GM Jac Cotelin/Clan Taldryan (PIN: 6)

The jolt was faint, very faint. But it was there. It was most definitely there. He could feel it. In the distance; it was beyond reach, but it was something. The lightest touch of feeling. A remote tremor. The clear sense of another.

For a time it remained, and he was afraid to respond lest he lose the connection. This was too important, too necessary. It had been so long, and he didn't want it to end. That faint object of his desire; he needed it. He desired it.

Then there was more. The faint pulsing grew steadily, striking harder at the senses as more and more intensity added to the mix. A fervor of activity rushed forth in a constant swirl of emotion and excitement. He could not tell whether the excitement was his own or those in the distance. *A mix of both, perhaps?* he thought, though it did not matter. All that mattered was that they were here, and he could feel. People were here, and he was awake. He was awake and feeling after so long.

That is, Thuy Nasir was awake only to the extent a specter is either asleep or awake. Distracted, he considered for a moment that very question. *Have I been asleep? I have surely been away from my thoughts for a long time, but was it sleep?* He could not remember what it felt like to sleep, nor what it really felt like to be awake. A thousand years will do that to a soul.

No matter how he had spent the prior years, this new change in circumstances was a welcome distraction. A strong connection that he felt confident he could follow, something that he would not lose. Something that was new and--finally--different.

For some reason, Thuy had the urge to speak. He let his lips part to make way for his first words in a hundred years. Had he given some thought to what those first words would be, he might have said something more profound. But not having given it the requisite thought, he simply said the first thing that came to mind: "I'm hungry," he said. Or at least he thought he said the words. To the world beyond him it would have been a whisper, if anything. It would have been unintelligible to say the least, if not for the fact that it was a language long unheard, but also that he had forgotten what it was to speak. *What is it for me to speak, anyway?* he thought, considering again his particular situation. *It is not like I have the ability to do so. It's not like I have the vocal cords or tongue.*

Were it not for the pulsating feeling that had initially given him rise, he may have pondered his state much longer. But the tremor was there and he felt a sense of urgency to seek it out. *I will remember to consider these things later.* He looked around, aimlessly turning his head and eyes in all directions, despite the fact that he simply sensed all that was around him without regard to sight. *How did I get here?* he pondered, trying to remember the last time that he had paid attention to his surroundings. Thuy “saw” the world in shades of gray, and he learned early on that light no longer had a significance to him. He could, in a sense, feel matter around him, knowing what was there and what was not. The spirit could not remember what it meant to see light, to know color, or to feel the world around him.

He approached the closest wall, the shades of gray that defined it coming more into focus. Thuy put his hand to the structure, as always with the expectation that he would feel the material. But his hand passed through as always. He guessed that to the extent he knew that there should have been a feeling, he did touch the wall. But there were no nerves to send a signal to a non-existent brain. He floated into the wall, and as he moved he saw the earthen frame of the cavern, gray layers of what he knew to be sand, mud and earth.

Had he still been human, the feeling of excitement might have overtaken Thuy. It had been so very long since he departed his tomb, so long since he had ventured out into what he knew to be the open air. And the beating tremor called to him, beckoning him to come forth. So he did just that, moving as swift as he could toward the feeling, navigating his path by the strength of the signal. As he moved, he passed through other openings, taking note of new places to explore on his way home. *Why have I not explored here before?* he asked himself. He paused at an underground river, watching the lapping gray particles move below him. When the feeling called again, he moved onward, floating over the river in exactly the way a stone wouldn't. He glided through until the gray melted away before him to reveal a massive open expanse.

A wave of recognition overtook Thuy as the memories of his life came roaring back. Though he could not remember the sight of light, he remembered distinctly the look of this place, or, more accurately, the feeling of horror it brought. He had been an important man here, a teacher to many young aspiring Sith students. The ending of that career had not been pleasant. It was just a memory of horror, though. *Just a bad memory*, he reminded himself. He remembered that long ago he had rid himself of those anxieties that kept him from the Valley of the Dark Lords. He had confronted those fears, though too late to make him brave in life, he was no longer afraid in death. He would not shy away from this place, not with the knowledge that people had come. Not with the knowledge that those people were strong in the Force. No, he had waited too long for this day.

The expansive valley stood before him like it had in his prime, sharp gray cliffs reaching out and around to envelop the land over which he floated. Most was untouched since his last visit, though some new piles of gray earth littered the base of the walls nearest to him. He could see that the statues still stood erect, some jutting out from the faces of rock and some freestanding within the Valley. The intricate patterns that were carved in the homages could barely be detected given the subtle distinction in the gray that he saw. But he knew those intricate carvings. He had studied them. *My, I hated that work, determining which Sith Lord was which*, he thought. *They were all dead, so what did they matter?* Apparently as much as he did now.

Having gathered his bearings, he glided forward once again, moving toward the visitors that he could feel so clearly. He hadn't dared to hope before, when the feeling was but a whisper, but now he knew. The visitors were strong in the Force. “And I can feel them,” he uttered excitedly. He could still feel the Force. Even in death, he could still feel the Force!

The landscape flew by below him and all around. Though he knew that he could simply flow through obstacles, he still dodged this way and that, taking care not to disturb the monoliths and other structures that had been built to honor more significant souls. He had enough of those encounters in the past and cared not for another. That was, after all, why he had found a nice quiet corner of the Valley in which to slumber. He had had enough of them all; the dead were worse than the living.

Around an arching stone sculpture and through a cut in the valley floor, he followed the scent that called to him. He knew where they were now, and he knew where to find them. The Sith Academy was the only place of concern on this side of the Valley, and he knew that place well. It wasn't long until it stood before him once more. “Ah, home sweet home,” he whispered, the sound again just a faint stir in the wind. The pyramid structure rose above him, looking massive even in the distance. Unlike the intricate carvings of the sith tombs, he could see clearly the form of the academy. Its sharp angles and clear silhouette filled his senses. It was markedly different from its surroundings and he welcomed the sight of the familiar structure.

When his focus dropped down from the mass of smooth gray stone, he saw his new friends at its base. Small figures in the distance littered the ground below the Sith Academy, skirting back and forth. From the distance, he could not make out quite what they were doing, but it seemed to be back-breaking work. Teams of two and three carried items across the commons. He recognized that vehicles were moving in the background, some appearing to be equipment-movers themselves. On the far side, barely distinguishable against the face of the rock behind it, he made out the shapes of larger craft. Though eons had passed since he had seen one, the craft bore the unmistakable look of shuttlecraft. Then, to his absolute delight, one of the craft elevated to the sky, light gray shooting from its rear engines to propel it forward. He could not believe his eyes; it had been so long since he had witnessed such a sight.

*Closer*, he thought. *I must go closer*. As he approached, it became more obvious what the men were doing. Their light gray forms carried crates and weaponry to various places along the flat before the Academy. Large machines with forklifts in front carefully placed defensive walls in a strategic formation on that main level. Taller than a man, the walls seemed to have placements for men to stand on top and reign terror on those below. *Battlements*, he thought, marveling at the operations before him. He moved closer again.

The men shouted at each other in a language that he could not comprehend, though he could understand the gist of what they were saying. Certain of the group were obviously in charge, standing behind the workers and directing the flow of equipment. The shuttlecraft were now coming and going with regularity, and with each new arrival, more men poured forth with new gray packages. Hundreds of them littered the ground, and looking upward he could see the same type of movement on the cliff faces that surrounded the Academy. The fortifications were here at the strongest point in the valley. They were setting up a defensive posture, or perhaps a base of operations.

He weaved in and out of the workers, gliding passed them, feeling for the signs of the Force. Occasionally he would feel raw energy emanating from one of the men, but none of them were the source of the power that woke him. These men were but soldiers. Those truly gifted in the Force were beyond, in the Academy itself.

Thuy turned toward the entrance of the Academy to make his way inside. It was then that the first blasts struck. He did not sense them coming, but saw the dark gray lines swirl the air and displace the ground. He watched as the men that were there flew backwards, their deformed bodies smacking hard against the stone on which they stood. Panic took hold of the other men as similar blasts struck along the perimeter of the defenses. The soldiers stopped their act of preparing for battle and moved quickly to their fighting positions.

He looked up, trying to find where the lasers had come from. There he saw in the distance what looked at first blush to be another shuttle. But as it approached, he saw a tight formation of starships spread outward and once again engage. Their angled wings spit gray fire at the base of the Sith Academy, finding fewer easy targets the second time around. It appeared that the Valley offered a great deal of protection to the Academy itself; the fighters were forced to pull out of the Valley before they were able to get a clean shot that would clear the defenses that had been erected. And though their damage was minimal, the fighters kept on their strafing runs, and were joined by countless more. Thuy did not know what to think. It had been a dozen lifetimes since he had witnessed such a sight. He enjoyed the commotion.

The defenses on the cliff walls did not fare as well. Although it appeared that those defenses contained some anti-aircraft weaponry, it was clear that no one was ready for the attacks. He watched as soldiers and debris were thrown from the cliff faces. He was amazed at the detail he could see as the men fell, the gray splattering of blood and entrails ending the lives of the soldiers. The starfighters concentrated on those defenses, battering them, easy targets that they were. *They were unprepared*, Thuy thought. He wondered who the sides to this battle were. *Surely the Jedi and Sith are not still fighting after all of these years. One had to have won by now.*

Reinforcements came quickly. Within minutes, additional starfighters joined the mix above the Valley, these ones taking aim at the aggressors. Thuy couldn’t keep them straight, the dark flat wings of each fighter looking too similar to tell apart. All he knew was that the pilots were beyond good; they were amazing. Looping in, out and around each other, neither side gained traction and only one fighter was lost during the fray. *But maybe that’s the goal*, he thought, *to protect the main forces as they land*. He saw numerous shuttlecraft bypass the dogfight to touch down on the valley floor. Both of these armies then had boots on the ground.

It was all becoming too much to bear for him. He had done nothing for ages and then this overtakes all of his senses, or those he still had. He could not keep straight the action that he was seeing. The gray lines began to blur. Small particles floated through the air, smoke for sure, which clouded his view. He was confused as to whom was whom.

Suddenly, as quick as the confusion came, it was gone. He felt again the pulsing that he had woken for. The faint feeling was no longer beyond the Sith Academy. No, it was growing stronger as new figures exited the structure and others landed via aircraft outside the defensive perimeter. The Jedi had finally arrived. And he remembered why he had come out to play.

Thuy Nasir was hungry.

Gray lasers blurred past him, firing in both toward the battlements and down from behind the walls. Thuy panicked for a moment when one blast shot through his chest, until he remembered that he was already dead. *That was close*, he humored himself. At the head of the approaching line, Thuy saw the Jedi. They were unmistakable, their confident charge forward with lightsabers extended. Thuy saw the gray flashes as blades connected with incoming fire. He knew the defenses hadn’t been fully erected, but he marveled at how ineffective the incoming fire was against the oncoming horde.

The men on the defensive knew it as well, and as the attackers came near, a wave of Jedi launched from behind the various structures to intercept. They were all around Thuy now, everywhere he watched was filled with combat. Sound filled his ears, screams of anger, aggression, horror and despair. Thuy could feel the flux of the Force, sensing the draw of power around him as those engaged in combat used their powers to the fullest. The spirit could sense when a man fell, the connection to the Force suddenly severing. But he was disappointed: none of those early deaths were of those men who would have been strong enough to keep their spirit in this world. Thuy looked around, hoping to find a battle that would create a new spiritual friend.

He quickly focused on two obviously skilled opponents. They clashed in the center of the causeway to the Sith Academy, their sabers darting back and forth on attack and defense. Thuy gaped at the ability of the opponents. They leapt and spun around each other, never giving or taking ground. The Force moved at their beck and call as each man used it to his advantage. Thuy saw the unmistakable sight of lightning arc from the fingertips of one man, only to be deflected by the saber of the other. Then inhuman speed allowed the space between the combatants to close, and they were once again jabbing and parrying.

And then, with the slightest mistake, one of the men gave it all away. He overextended a swing of his saber and opened his backside to attack. With one quick flick of his opponent’s lightsaber, the man’s torso was sliced in two. His lifeless body dropped to the ground as the living man ran forward to his next battle. But Thuy stayed and watched. *I like to watch them struggle with their first steps*, he thought, knowing that this man had been strong enough that a spirit would emerge.

That was what happened. From the corpse of the dissected Jedi emerged a light grey form, a cloud of dense mist that floated above the body. For a few moments, nothing changed about the mist, but then it started to take shape. First the rough torso of a man, then the arms legs and head. In but a few moments, the man had learned to remake his image. The new spirit stared dumfounded at the lifeless body below. It floated there, making no movements and ignoring the battle that raged beyond. *I remember that feeling*, Thuy thought, *the ultimate despair and confusion. It’s unfortunate that he knows not what is coming next.*

Thuy was hungry, and his prey floated before him. Thuy called on the power of the Dark Side, augmented by the Valley of the Dark Lords and the battle within. He concentrated on the new spirit, and like he had so many times in the past, watched the confusion overtake the new being once again. Through his powers, and at the beckoning of his master, Marka Ragnos, Thuy Nasir began to consume the spirit and the power it brought. The form of the Jedi dissipated once more, and the mist flowed into Thuy, a stream of grey smoke moving through his chest. The Jedi’s spirit became a part of Thuy nearly as quickly as it had become a spirit. Thuy could feel the power flowing within him, satiating a hunger that had lasted for hundreds of years.

Content for the moment, Thuy looked around the battlefield once more. He could see and feel that other Jedi had fallen. And he could see that the others had also done their duty. Those spirits that swore fealty to the spirit of Marka Ragnos all came to the site of the battle. Dozens of specters filled the battlefield, consuming the spirits and power of the dead and watching the scene with delight. Thuy was not the only one. He was never the only one.

*And there is not a single soul that will escape today*, he thought as he floated toward his next victim.