

By the time Ghost made it into the throne room, it had already begun. A cacophony of hissing plasma echoed through the massive chamber, fusing with the din of blaster fire and Force-fueled attacks.

The Arconae pressed forward. Timeros' glacial eyes never wavered from the serpentine throne as the separatist launched themselves at the cadre of loyalists standing vigil.

Valtiere met Timeros' glower from the top of the dais, his anger quietly seething through the dark side and lending him resolve. His ignited lightsaber turned away any bolts that strayed his way.

Troutrooper lazily lobbed a bolt of blue-white energy at a charging Teroch Erinos Arconae. The youth twisted clear of its path and darted forward with breakneck speed for the fish. "Gotta try harder than that, Trouty!" he yelled. Nadrin Erinos Arconae was right on his brother's heels, blaster barking in controlled bursts that the Mon Cal turned smoothly aside with his lightsaber.

At the base of the dias, a set of primal sneers cut through the battlefield as Quaestor Cethgus Entar Arconae slammed his lightsaber into Rollmaster Andrelious J. Inahj's. Sparks hissed angrily as they took out their mutual aggressions.

In the shadows of the tall stone pillars, Darkblade did his best to keep up with his Master, Meleu, trading blows back and forth in a test of mettle.

To the other side, Ood had managed to plant his roots and transformed into the tree-version of an octopus. His appendages lashed out like thick vines, forcing the team of Skar, Lexiconus, and Kanis.

"I hate tree's!" Skar shouted as he severed a tree-limb with his lightsaber. Ood didn't seem to mind the hit, however, and continued his assault.

Adam Bolera darted forward from the dias, running right up to one of the stone pillars, jumping, and using it as a springboard to launch himself at Sight, who managed to catch the downward strike and turn the Knight away.

"Arcia, this is ridiculous!" Atyiru Entar cried out as she turned aside a volley of blaster fire from the Nighthawk Captain's weapon. "Please stop this, we can talk!" Xephia added her blaster to the fray as well, but Ernordeth joined her to aid with the defensive.

Nath Voth, Celahir Erinos, and the newcomer Revs clashed against the experienced hand of Celevon Edraven, Zakath and Antar Locke.

From the cover of his veil and the safety of his disguise, Marick-as-Ghost watched the fighting quietly. Something inside him stirred. A heat, no, an anger like a furnace boiling in his chest.

And then the first blood was truly drawn. A stray blaster bolt cut into Nath Voth's side and the female Zabrak let out a cry and went down. Atyiru rushed to her side, Ernordeth doing his best to shield her.

Marick had seen enough.

The Consul darted straight through the center of combat, cloaked in a shroud through the Force. He brushed passed Valtiere, materialized back into view, and settled himself down into the seat of the serpentine throne.

Marick Arconae pulled down the hood and let his glowing eyes fade to his normal cerulean. His long silver hair shifted back to a raven hue. He pulled away the bone-white mask and cast it aside.

The fighting simply stopped. The Shadow Lord had returned, and there was something different about him.

"That's enough," Marick called out, his voice ringing through the silent chamber. "Captain Bly, bar the throne room doors. Have the guard cripple anyone who tries to leave.

"Yes sir," Captain Bly snapped.

Marick rose slowly from the throne and stood next to Valtiere, the man he had trusted the legacy of Qel-Droma with. He placed a hand on his shoulder and looked out at the room, taking in the entire scene and committing it to memory. He would never forget it.

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