**The Great Escape**

**SW Kenath Zoron - 13820**

Screams cut through the sounds of battle, but Zoron couldn't spare the men or the time to help the wounded. The One Sith forces were ruthless and we literally hacking their way through the streets of the city in an effort to wipe out any supporters the Grey Paladins had. The cold, logical side of him also realized that the Grey Paladins would likely never return to this place, so saving a handful of Hallions wouldn't matter in the long run.

As Zoron moved down the streets, he couldn't help but glance at the Grey Paladin with his troops. This Cole Drayson reminded him very much of himself, what with his love of blasters and reliance on his innate skills rather than his Force abilities. Even the man's choice of clothing was similar to what he preferred whenever he wasn't armoured for battle.

Zoron's comms crackled in his helmet. " ... oron. Status?"

He knew that his Consul should be monitoring the battlegroup sitting miles overhead, so the fact that Rian was able to spare a moment to check on his unit was a good indication that the space above him was clear of enemies.

"Advancing toward the Grey Citadel. ETA is.. " Zoron glanced at Captain Ruondo, Darkfire 9's commander, who held up three fingers in response. "... 3 minutes. Streets are mostly empty, little resistance from One Sith thus far. We can hear heavy fighting ahead."

"Excellent. You will..." Rian's voice cut off abruptly. After a short pause, he came back over the comms. "Zoron. You need to move expeditiously. A One Sith fleet has just jumped into the system. Move." The transmission cut out.

Zoron turned to Drayson and Ruondo. "Clock is ticking. Enemy fleet in system. We gotta move."

Ruondo immediately opened the comm channel to all the Darkfire members. "Double time. Now." The soldiers responded immediately and opened up their strides into loping runs with Drayson and Zoron matching the pace.

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Alerts were blaring on the bridge of the *Resurgent* as the One Sith ships jumped in. Watch standers began calling out information as soon as their sensors updated.

Rian spun to the large display in the center of the bridge and watched as the space around his fleet filled with red symbols. A veteran of many campaigns and battles, he nevertheless felt the tension rising in his body as he read the sensor's analysis of the enemy strength. He looked at his own fleet's formation and nodded, happy that he had set up a defensive perimeter prior to the One Sith arrival.

"Launch all remaining squadrons. Focus fire on the lead capital ship. Take it down fast."

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Zoron caught a flicker of light out of the corner of his eye and looked up. He saw the One Sith trooper a second too late and knew he couldn't get his rifle around in time. He tried anyways and steeled himself for a blaster bolt to strike him.

It never came.

He finished bringing his rifle to bear but the trooper was down. He looked around quickly and saw the barrels of Drayson's pistols swinging away from the dead trooper.

They entered the Grey Citadel's courtyard through a gap in the exterior wall that the One Sith forces had opened. The carnage within shocked even Zoron. One Sith troopers lay about everywhere, some smouldering from lightning strikes, others eviscerated from saber slashes, and others simply piles of red mush. A Darkfire trooper swore and it came across the comms. Zoron understood the sentiment, even if these were their enemies.

An explosion from inside the Citadel snapped them back to the task at hand. Drayson broke into a run towards the sound and the Darkfire troopers immediately advanced as well. With a last look at the corpses around him, Zoron joined them.

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The *Resurgent* shook as One Sith turbolasers hammered at its shields. The Taldryan forces had successfully crippled two of the One Sith capital ships, but that had only served to even up the fight. The One Sith fleet was still very much a threat and Rian needed Zoron and Drayson to finish up quickly.

"Sir! The *Fury* and the *Valor* are bother reporting heavy hull damage. Estimate that they will be combat ineffective in six minutes unless something changes. *Dark Prophet II* and *Justice* are also reporting their shields are failing."

Rian cursed under his breath and knew that they would have to withdraw in the next few minutes or risk major losses. Stabbing his finger down, he connected to Zoron's squad's feed and sighed with relief as he saw that the troops had made contact with some of the Grey Paladins.

"Launch the shuttles - get them down to Zoron's location now. Maneuver the *Resurgent* and *Justice* to shield the *Fury* and *Valor* to buy them some time."

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Zoron was once again stunned as he entered the Citadel's dining hall. Corpses littered the room and only a few One Sith troops were still fighting against the remaining Paladins. The One Sith troops were in the middle of the room and were facing away from Zoron's troops.

The Darkfire team wasted no time in taking advantage of their position. The last One Sith trooper was cut in half by a dozen laser blasts before he even knew his allies were dead.

Drayson strode forward to the Paladins and hugged one.

"Kajin. Where are the others?" Drayson looked around hopefully but the other man, who Zoron now recognized as Kajin Savoros, shook his head.

"We are all that are left. They managed to get troops into the sleeping quarters and killed almost half of us before any alarm was sounded."

Drayson hung his head and stood silently for a moment.

A voice broke in across their comms. "This is *Intruder 1*. Inbound to the courtyard. You're out of time inside, the fleet needs to leave now. We will be down for exactly 90 seconds. Anyone not onboard will be left. *Intruder 1* out."

Zoron cleared his throat and began shouting order. "Captain, get your scouts back out to the courtyard and hold that point now! Medics, get your charges on their feet and moving! Master Sergeant, 30 seconds to get whatever intel you can find off these bodies then back to the courtyard! Everyone else, get moving. We're down to 80 seconds!"

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"Sir, *Intruder 1* and the other shuttles report that they have lifted off and are enroute. They will be clear of the atmosphere in 45 seconds."

Rian immediately opened the fleet-wide channel. "*Fury, Valor* - jump now." Rian paused for a moment as he watched the green blips disappear from his screen as the wounded ships fled into the safety of hyperspace. "All ships, prepare to jump the moment the transports are away. Once all transports have jumped, engage hyperdrives. Do not, I repeat, do not wait for orders."

The watch stander's voice cut in. "20 seconds!"

Rian leaned forward in his seat as he watched the flurry of activity on the screens.

"5 seconds!"

Rian saw the string of green symbols that represented his transports all snap off the screen as they cleared the gravity well of the planet.

"JUMP!" Rian shouted and felt the lurch as the ship slipped into hyperspace. He slumped back into his seat and smiled.