“Mind Your Elders”

By Braecen Kaeth (4520)

An Arcona Competition: Three Arconans and a Baby

**Selen, Dajorra System**

**The Citadel**

Masters of the shadows. Lore keepers of the Shadow Weavers. Diligent students of the ruins of Arconae Secundus. Clan Aronca had promised Braecen a unique opportunity to study the journals of the original Shadow Lord, Mejas Doto. As an outsider, they had kept him at arm’s length from these truths; he had yet to earn the title of Shadesworn in more than name.

 When the Shadow Lady, Atyiru Caesura Entar, had summoned him to Selen from Last Stand, he had felt a momentary swelling of pride. *Finally,* he had thought, *I have earned their trust and access to the teachings of the Shadow Weavers and Shadesworn.* When he had entered the Consul’s chambers, she had been accompanied by two of his fellow Elders – Marick Arconae and Timeros Caesus Entar – and a chill ran up his back. Paranoia or prudent caution forced his hands towards the twin lightsabers at his side. Marick’s eyebrow arched, but Timeros’ hands fell to the infamous ‘scholar’ hilts of his twin blades.

 A careful motion from the Consul stayed the trio from bloodshed. “Stop,” she barked, “I will not tolerate open conflict in these chambers nor *this* Clan.” Her implication that this Clan was, in fact, her Clan; to guide, to council, to rule. “If you *boys* are done, I have urgent business to attend to.” She spun on her heel as a hologram sprung to life in the rear of the chamber. “I have abducted the child of a ruling family. I have need of their considerable resources to complete another agenda.”

 She stopped, turning her head over her shoulder to ensure Braecen was still involved in the conversation. “You, Kaeth, will be responsible for the safeguarding of this asset.” The pair of Aroncae Elders chuckled as the color drained from Braecen’s face. Her eyes narrowed as she rounded on the pair, “And you, I have decided, will accompany him. To… evaluate… his progress.” The laughing ceased.

**Gethsemane, Djorra System**

**d’Tana Estate**

“Make it stop!” Marick screamed. His voice hoarse and haunted from the ongoing torture. He turned towards his cohort, Timeros, and found him in an equally difficult position. The other had simply gone catatonic and refused to admit he was not in a ‘trance’ to commune with the Force. Unintelligible words were muttered below his breath as the Dark Adept rocked back and forth.

 “Failure, Kaeth!” his voice rose over the screaming and crying. “Failure, I say!” Braecen moved about the room with incredible haste from station to station. His hands moving deftly as he boiled a bottle, changed the diaper, and attempted to play peek-a-boo in between mission critical moments. Marick, ever the Consul, noted and was, at the least, impressed with his willingness to adapt to a strenuous situation.

 Braecen appeared frazzled and out of his element, though. The stress showing on his face as his brow furrowed on the complexity of the task at hand. “I think,” he began, “that Sith Alchemy is easier to study than the art of properly warming a bottle.” He lifted the bottle from the boiling water with the use of the Dark Side. It levitated momentarily until he snatched it from the air. He turned it over and deposited a small amount on his wrist in attempt to determine its warmth “Ow!” he squealed. The pain of the Krath snapped Timeros from his stupor. He chuckled at the other’s misery; momentarily forgetting his own Consul-induced misery.

 “I am gla-“ Braecen began before a claxon of alarms sounded throughout the estate. Instantly, the demeanor of the three men changed. What had once been a group idly babysitting the future heir of an inner-core monarchy transformed into three terrifying instruments of death.

 Braecen raced to the child, scooping it into one of his arms. His other hand reached for the hilt of his blade and joined the chorus of snap-hisses within the room. The other two moved to defensive positions within the d’Tana complex. This was the third instance in which their privacy had been breached in the past forty eight hours.

 The first instance had been both intriguing and bewildering. Unaware that anyone might be actually searching for the child, the trio of Elders were caught unawares by an irate Trandoshan. What they would later to determine was that she was the primary caregiver of the child. She had almost bisected the head from the body of Braecen. And Timeros had been forced to retreat under extreme duress; his weapons being knocked from his hands. Marick had been able to survive the initial shock to combat the large, powerful alien until she could be subdued by the trio.

 She was now unconscious and sedated in the brink of the complex. Anxious and on edge, the group had been caught far less unaware when a group of mercenaries hired by the family approached. Attempting to infiltrate under the cover of night, the group had been vastly unprepared to meet Force users. Far less prepared to meet Force Adepts. The carnage had only been rivaled by the brevity of the event.

 What this attack lacked in elegance, however, was matched in ferocity. A missile detonated against an outer wall. Braecen augmented his own defenses with the Force; an immovable object in the face of his attacker’s will. Shrapnel and debris rained down on him, but he was able to shield the youngling from the fallout. Collecting himself, he shoved off with one foot and attained maximum velocity in a few steps. The Dark Side fueled his initiative and he could sense the Mastery of the Force being exemplified by his comrades in their own desperate battles.

 Rounding a corner, Braecen came face to face with a Mandalorian bounty hunter shouting orders. His persona rippled through the Force. It demanded respect, loyalty, and unquestioned obedience to his will. *This is their leader,* the Elder catalogued. A startled moment turned to recognition as the leader determined the individual before him held the small babe in the crook of his arm. “Light ‘em up!” His orders came in crescendo.

 A collection of blaster nozzles turned onto the pair. Braecen’s white blade whirling in the defensive, bolts careening at awkward angles as his sole intent was to protect the pair. As he spun through the madness, he made his way toward an adjacent staircase before disappearing from sight. Heavy footfalls chased at his rear. Occasionally, he would halt his retreat to dispatch of an over eager bounty hunter whom had gotten ahead of the pack.

 Working his way through the maze, Braecen reached out in the Force to sense the position of his peers. Marick, he could sense, was attempting to remove the head from the snake. His battle with the leader of the bounty hunters would assuredly be a great tale of its own.

 Timeros, though, was much closer. Zigging and zagging through the corridors, Braecen finally reached the main hall. At the far end an entity shrouded in shadows and blazing in the Force dutifully marched forward. “Behind me,” the solemn voice of Timeros rang. Braecen complied with his fellow Krath’s wishes.

 A group of five rushed into the hall in Braecen’s wake. Their long strides drew up short at the ghostly sight of Krath Adept Timeros before them. In measured steps, the soldiers fanned out to flank their opponent; intimidated by the appearance of twin lightsabers. Rumors had been heard across the galaxy about Dark Jedi, but the likelihood of meeting one on the field of battle was a unique occurrence.

 Timeros did not wait for the idle threats. His left hand raised, he willed the Force to fling one of the soldiers into the wall with alarming speed. A sick crunch signified the breaking of the man’s spine against the duracrete walls. Four blasters opened fire a second later. A second was too much time.

 Empowered by the Force, Timeros was able to bat aside the incoming bolts as he closed the distance between himself the first combatant. He slew him in one swipe. The body cleaved in two from shoulder to hip. A bolt of lightning jumped from the Elder and impaled another. His smoking husk had yet to fall to the ground before the Elder was onto his next opponent. His blades bisected the head from the shoulders before he spun around the falling corpse and launched one of his twin blades at the final foe. The lightsaber whirled end over end. A gentle nudge in the Force brought the point of the blade into line with the man’s heart.

 “Do you hear that?” Timeros inquired as he turned towards Braecen. The latter shook his head in the negative. His own heart hammering at such a pace he could hear nothing else. “Silence,” Timeros continued, “beautiful silence.”

 Braecen turned his head towards the child in his arm. The heir had somehow fallen fast asleep in all of the commotion. A stupid grin split his face. “I told you I was a natural with children,” Braecen quipped. Timeros narrowed his eyes. “I will report our continued success to the Shadow Lady.”