
Vodo Biask Taldrya - 3729

With the Sun Horuset falling over the lip of the canyon, Vodo Biask Taldrya planted a metallic foot firmly in the brown-red soil and examined his day’s progress. The dull din of battle could be heard, even now, echoing down the length of the valley and from this vantage he could even see the red, green, and blue flashes of far distant blaster fire. The air was thinner up here, nearly 1000m over the floor of the yawning Valley of the Sith Lords, which opened itself before him and began in earnest less than 2km away. It was here where his goal lay however, at the Sith Academy.

It had begun early in the day, their long hike up the thin path and scree. His Derriphan Massassi escorts were breathing heavily, having had to carry themselves, their weapons, and their armor up the steep incline while the Dark Jedi they accompanied merely drew longer, metered breaths to compensate for the thin air. His prosthetic legs had done much of the work getting him here and the strenuous bits of scrambling and climbing had barely taxed him. Ahead, perhaps another half-kilometer up a comparatively level wash was the foot of the pyramidal Academy.

His eyes trailed from that ancient bastion to the south, scanning the ridge to his left, looking for the downed LAAT/i. It had been sent here yesterday to secure the Academy from Darth Ashen’s forces and perhaps those of Esoteric’s as well, but all contact had been lost as it neared the Academy. It was supposed, by those calling the shots, that it had been shot down and it appeared that the assumption was a prescient one. He could see a smattering of wreckage strewn about the rock face to the south and the area below covering several acres of rocky, barren dirt.

There were few plants on Korriban and it was beyond him how it was the oxygen of this planet was constantly renewed. In other systems various natural processes recycled atmospheric carbon into breathable gases. Here, this world appeared dead. It was a wonder that it had ever spawned the species that had brought the Galaxy to its knees time and time again. Though the Sith were largely gone, and their Empire long dead, this world remained as alive as it ever had been. And it was alive; Vodo could feel the Force here. The Dark Side emanated from the core of the planet and infused every stone, every brick, and every breeze with its sinister yet familiar embrace.

He reached out, trying to determine what was awaiting him ahead. He sensed nothing out of sorts. The wreckage was inert and he felt no life signs there. The VOICE’s agents had probably succumbed to the impact. A pity, he thought to himself, those two had shown promise. Mav had found a pair of very unique covert assets in them and Vodo wasn’t afraid to admit to himself that he was jealous. His own network of spies and informants, that had served adequately while upon the Dark Council, would have been well served by the Ust’essi sisters. It didn’t hurt that they dressed rather scandalously in an organization, like the Brotherhood, that was populated with old Imperial Pilots, acolytes buried in their robes, and few Twi’lek.

 “Rizvaer, take your men and scout that LAAT/i. You don’t need to poke around long, just verify the casualties and return to me at the Academy”, the Derriphan squad leader beat a fist against his chest in salute and gathered the escort to accompany him up the ridge.

Vodo continued his way towards the Academy. As accomplished as he was in the lore of the Ancient Sith, their Empires, their Conquests, their language, and the crises they’d inspired in millennia past the Epis had never actually set foot on Korriban itself. He’d been on-planet less than 24hrs and now he was approaching the legendary Sith Academy. Darth Revan had passed through here. Lord Kaan had raised his own Brotherhood here and trained his disciples. Marka Ragnos had over seen Okemi’s tutelage in this very place and from that ultimately arrived the present day Brotherhood. He took in the majesty of the place, as run down and decayed as it was, and basked in awe. It was perhaps this distraction which allowed him to be so surprised.

“You must be the rescue party”, he voice was husky, low and sultry.

Vodo’s lightsaber was in hand at once, summoned from the magnetic hard-point on his back. He quickly recognized the visage of one of the sisters, though he had no clue which, “You’re alive.”

She was seated upon a rather protruding boulder off the side of the trail and several feet over him, “Very astute. I recognize you, Biask is it?”

“Yes. Where’s your sister? Is it only you here?”

She didn’t say anything for a moment, he eyes wavering slightly at the mention of the missing girl, “Only me.”

Vodo couldn’t figure it out but there was something about her eyes that caught his attention. She broke his piercing gaze after a few moments, “The Academy is secure. There’s been no one here except some rodents and ghosts for centuries.”

“Good. I’ll report to my Consul and he’ll let the VOICE know your condition”, Vodo put her eyes out of his head, they too were distracting, “In the mean time I wish to examine the Academy myself.”

“It’s a ruin. The foyer has collapsed and access to most of the pyramid is restricted by fallen debris. When does our shuttle arrive?”

 Vodo furrowed his brow, “There will be no shuttle. We’re to wait here and dig in until reinforcements make it up the hill. After you were shot down all air transports were grounded until Air Superiority could be ensured, and I wouldn’t count on that after Antei.”

Her face betrayed the faintest of irritations but quickly reverted to neutral. She stood up and dusted her tight fitting pants off, “Great. Well, you should follow me then. I found an entrance last night.”

She turned, her hip pushing out to the side as she looked over her shoulder and down upon the Krath Epis, “Oh, my name is Nalia.”

Rizvaer surveyed the wreckage. Debris was strewn all over the high-altitude clearing but lay primarily in three large clusters. The remains of the tail and engine pods lay up the ridge another 500m and he dispatched two of his warriors to investigate. The troop bay and a hefty portion of the wing’s blade lay ahead of him, and further west lay several pieces of the nose section where the pilot and copilot copulas were. He sent one warrior down that way and kept one for himself in his inspection of the midsection.

A Massassi, Korriban was his ancestral home. His forbearers had once been Sith themselves, but had slowly been mutated and improved until they were the impressive, fearsome warriors that had once rampaged across the Galaxy at the behest of the Dark Lord. Rizvaer had to push these thoughts out of his head though. He couldn’t allow the distraction to break his concentration. It was difficult to do so though when the juxtaposition was so queer. Subjectively, he and his tribe had been here on Korriban only two years ago.

The Derriphan had been Bonded to a Sith Lord, a vassal of the Dark Lord Marka Ragnos. They had served as his enforcers, his shock troops, and at times as his Honor Guard. The Palaces, the Tombs, and the Academy itself were no stranger to him. Rather, they hadn’t been. Seeing this planet in ruins, the remains of the once mighty Sith Empire in shambles was difficult to rectify in his mind. Okemi had stolen them. He had stolen the Bond, had secreted the Derriphan away and placed them in stasis in preparation of the day in which he made his move against Ragnos. That day never came and the Derriphan slept for 5000 years. 2 years or 5000 years, it made no difference. Okemi was dead. Ragnos was dead. Korriban was dead.

The LAAT/i had clearly taken a hard hit. The Massassi warrior approached the wreckage and surmised that a Surface to Air missile had impacted somewhere, probably the tail where the wreckage was least whole. The troop bay had survived mostly intact, a testament to its construction and the care the designers had given to the survivability of the passengers. No one had survived this however and the bay was a mess of gore. Severed limbs, burnt chunks of plasteel armor, and corpses littered the interior. The bay lay on its port side, the left side door pinned under its bulk, and he peered in through cracks in the hull and splintered body panels.

“Under-Arban, there’s no one left here”, the warrior that had accompanied him, Jinsko’v, reported from the other side of the hull.

Rizvaer nodded to himself and hefted his weapon and trotted around the backside. They were joined shortly thereafter by the warrior he’d dispatched to the nose section. The Massassi reported the bodies of both pilots were still strapped to their seats, clearly dead. It took another hour for the last two to rejoin them from the higher wreckage.

“We found no bodies, or survivors, Under-Arban.”

He hadn’t expected any, but noted it anyhow. Between the bodies he’d counted and those of the pilots he tallied ten. The transport had taken off from Forward Operating Base Besh with two crew, two gunners, eight troopers, and two Jedi. That left four unaccounted. The wing still somewhat attached to the hull was crushed and the gunner’s pod was under the bulk of the wreckage. It could be assumed the man was dead. The second wing seemed to be laying in several hundred pieces across the plain and so that one too could be assumed to have perished. That left the two Jedi.

“What of the Twi’lek? The Jedi that were supposed to be here”, Rizvaer directed one of his warriors to recheck the mid-section.

The warrior returned quickly, “All human in there, Under-Arban.”

His brow furrowed. The Jedi could have survived, with their use of the Force. Where had they gotten to? Had they gone ahead with their mission and proceeded to the Academy? Either they had or they hadn’t. His mission here was complete and he needed to rendezvous with Epis Biask before it was dark anyhow.

Nalia’s hips swayed with each step. Normally immune to the wiles of the finer sex Vodo found himself staring at times. Lacking the proper—equipment, nothing would ever come of them coupling. A man of Vodo’s particular interests and talents could find many ways to find his pleasure though, especially if the other party wasn’t entirely willing or enjoying themselves. The Jedi glanced over her shoulder at that moment and looked the Epis up and down. She couldn’t have read my thoughts that easily, Vodo reassured himself. She probably had sensed the dark turn in his disposition. He would have to guard his emotions more closely. Focus. Focus on the mission.

“Come, it’s not much further. We’ll want to get inside before dark. There may be Shyrack inside, but there are certainly Tuk’ata outside”, the woman picked up her paced and was matched effortlessly by Vodo.

He couldn’t read her well. Her emotions were in turmoil, perhaps from the loss of the sister she was very close to, but her body language spoke of confidence and purpose. Twi’lek found it difficult to lie to one another; their lekku twitched and writhed subconsciously communicating sub-vocally in a language all its own. Even aliens who learned to interpret the motions and movements of the head-tails often missed subtle hints and suggestions that were all too apparent to one whose head sprouted the large fleshy appendages.

“What happened to your transport?”

“We crashed”.

The Epis was not amused, “Clearly. What happened?”

She stopped and turned around, her hands planted on her hips as she drew long controlled breaths to acclimate to the ever increasing altitude, “We were two clicks out from the Academy drop site. The Co-Pilot had just turned on the Ready Light in the cabin so we were all checking our gear when the Pilot announced a target lock and began evasive maneuvers. Next thing I know I woke up a couple hundred meters from the burning wreck and the light fading around me.”

Though her lekku twitched in truthfulness, he couldn’t shake the feeling that something was off. Studying her face he was only convinced that this woman wasn’t telling him something. There was a darkness about her that he found difficult to resolve with what he knew of her and her allegiance to the Jedi. Vodo could have sworn there was a sharpness to her glare and a subtle shadow around her eyes that made them beautiful in the same way that a predator was; dangerous and splendid.

Nalia didn’t wait for his follow up question and turned. Her pace resumed and Vodo followed. The Academy loomed over them and its shadow’s presence could be felt. Its imposing weight spoke of millennia of silence; its towering and colossal bulk a testament to a species that hadn’t occupied this planet for nearly 5000 years, but whose legacy still affected Galactic events and currents. While the true battle raged in the Valley of the Sith Lords, still very much audible in the not-to distance, both sides hoped to find relics, untouched artifacts or historical curiosities here even though the Jedi Order had done its best over those several millennia to scour the site clean. Lord Kaan’s Brotherhood, Darth Malik’s Army, and Darth Vitiate’s Empire had all certainly taken their toll on the site as well; taking what wasn’t nailed down and leaving their own detritus in its wake.

Proceeding at a trot the Massassi were making good time. They didn’t bother with keeping to cover this far from known enemy positions. There was always the chance a sniper was watching but tactical forecasts had been thorough and had predicted that any enemy contact would be swift, out in the open, and obvious. Right now, returning to Vodo Biask Taldrya was Under-Arban Rizvaer’s primary objective. His armored helmet’s HUD brightened the darkening terrain making his every footstep sure. Last they’d been here, the Palace of the Sith Lord had been lighted with fire torches, an anachronism by that time to be sure, but it was again the juxtaposition that was on his mind.

Rizvaer, and all of the Derriphan, were equipped in Typhojem Armor. Specially designed by the Clan Taldryan for the Massassi to fit their unique anatomy and combat role, each armored suit was light-weight but extremely durable and effective. In training he’d seen a Warrior take a full powered blast from a heavy blaster pistol wielded by a Human Training Sergeant to the chest. The Warrior had been laid out after the shot but quickly climbed back to his feet with a three inch wide carbon score on his breastplate.

The technological capabilities of the armor still boggled the experienced Warrior. Under-Arban Rizvaer had been trained in hand to hand combat and the use of his Lanvarok since birth and had been receiving blaster training for over a year and a half now at the hands of Taldryan’s best, but it was really this armor that made him feel even more formidable. He could see in the dark of night. He could see a map of the terrain and the way points that would lead him to his objective. Also impressive was the audio-amplification hardware that made even the slightest of noises perfectly audible.

A rock slipped to the Warriors’ left. Rizvaer called an immediate halt to their progress. The Derriphan hunkered down in place without hesitation and took up a scanning over-watch. Each Massassi watched a different quarter and moved their weapon’s muzzle slowly back and forth through it as they waited. Rizvaer took slow breaths, calming his beating heart and opened his physical senses. It had been a rock tumbling, the noise of it striking another one on its way down. The hill here wasn’t so steep that rocks just moved on their own. Had they somehow dislodged it in their haste? No—the noise had been too far removed from the party.

“Contact le—“

A snap-hiss of a lightsaber filled his ears, cutting the warrior behind Rizvaer off. He snapped around, bringing his rifle to bare to see his trooper also cut in half and a Twi’lek woman flying at him, her sapphire lightsaber filling his vision.

The distant retort of blaster fire coincided with a curious tingle in his lekku. Vodo knew to trust those shivers that started in the tips of his head tails and sometimes grew to crawl all up and down the skin covering them. His hand went straight to the meter long saber hilt on his back and clasped it.

Nalia heard the magnetic hardpoint click as it released and glanced over her shoulder, “Something amiss, Krath?”

 “Time for full disclosure, Nalia. What’s going on here?”

They were now at the base of the massive construction that was the Sith Academy. The true entrance was above and to their left. They’d passed the path leading up to it some time back and true to her word, Vodo could see in the last of the Day’s light that several large rocks and fallen pillars blocked the entrance. Down here, by the foot of the pyramid, the cool air brushed past them swiftly. Vodo had drawn his hood up earlier and wrapped one of his lekku around his throat and over the far shoulder and the exposed skin tickled in the breeze.

Her coy expression said more than her words, “What’s going on?”

The Krath Epis ignited his lightsaber, its meter long blade emerging from the unorthodox hilt, “No more games, Jedi. Tell me what you—”

She didn’t allow him to finish. With a flick of her wrist several rocks the size of a fist came flying at Vodo like cannonballs. He shifted into a defensive stance, whirling his blade this way and that to dissect the missiles. With each spin of his weapon the silver blade passed through a rock and met no resistance. An illusion! Nalia was gone, disappearing around a cornerstone, and Vodo was now hot in pursuit.

He found the entrance she’d spoken of rather easily, appearing to be a service entrance weathered by the ages. She was unfortunately much quicker than he was over the hard rock floor and was easily pulling away. Choosing caution over initiative Vodo slowed and watched for traps and ambushes. What was going on? Had the Jedi sabotaged their mission and turned cloak? Who was she working for? Could her sister still be alive? He played these possibilities through his mind looking for the most probable situation.

Within the Academy the cool air was oppressive. Constructed of solid stone blocks at its lowest levels the foundations themselves seemed to suck the heat from the air and his body. Nonetheless he dropped his robe to the ground, it could only get in the way should it come to violence; There was no doubt in his mind that it would. He listened carefully as he proceeded. His heavy metal legs clanked noisily with each step so stealth was unlikely to aid him here in the echoing corridors. Instead he grabbed at the Dark Side and bid it do his will. He exuded calm and malevolence. He pushed an aura of danger, patience, and sadism into the area around him. He hoped he could induce fear into his prey. He wanted her panicked. Vodo wanted to relish in the hunt and her to know it. Her fear would lead him like a beacon. It would empower him and weaken her.

Her mind was closed off to him though, unsurprising in another Force User but disappointing all the same. As he proceeded he kept himself open to the Force, waiting for that moment when it would warn him of impending danger. He would only have an instant, a fraction of the moment, to react or be felled. And there it was, like a familiar lover. His saber snapped to life and the silver light it cast illuminated the dark in a ghostly white shimmer that clashed violently with her sapphire blade. She’d materialized from the dark like a phantom, her blade in hand, and after several quick parried blows she was gone again. Vodo was taken aback.

His keen Twi’lek eyes could pierce the dark better than a human’s, the advantage of evolving as a semi-subterranean species, but only as well as his quarry could. In the dark it seemed that she was queen and she could wrap herself in the Force, cloak herself against detection, appear and disappear at will. The corridor opened up into a larger chamber that expanded many meters to either side of him. Vodo swept his saber in an enormous arc simultaneously clearing his immediate vicinity of anyone inside his reach and illuminating all corners of the room. An enormous shadow glowered in the center of the chamber. Vodo suspected he knew what it was and as he carefully paced forward his suspicions were confirmed. A giant stone statue of a human man stood there, powerfully built and beautifully sculpted. A bald head and etched tattoos around his eyes betrayed his identity. This was the site of the Tomb of Darth Bane, progenitor of the Order of Sith Lords and the Rule of Two. This was hallowed ground.

Nalia was not impressed however and she took advantage of Vodo’s awe. Her sapphire blade again hissed to life, this time above him as she dropped from somewhere on the statue. Vodo lurched backward and watched as the lithe woman hit the ground and launched at him in a blindingly fast reposte. The advantage was his as long as he could keep her from disappearing however. Over 2 meters long, Vodo’s lightsaber was unique within the Brotherhood. It bore a greater resemblance to a short Saber Pike than a traditional lightsaber and Vodo had trained relentlessly to perfect his mastery of Ataru to it.

He jabbed and prodded with the tip of his blade at her, causing her to dodge and juke to avoid impalement. Each time she moved, every time she parried, he nimbly readjusted his saber. Vodo probed her defense, pushing the saber at her, pulling it back and thrusting again relentlessly. Occasionally he’d thrust forward and swipe sideways, swishing the silver blade of light through the air. He moved methodically, constantly shifting his lateral movement in both directions while slowly advancing on her. She was constantly on the defensive. Vodo watched as she redirected his probing attacks with graceful sweeping arcs and short staccatos; she was a practitioner of Form III, Soresu. All the better, as that had been the first Form he’d mastered.

The Epis switched all at once from agile probing into a vicious overhead strike. The silver blade moved so quickly that it seemingly created a solid arcing trail. The Jedi, to her credit, reacted swiftly and met the blade inches from her head, angling her saber so that the momentum of the Dark Jedi’s attack carried it off to her left. She flowed into a counter-attack, seeking to sever the Krath’s head from his shoulders as she brought her saber around in a circle but instead found her adversary already in her guard. Vodo planted a large taloned foot in her ribcage and sent her flying backward into the state of the venerable Dark Lord.

“You can’t beat me, Jedi”, he placed a mental pressure on her, “I am stronger than you. I am faster than you. I am *better* than you.”

She picked herself off the floor and shook her head, clearing her mind of the pain and pressure. Her eyes glowed a pale yellow faintly in the dark of the chamber. Her chortle began lowly and grew slowly to a loud hysterical laugh, “Fool!”

She flourished her weapon in the air and readied herself in a combat stance, “You have no idea what I am. We are so much more now.”

Vodo’s grin vanished in an instant, the implication of her words suddenly revelatory. He spun, his blade in motion, and only barely caught the second blue lightsaber’s blade before it would have bisected his torso. The other Ust’essi sister, Rhiaen, stood there with the same yellow glow in her eyes. Her mouth was twisted in a malevolent sneer as she strained with the effort of her attack. She disengaged, leapt backward and in that moment her sister attacked from the other side.

Nalia’s saber was a blur in the darkness and it danced across his vision, partially blinding him. Vodo opened himself to the Force, trusting in it to guide him but even that was pushing his limits. He trained constantly against the best his Clan could muster, but rarely did he train against two opponents at once. It was statistically more likely that if he were to oppose two duelists at once that he would have a Clanmate present to help him. Jedi and Dark Jedi were precious resources and at his level of mastery, as middling as it still was, it was rare to send two to the do the job one could accomplish alone.

Rhiaen moved forward and engaged. Vodo parried high to one side, batted away low at the other. He thrust his saber forward and found it shoved away and used the gyroscopic force to spin it the opposite direction to deflect a combo of strikes aimed at his torso and head. They moved the length of the room as all three jockeyed for position. Every time Vodo managed to get both of them in front of him where he could deal with both at once the twin Jedi seemed to instinctively know how to move to bracket him again without ever saying a word.

Rhiaen leapt, her blade over her head while her sister Nalia crouched low and swept in a semi-circle. Vodo pressed his off hand at the Jedi in the air sending her flying backwards off into the darkness, her position discernible by the blue saber at her side as she landed with a dull thud. At the same time he lifted his dominant leg, raising it from the path of the second weapon and lashed out, planting his large taloned-foot on Nalia’s forehead. She too went crashing backward, though the much nearer stone wall on her side arrested her stop.

Taking the moment of peace Vodo gathered himself and focused his rage. Needing both hands he secured his saber on the magnetic hardpoint against his cuirass’s back-plate. He then quickly wove out a complicated series of spells, filling the air with what appeared to be a black cloud of the Force. He disappeared into the fog which seemingly spread across the entire chamber taking the darkness and turning it black. He filled the air with his presence as though he were everywhere at once. The sisters would sense him beside them, in front of them, and behind them at once. The Krath was very careful to maintain his concentration, carefully constructing each illusion and tailoring them to each Jedi for maximum effect.

He could watch them as they rose to their feet, shaking off the pain. Each swept their blade around, seeking to dispel the blackness and find the other. Slowly, methodically, they began moving towards one-another, “Nalia! Where is he?”

“Frelling Krath Sorcery! Rhiaen, stay close to me.”

Vodo moved toward them slowly, careful to tread softly enough his footfalls were lost in the moment and the illusion. He watched them reach out and clasp hands, reassuring each-other that they were indeed together. They stood back to back, slowly circling clockwise expecting an attack at any moment. It was quite beautiful to watch really, the identical twins circling rhythmically. They swept their matching sabers around themselves protectively as though he’d be daft enough to come close. He wouldn’t be able to keep this going for too much longer but it had allowed him to formulate his plan.

He dropped the illusion all at once hoping to disorient them with the sudden change in perception. Suddenly Vodo was in one place and the blackness was gone, but all their stolen senses were suddenly returned and he hoped the onslaught of information would let him catch them off guard. Summoning one last illusion he hurled it straight at the one closest to him.

Nalia’s saber rose to deflect the thrown saber she saw flying at her like a spear but Rhiaen who had not been its target saw through the deception, “Nalia! No—“

It was too late however. Nalia’s saber passed through the apparition and left her mid-section entirely exposed to the actual saber that twirled through the air at her. It passed through her navel sideways cleanly and flew back to Vodo’s outstretched hand. The Twi’lek girl collapsed to the ground in two parts, already dead. Rhiaen was enraged and snapped. She literally flew through air, covering the ten meters separating them. Her eyes were now glowing a bright amber-yellow and her voice had dropped an octave as she roared in fury. Caught off guard by the ferocity of the attack and the change in her demeanor, Vodo found himself on the defensive and giving ground briskly.

She backed him into Bane’s massive stone shin. Rhiaen’s blue lightsaber carved furrow after furrow into the statue as Vodo managed to only just barely block the onslaught. He scowled with the effort of trying to keep the Jedi from taking his head off. To call her a Jedi now seemed outmoded as she was clearly channeling the Dark Side and plenty of it. Finally managing to free himself from the statue with a brief counter-attack he opened the space between them. She raised her hand at him, her fingers pointed at him and splayed. His eyes went wide as tendrils of blue-white Lightning arced at his face. Vodo brought his saber up defensively which acted like a Lightning Rod, drawing the attack into itself. When she exhausted herself he angled the blade and redirected the current at her.

Rhiaen snapped her blade up and caught the Lightning and redirected it back at Vodo reflexively. With his blade still in the way the Lightning cackled and hissed as it arced back and forth infinitely between the two weapons. Vodo placed a foot forward and brought himself a half-meter closer to her. She followed suit until their sabers’ blades were a mere hands-width apart and the Lightning appeared as a series of solid lines strung between the two. Each struggled with the effort of maintaining their grasp on their hilt. When one tried angling their saber blade a few degrees the other mimicked.

“What’s happened to you? This isn’t the power of a Jedi.” Vodo’s glare was locked with hers; their contest of wills now paralleling their test of endurance and control.

Rhiaen’s mouth quivered with exertion as she spoke, a light smile tingeing the corners of her mouth, “Bane. Bane happened. He filled us with his power, his energy, and his teachings. He showed us how to survive against adversity last night and implored us to do his bidding. First, I must kill you and what was to be Nalia and I’s will now be mine alone!”

Appearing from nowhere a giant humanoid figure in dark colored armor slammed into the Jedi with its mass and sent her flying to the ground. With the Lightning suddenly released from its loop it unleashed itself away from Vodo into the figure which sailed into Bane’s crotch and fell limply to the floor. The Krath Epis strode till he stood over Rhiaen. She reached for the saber hilt that lay just out of her grasp. It wiggled, clinking on the stone ground before it moved to her outstretched hand. Vodo casually swept his saber blade across the hilt’s path, cleaving it asunder. Rhiaen made a pitiful noise of desperation and resignment.

With his saber now at her throat he examined the Jedi’s eyes. She lay on her back, blood leaking slowly from several contusions. Her eyes were normal now, the glow had faded to nothing before him and left only a pathetic broken Jedi woman laying there. She sobbed in fear breathlessly, quietly awaiting her fate. Filled with the glory of victory over an enemy he relished in the emotions pouring from her. Slowly Vodo dipped the point of his saber into the soft of her throat just far enough to open her airway to the darkness and removed it. Her screams and ugly gasps echoed murderously upon the stone walls. She clasped at her throat, clawed at the air, and attempted to crawl away but found herself pinned to the ground by the ever increasing weight of the Dark Jedi’s foot upon her chest. Growing short of breath, and the lights going out in her head Vodo released his weight upon her. Her eyes went wide as one last gasp of air filled her burning lungs before the silver blade passed effortlessly across her entire neck, ending it.

Vodo’s skin prickled with the act. He was electrified with the ecstasy of it all and lifted his arms to his side and boomed triumphantly. Bane’s Ghost never said a thing to him however. If it was not pleased with the display, Vodo cared not at all. His moment complete he walked slowly toward the Statue of Bane to the crumpled pile of armor and flesh there. It twitched spasmodically as though the nerves were trying to reboot the organic tissue. Using his foot he flipped the body over and used his saber to spread some light over it.

“Rizvaer.”

Vodo removed the Derriphan’s helmet gingerly and set beside the Massassi’s head, “You saved my life and I am grateful. Where are your warriors?”

Rizvaer’s mouth tried to form several words before he coughed up blood. Clearing his airway he managed to mutter, “Ambushed—Jedi. Dead.”

Vodo glanced at Rhiaen’s body, and then saw the sucking wounding on the Under-Arban’s right side. He remembered the blaster fire just before Nalia had run in here and nodded perceptively, “How do you wish to go?”

The Massassi’s eyes were having trouble focusing and his arms couldn’t quite find the strength to reach Vodo’s hand holding the saber over them, but the Epis understood. Vodo flipped the weapon until it pointed down and plunged the weapon into the Under-Arban’s chest, through his heart, and he was dead instantly. The chamber’s darkness, suddenly overbearing, absorbed the last of the air escaping Rizvaer’s lungs. Vodo collected his robe on his way out of the Academy and stood in the chilled night air of Korriban. Everything was quiet, save the distant din of battle. He alone would secure this site until Grand Master Cotelin saw fit to send his relief. Should Esoteric’s or Ashen’s men arrive first, they’d find him an implacable foe.