

It was early morning, and the sun had yet to rise. Still, something caused Bentre's eyes to flutter open, a slight moan escaping his lips as he turned over. Looking back, the Sith could see his wife lying in the bed beside him, her lekku draped off the edge of their bed. A sense of caution gripped his stomach as carefully and quietly the Warrior untangled himself from the bed sheets. To his relief, his motions prompted little more than sleepy murmurs from Tasha'vel, before she snuggled back into her pillow with a soft snore.

As he crept across the room toward the door which led into the hall, Stahoes tried to put a finger on what had disturbed him. The noises of nature were nothing new to him. They had not woken him, on the contrary the serenade of wildlife was one of the things he most enjoyed about this little retreat. It was something else entirely. Closing his eyes, Bentre stretched out into the Force, trying to probe for the disturbance in its depths.

There was nothing. It took the Human several moments to realize what he was sensing before it hit him. Whereas the gentle rhythms of the Force were as constant a companion as the hissing and spitting voices in his head, now there was nothing. For the first time in what felt like years, he could not tap into the Force at will. It was worse than ever before, for whereas he could sense however faintly its presence it was as though his eyes had been plucked from him. A sensation he was all too familiar with, but this was far more horrible than when Anima had taken in left eye.

This was more like the phantom pains that he had felt when his arm had first been amputated after Dentaavi. It was a silence deeper than anything he could imagine. He found the silence to be more horrifying even than the moment when the Progenitor's ship had exploded. It trumped the moment that he realized his device had killed his friend and mentor, Ventus. In the time since he had awoken, the loss of sensation had managed to make all the sacrifices and work since he had met Marcus Kiriyu feel like so much wasted effort.

As the sensations of dread threatened to utterly overwhelm him, a cold anger began to rise in his stomach. What was it that he was becoming so upset about when it really came down to it? He wasn't just a Sith, or a human, anymore than he was just some Slicer. He was a damn good Sith, an exemplary human, and a noteworthy Slicer. He was not just Bentre Stahoes, he was a Sith Warrior. He was Kairn'tel Versea, he was the Patriarch of the Estate and most of all, despite the persecutions of the Grand Master's goons, he was still an Obelisk. When all seemed lost, he would fight.

Almost immediately, Bentre's mind began to work. Who could he contact as a grounds to start with? Who else had been affected by this malady? He knew that Marcus Kiriyu was a Krath former, that Sanguinius still knew of many dark secrets, and Macron's knowledge ran deeper than he truly dared to speculate.

If he had to, Stahoes would break into the Shadow Academy's stacks to research what phenomena might cause such an affliction. He had plenty of mundane skills to tap into, he

would do whatever he had to. He would find the person or thing that had blinded him to the Force, and he would destroy the source. He was an Obelisk, damn it. He was going to stand up and act like it.