

## Pawns of Purpose

*The Sith Academy towered into the sky to one end of the Valley of the Dark Lords on Korriban. As one of only a few entrances to the valley, it stood at an important strategic crossroads for three factions of a Brotherhood of Dark Jedi engrossed in a Civil War. Yet all had not converged yet on the planet. Fleets battled far above the surface, while troops reinforced their positions on the ground and prepared for their assaults. Those first to the ground rushed on the Sith Academy, with no time to lose. All of them attempting to secure a position deemed crucial to the efforts in a war waged by those who held the most power. All claiming to be on the path with the principle purpose.*

Dark side energy overwhelmed the senses, so much so for the Dark Jedi that it was as if none of the rest of them mattered, not that they could use them even if they wanted. Thick ancient dust hung in the air, disturbed by all the activity planetside over the past few hours reducing visibility to almost nothing. The group moved slowly, although the dust would provide great cover, it was great cover for their enemies as well. None of them knew what to expect when they volunteered to be part of the first team to assault the ancient Sith Academy. All of them knew they wanted to be part of history.

“Why are we relegated to rear guard?” Private Tharp asked, slowly walking backwards with his carbine pointed at the dust behind them.

“What you don’t like it in the rear Private?” Sergeant Gary piped up. “You’re so good at keeping it tight!”

Chuckles came from the detachment of troops hand picked from the 25th Expeditionary Division of the Imperial Scholae Guard for the mission. None of them particularly happy with the current situation, but given the tense nature of the space battle that had occurred over the past night, they were just glad to be on the ground.

“Cut the chatter you two, enemy can’t see us but I could have shot you from a mile away with your big mouths,” Archangel chimed in. The Sith Battlelord from Scholae Palatinae was in charge of all the soldiers on the mission. He was reluctant to stop the amusing jabs but also realizing they were in the company of several other units and didn’t want to be the reason they all got ambushed in the dust.

Evant Taelyan gave Archangel a nudge, bumping into the heavily armored soldier to catch his attention, “You figure we should tell them why we’re actually rear guard?”

“You mean, it isn’t because we’re the tightest?”

Evant gave a disapproving look in lieu of an answer, although technically outranking the Sith Battlelord in the military structure, he considered the two of them to be peers.

“Look Evant, we can’t tell the troops that none of us trust House Odan-Urr, and that the Elders of Taldryan insisted on getting a first look at everything and taking whatever they want,” Archangel responded as the entire column came to a halt.

Everyone went silent and dropped to the ground in defensive positions, weapons at the ready. An eerie hum somewhere deep in the dust was all that could be heard as the march stopped. Then the two Sith looked at each other concerned, they had both felt it.

A disturbance in the Force.

Shortly following was a blood curdling scream carried by an echo in the distance, as if coming from deep within a cave. An eruption of blaster fire. Bright flashes of crimson illuminating the clouds of dust. The fighting had started.

Quickly the entire group began to move again. Somewhere ahead of them their team was moving past the entrance to the Sith Academy. They would be the last inside.

Evant reached down and held a tight grip on his lightsaber hilt as the massive stone archway slowly came into view ahead of them. Sounds of errant screams and blaster fire came out as one by one they stepped inside and took positions. Looking to his left as he stepped beyond the threshold was the corpse of a soldier with deep blaster wounds to his back.

“How the hell did they end up shooting them in the back?” Evant inquired, looking a bit concerned as he checked in with Archangel.

“Mind tricks?” Archangel answered with a tinge of uncertainty before amping up his confidence and barking orders to the platoon of Scholae troops they brought along for the ride. “Keep things tight men, and stay sharp.”

Uncomfortable chuckles followed as large pieces of debris were shuffled and a temporary defensive perimeter was established just inside the Sith Academy. Evant peered back outside into the dust, feeling out with the Force, finding nothing. The intense radiating energy of the dark side from the building he was about to dive deep inside left him uncomfortably numb to any true ability to sense danger.

Archangel cast a nod, and a gesture, as a squad of troops took position at the rear and watched the back door. Snipers pulling up their weapons and pointing them into the nothingness.

Inside, a maze of hallways and rooms awaited. The sounds of the battle ahead seemed to bounce off every available surface making it difficult to get oriented. Down the nearest corridor the rapid patter of footsteps could be heard approaching. The shallow gasps for breath of someone out of breath.

Looking carefully, Evant made eye contact with the man. It was the look of someone scared for their life. His body so pumped on adrenaline that he didn't even stop running when he spotted the group of soldiers. It was almost as if he was less afraid of the weapons pointed at him by a group of unexpected enemy soldiers, than whatever he was running from.

He stopped. Frozen in fear. Panting heavily. Unable to move out of either exhaustion or fear. The well trained soldiers of Scholae Palatinae waited for orders.

"Fire at will," Archangel calmly spoke as he made the execution order.

Blaster bolts tore into him at lightspeed, the first two landing square in the chest. A third hit the man square in the face, one of the soldiers showing off and scoring a headshot, wiping a clean slate over the look of fear. The lifeless body didn't even seem to make a sound as it fell.

"What the frak is going on in here?" Evant spat out, igniting his lightsaber as a second man rounded the corner and haphazardly tossed a few blasts their direction out of desperation before he too joined his fellow soldier on the ground.

"One Sith my lord, I can make out the markings on their uniforms," one of the Lieutenants spoke up.

"Let's move!" a call could be heard from the front of the group as the team began their trip deep into the Sith Academy.

They encountered little resistance as they moved. Twisting and winding down several different hallways before all pouring into a huge hole in the wall that looked like it may have at one time been a doorway. Ancient Sith writing covered every surface not cracked and scored beyond recognition from years of decay and battle within the halls.

A runner from Taldryan approached the two Dark Jedi with orders, "My lords, have your Scholae Palatinae troops cover this entrance to the Tomb of Darth Bane, and have the Dark Jedi join at the front of the assault."

With several nods from Evant and Archangel they made it so. "Lieutenant Dartura, you're in charge. Hold this position."

As the platoon of troops began to move some debris and establish a new defensive perimeter and draw up plans to hold the position, the Sith quickly pushed beyond the forces of Odan-Urr

and Taldryan to join the Elders in command of the operation at the opening of the actual tomb.

“Just take a defensive position along side us,” one of the Taldryan spoke as they approached. It was hard to tell which when all their attention was drawn to the spectacle of the tomb itself.

It was a massive cavernous room with books and etchings everywhere. The knowledge and lore contained within the walls was visually impressive. On the ground, standing above a sarcophagus undoubtedly belonging to Darth Bane himself was a figure in simple black robes, torn, with a single purple blade ignited staring at them. The dark side almost tangible in the air within the walls.

“Synin Torin I presume, your One Sith have been defeated, stand down,” Keirdagh spoke up, the Dark Jedi Master’s red toned combat flight suit in a rare moment of fitting in with the decor of the moment in the blood stained tomb.

A deep cackling laugh is all the answer Keirdagh would receive as some of the debris and corpses around the tomb began to shuffle with life. For several tense moments, three different droids began to move amongst the lifeless bodies towards Synin Torin. Evant’s eyes scanned the room counting the bodies of One Sith soldiers who lay dead around them. A battle had happened here already, and you’d think that Synin had lost given so many of his dead soldiers.

“You are surrounded and outnumbered you crazy fool. Stand down. I won’t repeat myself again,” Keirdagh demanded, his golden lightsaber held relaxed in his left hand almost casually.

“I welcome the challenge, I’ve already killed my own men to prove I alone deserve my place as Darth Bane’s apprentice. There can only be one. You will be but a step stool on my way to the top,” Synin laugh was almost a giggle of joy as an ASN-121 droid hovered up towards the Dark Jedi at the entrance to the tomb and began to spit fire in their direction.

Barriers in the force were thrown up to absorb the heat energy.

“Maximum efficiency,” was uttered by the skeleton like structure of a hunter droid in the distance as it began to fire on them with its left arm. Evant quickly stepped forward and began to deflect the blaster bolts back, his sapphire blade rapidly pushing the energy harmlessly into the surrounding walls. The bolts coming so quickly there wasn’t enough time to properly turn them back on the attacker.

Dark Side Adept Benevolent disappeared in a flourish beside them as Keirdagh began to descend the stairs into the tomb slowly at a walking pace towards Synin muttering obscenities nobody could really understand.

The IT-O interrogator droid stood steady at Synin's side as a wave of Force energy erupted from his location. It was an incredible wave of darkness that quickly overwhelmed everyone but the droids. Unable to maintain his fight Evant was forced to retreat under the concentrated power of the dark side beating down on him. Archangel had done the same as well as the third of the Taldryan's among them, Kenath Zoron.

The only Jedi to join them on the assault, A'lora Kituri, stepped forward. The Consular Chronicler deflecting the dark side energy for a few brief moments protecting the Dark Jedi she swore to protect. The four of them slowly backing away towards the exit of the tomb under the onslaught of the Force.

Only Keirdagh was still visible ahead of them, standing within the Tomb of Darth Bane. His mind focused on one thing. Synin.

Desperately trying to demoralize the possessed One Sith leader, it seemed to be having no effect. Until a flash of crimson caused a violent explosion as the IT-O droid hovering nearby was torn in half by the blade of Ben.

A brief distraction.

An interruption of the ritual causing the force wave.

The Elders of Taldryan rushed out of the tomb following the others who had accompanied them. Once outside they used their combined telekinetic energy to pull closed the massive stone door that had once sealed up the tomb.

"I hate that guy," Keirdagh spat.

"Mild, he's getting off easy," Kenath replied, brushing dust off his battle armor.

A roaring scream could be heard beyond the entrance to the tomb as flames illuminated from several gaps. The massive stone door itself beginning to shake, the team holding it in place. Dark side energy radiated through the solid stone door adding a feeling of uneasiness to the team in retreat. The soldiers nearby had a look of dread on them. The dark side was further taking its toll.

"I admire his work," Keirdagh announced defensively as the stone door behind him began to shift, "Let's leave that backrocket psychophant here to cool off and get back to it shall we?"

Blaster fire could be heard at the top of the winding corridor that lead to the tomb. Someone else had arrived.

“What is it now?” Keirdagh complained as a scout from the Palatinean forces arrived.

“Enemy troops are--”

“A’lora! We made contact with the twins,” another scout from Odan-Urr screamed at the top of their lungs rushing down the corridor tripping the last bit of distance and falling on their face.

The Palatinean grinned, sliding his foot back and continuing his original announcement.

“There are enemy troops attacking our position, by the look of it they appear to be--”

Slam. The scout of Odan-Urr lunged through the air and pressed the Palatinean soldier to the ground and immediately began throwing punches. He desperately held up his arms to block the blows, a space hand reaching up and grabbing the attacker by the throat. Quickly both of them were hauled up into the air by Archangel and held to either side, both of them flailing wildly.

The dark side energy emitting from the tomb was taking its toll.

Everyone watched, a bit taken back by the entire situation if not slightly amused as the Sith Juggernaut knocked the two into each other and dropped them to the ground.

“What do they appear to be Private?” Evant leaning over and holding the scouts face in his hands. He was unconscious. “Great.”

“It has to be the Loyalists. We’ve known we had a detachment of troops on our tail since we left this morning,” Kenath spoke, the Sith Warrior anxious to be of some help in the presence of the Taldryan Elders.

“Oh really? When exactly were you thinking about telling the rear guard about this?” Evant raised an eyebrow as he digested the new information.

“Need to know?” Kenath answered, looking to Keirdagh for some backup. He actually didn’t know the answer and had assumed that the Scholae Palatinae members already knew.

“Evant, shut up. That’s why we put you on the rear guard because we knew your team could handle it but we couldn’t risk a security leak with these damn Jedi everywhere,” the Dark Jedi Master answered, a hand raising to his face to rub his temple.

“We need to get away from this door, we can’t hold it much longer,” A’lora called out desperately, the Jedi desperately pushing back and trying to shield as much of the energy as possible.

“Thank you, miss obvious,” Keirdagh sighed. “Who the frak are the twins? Anybody?”

Archangel and Kenath moved over to use their physical might to hold the door in place and give A'lor a break. The Jedi Consular taking a much needed breath and looking over at her broken scout unconscious on the ground with a sigh. "Rhiaen and Nalia Ust'essi, a pair of twi'lek twin Jedi that we've had on Korriban for some time now gathering information. We expected to hear from them with details on how to find our way through the Valley of the Dark Lords to the Tomb of Marka Ragnos."

"Right, Mav may have mentioned them. Hard to pay attention to that guy sometimes. Thank you Jedi," Keirdagh responded. "For reinforcing all my reasons why I hate you Jedi."

A'lor a seemed taken back a bit, "What?"

"Need to know Keirdagh," Evant responded in jest.

"Shut up orders don't expire Evant," he continued before looking around. "There was a path up across the hallway above, let's get some covering fire and regroup up there. At least my headache might go away from the constant droning of an insane possessed Sith on the other side of this damn door."

All at once the team took it as orders. Archangel and Kenath abandoned the door to coordinate the troop efforts above while the rest of them stayed behind to hold it shut. After a few moments the sound of blaster fire upstairs intensified and they got the all clear. At once the four moved away from the door and rushed up away from it.

It was a stalemate upstairs. Their Rebel forces pinned down behind doorways and pillars keeping suppressing fire on the enemy forces in the distance doing the same. As they rushed across the hallway and up the stairs the troops fell in line behind them and they started the ascent. Up they went, stair by stair.

"I kind of like it in the rear, it's where all the action is," Archangel said to Evant with a grin on his face, baiting his fellow Palatinean to some snide comment.

"Too easy Arch, seriously?" Evant replied as they reached the top of the stairs.

"Squads, form a defensive perimeter at these stairs and keep anything from getting up," Archangel ordered as he and Evant turned to join the rest of the team whose troops were likewise securing the other approaches to their new position. Debris once again forming makeshift defensive positions.

All six of the Jedi took a brief moment to relax. Despite the dark side empowerment that came from walking the halls of the ancient Sith Academy, the dark side wave from Darth Bane had

been almost too much. Even the two Elders were impacted by it. Yet failure was not an option.

“Rebel scum!” a shout could be heard from the bottom of the stairs somewhere out of view. “You can’t win. I know you have no more than a company worth of soldiers up there, yet an entire battalion of troops loyal to Lord Ashen await my command.”

“I hate that guy too,” Keirdagh commented, as if answering a question that wasn’t asked before yelling back down a reply. “And who the frak are you supposed to be?”

“You can address me as Major Colyn Skybender, sent to kill any Rebel I come across as I secure this location for Lord Ashen,” Colyn responded authoritatively.

“No, I think I’ll call you Major Shab,” Keirdagh amusingly replied from behind the lines.

“Your insults are weaker than you are,” Skybender replied. “Take them boys!”

A flood of crimson bolts came flying up the stairwell from a portable heavy repeating blaster setup at the base forcing the Rebels to retreat behind available cover and away from the stairs. The energy tore into the ancient stone walls and ceiling of the Sith Academy scoring it up and melting the surface. This combined with small arms fire from the other soldiers at the base of the stairs hoping to score a blind hit on the Rebels above.

As the Rebels dug their heels in at the top of the stairs, using it as a choke point, they scouted the upper floors looking for their next move. A squad of Loyalist forces would be the first casualties as they rushed up the stairs as the first of the assault. One by one they would be torn apart and their bodies falling lifelessly back down the stairs. Not one would reach the top.

“Seems they intend to overwhelm us with their numbers,” Archangel called out as he ducked back behind a physical barrier where the six Jedi were planning their next move.

“Explains the stupid rush strategy they’ve employed,” Kenath replied, firing his heavy blaster pistol over the barrier behind him towards the stairs and hitting an already dead Loyalist soldier in the eye socket.

“It’s a distraction while they look to flank us. Also, I hate the smell of burning flesh,” Keirdagh spat out as he nodded at one of the Taldryan scouts returning from a quick trip through the upper floors. “Give me the good news Private.”

“The entire academy is so heavily damaged and deteriorated that there is no other way up here to our position. Holes in the structure and damaged passageways could be used to flank us given enough time to build a way up but it does buy us time,” the Private reported, eager to get out the good news but hesitating and taking a deep breath out before continuing.



Keirdagh didn't even ask for more information, just looking intently at the Private as if the Dark Jedi Master already knew what he was about to say but demanding he say it anyways.

The Private continued. "Sith Lord Esoteric's New Order forces have arrived at the Sith Academy, it appears to be at least a full company of reinforcements from the Tomb of Ajunta Pall in response to the earlier defeat they suffered."

"Assumptions Private, and irrelevant. It matters not why they're here," Keirdagh sounded even more annoyed than before the sounds of relentless blaster fire eliminated any chance of getting a chance to think clearly.

"They don't know we're up here?" Archangel asked, as the soldier beside him slumped lifelessly into him. The Loyalist forces insane offensive strategy was starting to pay off as new waves of soldiers used the dead as shields.

"They sure as frak know something is going on in here with all this racket," Evant shouted as he peered back around from his cover behind a fallen pillar and shoot a violent burst of electricity into a soldier using a pile of the dead as a shield causing him to black out.

A grenade was lobbed towards the doorway, a desperate attack in such a fragile ancient tomb. The explosion tore apart bodies with kinetic energy and sprayed blood across every nearby surface. It broke apart the cover and allowed the Rebels clear fire to push the Loyalists back down the stairway a bit.

The familiar sound of heavy repeating blaster fire started again. The Rebels all ducked at the sound, expecting the emplacement had been moved up the stairs. They were wrong.

"Droids!" a soldier screamed from the bottom of the stairs. Synin Torin had escaped the Tomb of Darth Bane. Screams followed as the sounds of flame and blaster fire echoed through the bottom floor of the Sith Academy.

Slowly the Loyalists retreated from down the stairway to cover their own rear flank as the sound of a lightsaber was heard joining the fray. The sounds of the heavy repeating blaster stopped as the whirl of the lightsaber echoed up the battle scarred stairway leading to the Rebels. All six of the Jedi stood up from behind cover and ignited their own blades ready to defend themselves.

Time seemed to slow down as their brains processed every distinct sound and and vibration in the Sith Academy beyond their vision below them.

Somewhere at the rear flank of the Rebels an explosion was heard that shook the entire upper floor. Cracks began to form along the walls at the relentless beating the ongoing Civil War was taking on the ancient structure.

“If this goes on much longer, we’ll end up taking a makeshift elevator back to the first floor,” Evant proclaimed, a weak attempt at humor to deal with the stress of the combat.

“There are a least a hundred people I hate below us. I’d like nothing more than to drop this entire floor on top of them,” Keirdagh replied, his golden lightsaber again held casually to the side, a look of annoyance on his bearded face.

“Only a hundred?” Kenath asked, his blaster pistol aimed at the stairs.

“Fine. A hundred and one.”

The team of Rebels kept watching their front and rear flank, waiting for an attack. From somewhere below them they heard blaster fire and explosions. All of them waiting for further orders not sure what was going to happen next.

“Let’s move,” Keirdagh called as the Taldryan troops and Kenath fell in line behind him, and they carefully proceeded towards the stairs.

Immediately behind them were what few troops the Jedi could provide. Followed in the rear by the a detachment of the 25th Expeditionary Division of Scholae Palatinae. All of them prepared for whatever awaited them.

As they made their way to the stairs they carefully watched their footing. Bodies lay everywhere draining blood and entrails making a solid footing difficult. At the bottom of the stairs lay countless more bodies. They did their best to ignore it all as they pushed quickly towards the sounds of the lightsaber.

“My droids!” the angered voice shouted out, echoing through the halls of the Sith Academy as well as the Force. Immediately recognizable as Synin Torin.

Further dialogue could be heard but not over the pouring of blaster fire that continued. As the Rebels reached the edge of a massive rotunda in the Sith Academy, the circulation center for one of the several libraries in the ancient facility, they opened fire on the Loyalist forces in a quick attack from the rear and replaced them in the battle.

In the center of the room, surrounded on nearly all sides by Loyalist forces, and now Rebel forces as well, Synin Torin stood alone. The possessed apparent apprentice of Darth Bane wielded his purple lightsaber in an impressive mixture of Soresu and Djem So that seemed almost impossible for a Dark Side Adept.

Blaster bolts were deflected back at their attackers killing them, but they were quickly replaced by new bodies. It seemed a battle of numbers and overwhelming force for the Loyalists against the will power and skills of an ancient Sith Lord.

“Kill him,” Keirdagh ordered as he took a step back away from the line and began to concentrate. He fell into a state of battle meditation, the Force already strong in the Sith Academy it now fueled the accuracy and resolve of the Rebel troops. Their shots a bit sharper. Minds now anticipating the Sith’s movements.

A private from Taldryan would score the first hit on flesh. A blaster bolt to the right shoulder. It would slow down the strikes considerably. The next shot, from Scholae Palatinae would strike the left hip. Slower to rotate now in the fleshy confines of the body, the spirit of Darth Bane began to find the limits of its new physical host.

After at least five shots to the torso, and one to the left knee, a final shot from Skybender himself would land in the neck and disconnect the possessed brain from the body it so desperately tried to cling to.

For a brief moment, the Rebels and Loyalists had reluctantly joined to take down a greater enemy. Yet, it was only as the lifeless body slumped to the ground did the Loyalist recognize the Rebel forces had even joined them in the battle.

“Min min vil ut valle Nharquis,” Kerdagh spat out, pointing at himself as a large chunk of debris went hurling across the rotunda.

Wide eyed, Skybender attempted to duck out of the way, but the piece of ancient stone the size of a shipping container was already one step ahead of him. It collided with his frail human form immediately breaking most the bones in his body on impact.

He died instantly.

Quickly the Rebel forces moved to defensive positions and immediately opened fire on the Loyalists still in shock at what had happened. Archangel moved along the edge of the rotunda to the left flank, cutting down enemy soldiers with his veridian blade along the narrow walkway. Evant would do the same with his azure blade moving down the right flank. As the Loyalist soldiers attempted to fall back the Rebel soldiers opened fire dropping as many as they could as they fled. Their hesitation had cost them.

One Sith forces were nowhere to be seen. Loyalist forces scattered randomly through the Sith Academy in retreat. Rebels gathered in the rotunda and regrouped as the intensity of the combat dropped off considerably. Sounds of blaster fire was growing more errant and distant. Moans of the wounded like a soundtrack to the feelings of every man and woman there.

Following their training, all they knew after years of the same, the soldiers of the different units began to secure the perimeter. Everyone in the rotunda just took in the letdown as adrenaline ran its course through their bodies.

The moans of a dying Loyalist soldier still clinging to life caught Evant's attention. The Sith Battlemaster approaching slowly, disengaging his lightsaber as he bent over and looked the young soldier in the eyes. He reached out and placed his hand on the soldier's face. He could already feel his life slipping away, the weak connection to the Force leaving him. There was nothing he could do to save him.

For a brief moment he allowed the grief and intense emotion to overwhelm him. Hatred for the puppeteers at the top who pitted brothers and sisters against each other. All that energy erupted in a violent burst of electricity that snuffed the life from the soldier in an instant.

A rare moment of weakness and loss of control for the Sith.

Crackling continued for several seconds after it stopped being of any use. The tendrils wrapping around the corpse and searing the flesh and violating the body.

Evant hadn't noticed the other Jedi all standing there watching him.

"Cud-bug!"

A two-part harmony of shrill high pitched screams filled the air almost more dreadful than the sounds of the battle that had just wound down. All of them turned towards the source to find two strikingly beautiful identical twin twi'leks stepping lightly from the shadows with the most excited of faces.

The last sight any of them expected.

"I can--"

"No! Don't finish that sentence," Keirdagh interrupted A'lora, holding up his hand. "Under no circumstances will you finish that sentence."

The twins moved delicately as they pranced from the shadows towards A'lora. They had all but ignored the bloodshed and Rebels watching them. No strangers to getting all the attention they wanted.

"It's great to see you Rhiaen and Nalia," A'lora smiled, having difficulty in containing her excitement to see familiar faces after so much time with the Dark Jedi.

“We’ve been keeping an eye on you,” Rhiaen said.

“It’s hard not to,” Nalia said shortly after.

“Is it just the two of you? Where are the rest of your troops?” Kenath inquired, looking into the shadows expecting more of House Odan-Urr’s troops to emerge.

“It’s just us,” A’lora responded in a solemn tone, “None of the rest of the summit agreed with even my being here on this mission but, I walk my own path. With these few troops who volunteered to follow me.”

“That explains a lot, seeking peace and serenity somewhere I’m sure,” Kenath responded annoyed, the confirmation of what he expected of the Jedi almost a relief.

“You know, the Sons of Taldryan were quick to accept the help of the Jedi House,” Rhiaen said defensively.

“So quick,” Nalia added on.

“What’s that saying. Keep your friends close,” Keirdagh paused briefly, nodding his head as if seeking the right words to some ancient well known proverb. “Something, something... stab a twi’lek.”

“What’s wrong with him?” Rhiaen looked at Nalia inquisitively. She shrugged.

“We really don’t have enough time right now to properly answer that question,” Kenath responded.

“I’ll just have to ask Mav about it later over some drinks,” Rhiaen responded, emphasizing her strong relationship with the Dark Councilor and Son of Taldryan.

“It doesn’t much matter that it’s just the two of us, the New Order forces are in retreat back to the Tomb of Ajunta Pall,” Nalia added.

Relief washed over the faces of the Dark Jedi, the first they had heard the news a large portion of those trying to kill them were on their way out the door. They had assumed as much, but the confirmation was a relief. The collection of Rebel troops still protecting their position in the rotunda they had won only moments earlier. Everything still so fresh.

“Spanky!”

The word yelled in the distance coming from a corridor behind them. It was almost too obvious a password to use that it would only work once, but it properly identified the approaching soldiers as the first set of reinforcements.

“Hail! Approach,” one of the Taldryan soldiers responded back allowing the group to approach their position safely. A platoon of men lead by several Dark Jedi.

“Rax, nice of you to finally show up,” Kenath stated unenthusiastically.

“What the hell happened to you guys?” Rax inquired, raising an eyebrow.

“Well, there were a bunch of people Keirdagh hated, so we killed quite a few of them, some stuff went boom, there was a *bit* of blood, then you showed up,” Evant replied with an unnecessary amount of sarcasm.

“The task of killing those I hate is endless Evant, but I don’t blame them for creating this intense feeling of dislike. They are merely pawns, spawned of that which I truly hate,” Keirdagh replied as he began to wipe the blood from his blood colored armor.

“Well, I don’t know about the rest of you, but I feel super inspired now about what we’re all doing here,” Evant responded with a heavy sigh, casting a glance at the Dark Jedi Master.

The war was far from over and many more pawns would die before it ended.