

Close Calls and Wounded Pride

Judecca

34 ABY

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The fully adorned Clan Summit stood on a raised dais against the wall, the high pillars of the Place Hall casting long shadows. Blade stood in front of them, but unfortunately this was not a promotion. Not only that but her position among them was left void as a poignant reminder of the circumstances she found herself in. The Palace Hall was more foreboding than usual, and the clan leaders' faces were serious and solemn as they went through their proceedings. They had even broken out the official judicial robes, which clearly didn't fit everyone anymore. They had worn to intimidate the accused, but the towering Palace Hall's shadows did a better job in comparison.

A serious charge had been levied against her, treason against House Excidium. Her accuser was a man named Gavon, a Hunter from her old house. They had been solidly crushed in the last feud, and his vindictive streak was manifesting itself in full force. She stared at the Hunter and grinned in anticipation. A convenient law was in place that allowed her to not only kill the annoying pest, but also defend her honor. Honor was something that was easily ruined, so she would stomp out anyone that attacked it.

The soft mumblings of the Clan Summit ceased and the Emperor himself finally spoke.

"Blade Ta'var of House Imperium, Gavon of House Excidium accuses you with treason against the clan. He claims that you have sold Excidium secrets to Imperium. He also claims that you are conspiring with those that would be our enemies. What do you say to these charges?" Xen'mordin Vismorsus asked.

"Not guilty," Blade stated in an even tone as she stared into Xen'mordin's hidden face.

"She's lying!" Gavon snarled in protest.

"Blade, do you wish to be judged by jury or by combat?" Xen asked.

"I choose a Trial by Combat." Blade answered confidently.

"Very well, you may begin," replied the Emperor.

The two combatants looked at each other with uncertainty and then back again at the Clan Summit. A stony silence filled the room. It was time to fight. Blade quickly activated her lightsaber, centered herself momentarily, and then launched forward at Gavon. The Hunter was ready, and swirled his saber into a defensive position. Soon enough, Blade's strikes crashed into the determined Gavon, fear in his eyes as Blade's swift blade weaved a flurry of staccato strikes in no discernible pattern. The Hunter put up a decent defense, but Blade's rapid strikes put Gavon in a difficult position.

The way Blade saw things, Gavon had two choices. Attack her and hope that he didn't make any mistakes or try to wait for the best opportunity and play more of a defensive game. The Hunter didn't have a lot of time to choose and Blade wasn't going to let him. Blade relentlessly pursued Gavon as she twisted, jumped, and ran around the Hunter's defenses looking for the best opening to strike home the killing blow. Gavon's clumsy blocks and parries were already losing pace with her attacks, his sweat dripping off in exertion.

Looking into the eyes of the frightened and angry Hunter, Blade saw a desperate man, one who realized his mistake far too late. Gavon's defenses were starting to slow, and in a last ditch effort at survival the Hunter twisted away from her and dove aside in a bid for safety. Blade was ready. She pounced after him, her body moving in a graceful arc as she whipped her lightsaber through the air in quick, successive strikes. Her lightsaber licked at the man's flesh, leaving several deep cuts and a severed dueling hand. dove

Blade watched Gavon fall to the ground and landed a few meters away from him. The Hunter's anguished screams filled the hall as he begged for mercy from the Clan Summit to stay Blade's hand. His arm was raised towards the Clan Summit in supplication. Blade would give him no such mercy today.

"Finish him!" The Emperor ordered.

"Nooooo!" The Hunter yelled as he attempted to crawl away from Blade.

Blade grinned as she knelt on top of the prone Hunter. Pulling his head back by his hair, she held her lightsaber close to his throat as she leaned closer.

"You were right," she whispered into his ear, using a tone that only he could hear.

Blade pushed the man's head down onto the guillotine made of light, another dark spark gone from the universe. After she deactivated her saber, she stood up and approached the Clan Summit, waiting for their verdict. The Emperor's eyes lingered on the deceased for a moment before they focused on her.

"Impressive fatality. You are hereby exonerated of all charges. Take your place among us." The Emperor ordered.

Blade bowed and took her place on the dais, gazing at the dead carcass of the Hunter. That had been a close one.