Dreams of the Past: Through Passion I Gain Strength

by Areticus Altainatus

It had been a long day for Areticus. He was ready to finally get some sleep. More courses were being thrown his way ever since his enrollment after graduation. It was all very interesting yes, but sometimes tedious. After his courses he trained with Lo-Kain in the sparring room as both rivals and a team. Then there was that spat with that dreadful madwoman Ophelia. Why Felix hung around with that machine always escaped him everytime he thought about it. Tomorrow will be a less busy day, however. Felix, Lo-Kain, and himself would always meet at the Citadel Cantina on Selen. It wasn’t Plagueis territory, but it was the only spot in the bloody galaxy that had his favorite wine: The deep blue vespire berries native from his home planet Naboo. After a hot shower he changed from his casual attire, casual being a vested button up with either a windsor knotted tie or bow tie with dress pants, and into a silken bed robe with the shadow academy emblem. It was issued to those who took residence in the academy. Areticus turned out his lights and lay down in his bed.  
  
 His body was relaxed and immobile, it was his mind that wasn’t. As he lay in bed within his dormitory he began to review his earlier bottom viol composition. It was a modest hobby that helped him spark ingenuity. After some time he began to feel vibrations in his head. They weren’t painful like with a headache, and he knew his head wasn’t bobbling or anything like the sort. Perhaps he was being perceptive of the blood being pumped into his brain? He was beginning to ignore it and go back to his recital until the vibrations became more intense. Annoying perhaps, but he wasn’t going to stop it by getting up or anything. Instead he allowed it to happen and attempted to think what could possibly be causing these vibrations. What else could he feel? His body felt as if it were getting colder. He felt sensations of tingling in some areas and numbness in others. The vibrations then became less intense, as if they were fading into a background. He took a heavy breath as a rising sensation overtook him. Areticus couldn’t take it anymore and decided to open his eyes. He was confused at what he saw.

He saw metal, and a lot of it. He looked around and saw that this floor was entire empty. He turned his gaze to the left, and then into the right. It was a completely empty room. Something at the corner of his peripheral caused him to look up, and what he saw put him in complete shock. He wasn’t looking at a metal floor earlier, he was looking at a roof. Below him he saw himself in bed. Dressed in a plaid bed robe next to an end desk with a lamp and pyramid shaped holocron. This was his dormitory, and that was his body asleep. He also noticed a strange silver cord coming out of his body’s chest. He followed its trail until it came to where he was. He touched the back of his head and felt the silver cord connect. He then looked down at himself. He looked exactly the same, though with a glowing shade of light blue.

“Strange,” Areticus said to himself, “What is this strange phenomenon?”

He thought of where he could research this form of dream and remembered some of the subjects involving neurology and dreamology within the Shadow Academy. Areticus desired to go there and felt himself start to fly there. At first he panicked as he was flying towards a wall, but was fascinated when he felt nothing and went through the wall. After multiple wall shifts he found himself in the Shadow Academy’s main library. When he arrived at the section of neurology he reached for one of the books, but his hand went through the cover. He looked back at his hand and tried again with the same result. He couldn’t even feel the texture of the hardcover. He then rose himself higher to have an arial overview of the place. He noticed the magistrate Ood on a desk with a small lamp looking over a tome and decided to investigate.

“Magistrate? Can you hear me,” Areticus called. No answer.

“No he can’t,” echoed another voice. Areticus quickly whirled around and was set back by the sight. A man who seemed giant to him stood in a elegant cloak that reflected the many stars of the cosmos. He seemed well aged, with a long grey beard that went past his shoulder line. More notably, this man had a glowing third eye that was the yellowish orange that a Sith has when attuned to the Dark Side.

“You you know who I am?” Asked the man.

“Darth Millennial,” Areticus replied.

“Correct. Do you know what his happening? Why you are here? Why I am here?”  
  
 Areticus shook his head, “I’m afraid I do not. Should I? Am I in danger?”

He heard the old sage chuckle, “No. You are not in any danger. You are on the Astral Plane, Areticus.”

“I don’t know what that is. How do you know my name?”

“I know a lot of names. I am here to guide you. Come,” he said as he began to turn and rise through the roof.

Areticus quickly followed after him. He took note that Darth Millennial didn’t have a silver cord around the back of his head as he did and wondered why. He could feel an intense pull as they both shot out through the atmosphere and into space. The stars nearby Lyspair began to streak past his vision similar to when a ship’s hyperdrive is activated. Areticus must be traveling in a similar way.   
  
 “My lord,” Areticus called out, “What is this phenomenon? Am I dead? What is the Astral Plane?”

They came into an immediate halt in empty space. Areticus didn’t feel any brush of impact at the sudden stop, but he was still surprised by it. He then saw Darth Millennial turn to face him. “You are not dead, but I am. The cord that is attached to your body shows that you still connect with the physical, and are therefore very much alive. Fear not, it cannot be severed and is perpetual in length. What we call the Astral Plane is a dimension separate from that of the physical. It is the most vibrant with the Force and is ultimately the dimension in which all consciousness goes upon death.”  
  
 “Well that rules out religions, not that I believed in any to begin with,” Areticus remarked.

“Incorrect. There are section of the Astral Plane associated with established mortal religions. Beings drawn to it will go there and spend their time there. Some drift away and explore the plane for what it truly is, most do not. Your spirit was able to separate from your physical body into the Astral. Your presence was felt, and so I came to you. I am your guide. Each person has one. I am here to instruct you now that you have arrived.”

“What am I to learn?”

“A greater understanding of the phenomenon you call the Force.”

Areticus raised an astral eyebrow in response, “And what do you call it?”

The old man chuckled, “A lesson for another time. We will start with the dark side, since you are already somewhat familiar with it. You will learn that through passion you gain strength.”

‘Through passion I gain strength’; the first precept of the Sith Code. It seemed almost mundane to Areticus. He knew the Sith Code from the introductory courses at the Shadow Academy. He thought perhaps mentioning his academic credentials, but remained silent instead. When they stopped, Areticus didn’t recognize their destination. “Where are we?” he asked.

“Your first lesson in passion is the most common. Anger. The Sith are familiar with this emotion and have used it effectively through the Force,” Darth Mellenial said, ignoring Areticus’ question.

Areticus thought back to Lo-Kain and the way he used the Force to enhance his physical prowess. Often times he would undergo a frenzy that pushed him even further. It always impressed him how his apprentice was able to push his limits through his conviction. His thoughts of Lo-Kain then ceased when he realized he could not see anything. He couldn’t feel anything either. He was trapped in darkness.

*Why? How? What happened?! He told me I was safe! He said nothing would go wrong! That bloody fracking liar! How dare he! I trusted him! I went into the unknown at her side! She used me! I am not a puppet! I AM NOT A PUPPET!*

Areticus struggled to breathe. *I must live!* He didn’t care about for so much as living as to ending hers. He wouldn’t dare let her get away. No! *She will pay!* Areticus roared as he felt the force jolt inside of him. A tunnel vision began to clear from the darkness. He lashed out towards it like an animal. *I am coming for you! Do you hear me Traya?! I AM COMING!* He opened his only good eye and rose from the ground. He whole body felt like it was burning. He shook himself and rolled allover the floor around him. With his teeth grinding against each other he launched himself upward and bellowed a roar into the sky. He then looked down at himself. His hands and arms looked disgusting. They looked like checkered stones clumped together wrapped in a leathery hide. The skin looked rotten and grey like a corpse.   
  
 “This was the rage of Darth Scion,” Darth Mellennial said. Areticus quickly whirled around to see him. He was staring downward at the scene Areticus had just experienced. Areticus looked at himself again and saw that he was back in his own astral form. “You could have warned me, you know,” he remarked.

“You needed to understand Scion’s rage. His anger for Traya gave him immortality through the Force alone. Remember this experience. Remember this fury.”

Areticus looked back one last time to see Scion walking away in the distance before turning to follow his guide once again. He often kept his emotions under control, preferring reason over passion. Sure this was close to a Jedi method, but Areticus refused to be affiliated as a Jedi. That anger however, was more than anything he thought he could muster himself. That was pure hatred on a level he didn’t think possible. Their next stop was just as unfamiliar. It looked to be a university library of sorts. Areticus couldn’t help but smile at the academic venue. He saw a lonely student that looked around as if he were waiting. Medium height, young 20s, scruffy brown hair. Nothing too interesting, however.

He looked over to his guide and saw him looking back at Areticus with amusement. “Though their lives may be mundane, a greater passion blooms within those who know a sound love,” he said.

Then Areticus saw her. That cute little glow of her smile. She was very short, guessing around 5”2 or so. She darted across the hall with a funny pitter patter with her tiny steps. The many curls on her head bounced with each step, making him laugh. Areticus dropped his backpack and started to pace himself towards her. She surprised him however when she jumped at him. He quickly caught her by her shins as she put her legs together and pressed it against his waist, keeping her arms around his neck for further support. It was unexpectedly comfortable, and she was very light. He could feel the rising pulse from both her forearms race past the sides of his neck. More importantly, when he looked into her eyes, they began to grow dark from the pupil dilation. The chemical tapestry was both simple and incredible. The autonomic nervous system, which is responsible for many uncontrollable reactions such as an increased heart rate or goosebumps, regulate the sphincter muscles. Those sphincter muscles play with the eye’s iris tissue like a sweet serenade. The result is a dilation triggered from the desire to observe as much of the present as possible, and preserve it perfectly in memory. It increases the vision’s resolution, and the mind lives in the present rather than drifting thoughts of the past or future. It was the overwhelming sensation of bliss he shared with her. Without leaving her gaze, Areticus spoke, “Stephanie, I-”

He almost thought he was going to fall when she puffed away into black smoke. Immediately after the entire library evaporated as well in the same manner. He was back with Darth Mellennial again. “No wait… Please!” Areticus cried, “One more minute with her! I’ll do anything. Just a single minute.”  
  
 “Remember this experience,” he replied coldly, “remember this love.” Grudgingly, Areticus followed him once again. Although he never truly knew that girl, he would never forget that feeling he had when she looked at him. As they were further traveling through the blur of celestial bodies, Areticus reflected on his recent experiences. He had always read about the emotions radically immersing oneself in the Force, but never actually knew how powerful of emotions it took. Nor did he know the intensity of what those feelings felt like. It was one thing to fuel the dark side with anger, but the joy of love? It had never crossed his mind. He wanted that feeling back. That kind of love felt incredible. Though Areticus didn’t currently know of any woman with that potential of connectivity.

Perhaps it didn’t have to be just the romantic love. But the love he knew with family. He remembered the day his son was born. He had such tiny hands. He remembered holding him in the infirmary and how it would grab his finger and giggle. It made him giggle too. But now his son was lost in a place he shouldn’t be. He was determined to bring him back home where he belonged. He missed him so much.

“I’m being torn apart,” he heard his precious boy say, “I know what I have to do, but I don’t if I have the strength to do it. Will you help me?”

Areticus stepped forward with his heart cringing as his chest. He looked dead straight into his son’s eyes, “Yes. Anything.”

The stab of the saber was painful, but it was nothing compared to the pain of his heart breaking. He touched his son’s cheek as tears escaped his eyes. He felt himself falling into darkness. As he fell he saw Mellennial hovering over Ben. His voice echoed into the abyss that was embracing him as was falling, “remember this experience, remember this despair.”

“When you return once more, we will begin your next lesson.”

Dusk was about to hit when he looked outside his window. That dream had bothered him all day. From when he awoke he looked through every book he could find pertaining to the subject. He even went back to brush his hands along the neurology book he couldn’t touch earlier. He consulted with as many people as he could and looked through every database the Shadow Academy had. He couldn’t find anything mentioning an Astral Plane or something similar to it. It was so odd. Was it even real? It certainly felt real. It felt more than real, in fact. He looked back from the window and stared at the swishing wine in his glass sitting at the table of his booth. He didn’t even notice Felix take his seat until he spoke up with a whistle, “Hey. You alright?”

“Hm? Oh yes. Just… Lost in thought.”

“You do that too much man,” his friend replied, “take a break for once. Isn’t that why we come here weekly?”

*If only you knew,* Areticus wanted to say. However, he didn’t think any amount of explanation to Felix would help. He would just dismiss it as some ‘weird force-user crap’. He wasn’t known to have sympathy for the concerns of those who use the Force. Rather, Areticus feared Felix was beginning to adopt a negative connotation associated with them. Sith stereotypes were often faulty from their superiority complex, and sometimes Areticus was of no exception. He took another sip of his wine, “Did you know that dreams are projections of your subconscious? Supposedly dream every night, you just don’t always remember them.”

Felix leaned back in the seat of the booth while raising an eyebrow, “Well yeah, I knew that. What about it?”

Areticus shook his head without leaving the gaze of his wine, “No reason. Just a fun piece of trivia. Do know of any dreams you remember?”

Felix’s brows lifted as his eyes shifted up and to the right, “Ermmm…. Well actually yeah, a couple.”

“Tell me about them?” Areticus asked.

Felix began explaining some of the numerous dreams he never forgot. Some of them made sense, whereas others were very bizarre and sometimes hilarious. The conversation continued until Lo-Kain finally made it to the dine out. The dinner was well, and they each said their goodbyes and departed to their respective homes. When Areticus entered his dormitory once again after a nice hot shower, he looked over his datapad notes once more. After he immediately woke from his astral projection he wrote down as much as he could from the experience. He reread all of his notes, and vividly remembered those experiences as well. With a heavy sigh he turned off his datapad and his lights. It was difficult for him to get back to sleep; his mind was still haunted by last night. Through passion I gain strength… Wanting to get his mind off the idea and get himself to sleep, Areticus began his routine of mentally going over his bottom viol compositions. Aside from that night it was the usual remedy that made him lose consciousness.

Then he started to feel his head vibrate...