, not wishing to see the yellow blade end his life.

EPILOGUE

THREE MONTHS LATER

Dempsey stood on the bridge of the *Rejuvenator*-class Star Destroyer *Pravus*. The huge warship, in orbit over the planet Judecca, allowed her to look down upon the planet. Huge fires could be seen even from orbit, as the cities of Teyr and Ohmen burned.

After the death of the Grand Master, Dempsey had travelled to Antei to rid herself of the Deputy Grand Master, and after that she had hunted down most of the Dark Council. None had survived their encounter with the new Dark Lord of the Sith. One of the clans – she couldn't even recall which one – has responded to this with a declaration of war, and days later, a fleet of ships had emerged from hyperspace near Judecca, and started its orbital bombardment. The defending forces had been able to drive them off after a fierce battle, but the damage had been done. After that, the other Clans had jumped at each other's throats.

Once again, the Dark Jedi Brotherhood had fallen into a massive civil war. A Great Jedi War, she knew, as history had never seen before.

She didn't really care how long it would last, who would be destroyed, and who would claim victory. 75 years after she was born, she had reached her destination as the sole Dark Lord of the Sith. After this civil war was over, she would be there to pick up the pieces and reform the Brotherhood based upon her ideas of what it should be like. And then, it was time to start pondering the destiny of every Dark Lord. How to subjugate the rest of the galaxy...