

STRANDS OF FATE:

READY FOR BATTLE

Knight Nashiro Kakos, Tyrant's Sword (PIN #14194)

I step into my quarters and close the door behind me. The *hiss* of the blast door shuts out the noise of the *Broken Blade*, with its raucous pirates and brooding Dark Jedi. I am alone and can prepare myself for combat.

Years ago, I would have carefully laid my armor and equipment out on my standard issue Imperial bunk. I would have checked power packs twice, as sometimes they read full on the chargers when they really aren't. I would have run diagnostics on my HUD built into my helmet, because you don't want to be the commando who forgot to calibrate his night sights. Last, I would have cleaned my E-11 blaster rifle, since your weapon can always be cleaner. Then, I would have done it all again.

My equipment load-out is much smaller now, but the routine before combat begins is no less sacred. I sit cross-legged on a small mat in the center of my quarters and place my blade across my lap. The room is small and unadorned. It is a soldier's room. I may not wear a uniform any longer, but I am still a soldier. I begin to ready myself for battle.

I breathe in deeply, close my eyes, and focus on my frustrations with the crew of the *Broken Blade*. I find my hatred of my former master. I find my rage at her betrayals. The hairs on my arm stand on end as my connection to the Dark Side grows. I feed off the emotion and create a vicious cycle that pumps liquid fire through my veins. My hands feel their way down the ancient Sith runes that adorn my beloved sword. Unlike my rifle, there are no others like it. Like my rifle, it is mine.

The small recesses of unholy script feel cold to the touch as they speak to me. They push me deeper into the darkness, adding fuel to the fire that burns in my very soul. I feel my way to the handle as I focus on my anger, channeling my fury into the weapon. As my blood lust grows, so to does the thirst of my blade. I long to drive it into the flesh of my enemies. It shares my desire.

My rage reaches a crescendo, but there is no explosion of Dark Side power. I have learned to control my anger and focus my hate. I open my eyes. The world is sharper now, clearer. I stand and grip my blade in one hand. I key the door and step into a common area of the *Broken Blade*.

"My lord," says a minor crew member. He has been waiting outside of my door, afraid to enter or announce his presence. My exit surprises him. "The captain wants to know if you are ready yet."

I give him a predatory smile. He turns a pale white. I drink in his fear and lean closer to his ashen face.

"Oh yes," I say. "I am definitely ready for battle."