

*Korriban.*

Dark clouds loomed over the ancient Sith world. Smoke engulfed the tattered, torn and stiff bodies littering the scorched ground surrounding the Sith Academy. To my left lay my former master, Andreious J. Inahj, and beside him his second apprentice, the newly knighted Vosh Kon. The two had also been hit by the explosion. Though I thought them dead, I watched as they both stumbled to their feet, excruciating pain inscribed in their faces. Scanning the site for other life forms, I saw Colyn Skybender to the right, injured, but standing tall with the famous enduring reserve of his Obelisk clique. As I watched the smoke clear, I saw our beloved grandmaster, standing in the distance, completely separate from the war zone. Thoughts of betrayal began to form in my head. *Was it all worth it?*

This battle may have very well been the point at which the boiling tensions within the brotherhood began to boil over. Clan against clan, house against house, path against path, councilor against councilor; I came to the realization that we were simply pawns on the chess board of a major power struggle. Muz Ashen wanted immortality, the most dangerous weapon that any one man can yield. Jack Cotelin couldn't have wanted any better. What about *Esoteric*? There was no way to know the truth. All that we could know was bloodshed and obedience.

And we shed blood, and we obeyed.

These thoughts cleared as the sound came back. I heard the screaming. The screaming of pain, the screaming of sorrow... And the screaming of my own name.

"Achilleus! Get up, quit laying around!" Marick Arconae towered above, the ferocity in his eyes surpassing even that of the most powerful Sith lords. "What happened over here?"

"A TIE came crashing down onto one of our battery caches." The usual formalities for our Shadow Lord had been erased from my mind by the droning of starfighters above, complemented by the trilling of blasters and turrets, and coupled with the screams of my comrades.

"We need all available Arconans at the forefront. Our infantry is taking some heavy hits up there." The Consul outstretched his hand, which I grasped as he pulled me to my feet. "I understand that this is tough, but Muz sent Arcona in first for a reason. Do what you can."

With that, he ejected his blade, rushing into battle before his image was once again blotted out by the smoke. I ejected my own lightsaber, comforted by the humming of its blue blade, and, joined by my silent former master and Vosh, along with Galleros Sjl and Kordath D'tana, sprinted with what little power was left in me. *If I was going to finish this, I was going to finish strong.*

We lept over an armament of standard Arconan infantry who had begun shooting under the cover of a wall made of supply crates. They cheered as we made our dramatic entrance onto the stage. They viewed us as saviors. They trusted us. This was right before I heard the explosion of a thermal detonator behind me. When I looked back, our flock was no more. Body parts and blood flew everywhere.

Immediately we were detected by our former brothers, and immediately we engaged. The togruta I locked blades with looked as distraught as I did. The look in his eyes reflected mine, and for a moment, I hesitated, and so did he. We were both just following orders. I can still remember vividly the limpness of his body as it fell to the ground.

I grabbed a Mirialan wearing the Taldryan crest by the head. I pulled him down, my knee meeting his face midway, fracturing his nose. After throwing him to the ground, I stomped on his chest. I looked down at my reflection in his metal breastplate. A bloodstained animal stared back. A bloodstained animal knelt down to him. A bloodstained animal placed its hands on his throat, and choked what little life that had not been destroyed by the war out of him. Even a Sith is more than a primal beast.

All around me were animals. I watched as Arconan officers lined up our brothers-turned-enemies that had surrendered, and executed them on spot as their hands were held up. I felt no sympathy. Originally, I was here in the hopes that I could make a name for myself and finally break into the walls of the Equites. Now, I merely wanted to survive, and to kill, and to rain vengeance upon those that were once our brothers.

Underneath the towering pyramids of Korriban, a civil war had begun. The same question echoed in my head.

*Was it all worth it?*