

The streets of Corellia teemed with the usual concentration of civilians, mundanely following the steps of their daily lives. Here and there a few ne'er-do-wells roamed amongst the crowd, working loose pockets to make their small fortunes. They subconsciously found their hands avoiding a specific area of the flowing river of bodies. This was not due to their own volition...no, someone wanted to remain blind to all eyes. Which was sometimes difficult as his demeanor often drew a curious eye. Silent and sullen could be so loud and obnoxious at times. Still, it was one of the perks of stealth work as much as it was a con. The adrenaline rush that came from expecting discovery at any time.

The swarm reached an intersection of sorts; it was mostly an amalgamation of poorly kept shops and underworld-type clubs. While the crowd urged right in their repellant urge to get far from the locale, the cloaked figure among them turned left. It bee-lined for one of the clubs, taking in the surroundings and feeling for any violent presences. There were a few, but a couple of bodyguards were pretty standard in a club scene.

The figure approached the doorway confidently, recalling a somewhat unspoken rule of social status within the Underworld: weakness meant death. The idea was similar to Plagueis' own, but comparing the two brought a snarl to his lips. Plagueis was definitely more refined than this swill hole. He ducked slightly as he entered, the door obviously designed with the locals in mind, and swept his eyes across the room. He did not remain within the doorway, that would only draw attention. Instead he picked a seat where he could put his back to the wall and the light was dim. Truth be told, the entire club was dim. He could still utilize the Force to "see" what his eyes could not, however. A server droid came by and he ordered a drink to keep up appearances.

His cloak's hood hung about his face, and while etiquette might dictate he remove it, he refused to do so. Beneath the loose rim his orange eyes probed the corners of the building. His prey were here, he could feel it tingling in the back of his mind. So the intel from his Inquisitorial contact was indeed correct.

He reached up a red, tattooed hand and scratched at an itch on his cheek, making sure to not get too close lest his clawed gauntlet take flesh with it. It was while he was peering over his drink, brought just a moment before, that the blurred edges of his vision called to him. A jerky movement that compelled the eyes to focus upon it. A small group of locals huddled together in animated discussion. Normally not a suspicious act in theory, the piece that caught the Zabrak's eyes was the crest stamped onto one of their work jackets: a round circle with the letters CEC upon it. A small grin slowly stole across his face and he even took a sip of his drink, enjoying the bittersweet flavor. The hunt had begun. The Corellian Engineering Corporation was said to be a sympathizer of Jedi, and had apparently offered a CR-90 Corvette to speed the undesirables to safety. If there were such a place. After Tython, Kul did not think the Grandmaster would stop hunting the Jedi due to a small thing as distance.

The Knight waited in his corner, content to patiently let the prey come to him. They always did. Just like clockwork, the group calmed down. The larger of the group of men beckoned the rest and they began to slip quietly out of the back entrance, a quick nod to the barkeep. Kul noted the fact for further use. If the barkeep was also a sympathizer, the Inquisitorial could perhaps find more than one bounty here. If they did not already know. His informant was never very forthcoming.

He waited as the final member, an Arconan with bulging eyes, exited the abode. Giving himself another few seconds, he finally drained his drink before tossing some credits to the server droid as it passed. He briskly left through the front, immediately cloaking and turning into the adjoining alley. He could sense their presences ahead, though there were fewer. Unfortunate. He was looking forward to a good fight.

The group remaining--the hulking Corellian, the bigeye Arconan, and a couple of other humans of unknown origin--yelled in surprise as the robed figure appeared before them, an unlit saber hilt dangling in his right hand. The other hand slowly curled and uncurled the claws of his gauntlet.

"Greetings. Where might I find a couple of rogue Jedi in these parts?" His answer was the whirring of blasters as they charged into readiness. He doubted they were set for stun. A shrug was his retort.

"And here I thought we might could get along. But seriously--" his grin faded and his crimson saber lit up the alley, "--where's the corvette?"

The large Corellian flicked his blaster a short degree.

"I don't know how you found us, Sith, but your mission ends here. It's four on one, and some of us have killed your kind before." The group grew awash with a sense of arrogance; the stench was almost palpable. Kul could not stop the chuckle that emerged from his chest.

"That's what they all say. Right before being torn in two by a lightsaber. Don't try to bluff. It will only annoy me." One of the men to Kul's left screamed suddenly. He groped at his eyes with his free hand.

"I can't see! He's blinded me, Artur!" His wailing continued, along with a few imaginative curses. He reached an apex of confusion and his reflexes kicked in. He pulled the blaster's trigger.

The bolt blasted across the space, but the Knight was ready for it. He merely leaned back a few inches and watched as the bolt punctured the chest of the other human to Kul's right. The corpse crashed to the ground in a puff of street dust. The other pair stood dazed for a brief moment before calling out whatever war cry came to them first and let loose with their blasters. Kul utilized his physical prowess, leg muscles contracting and propelling him forward towards the hefty Corellian. Deflecting a bolt was all the immediate fight needed. As it sailed away the Zabrak followed through with a fluid half turn, driving his saber through the man's chest. He quickly pulled the body around, blocking the incoming bolts from the Arconan. As its attacker came closer it panicked and decided trying to run was more worthwhile. Kul stopped and laughed.

"Running won't save you now." He had arrived at the blind man, who was shaking against the alley wall. Kul reached down with his left hand, gripping the man's skull in his gauntlet. He relinquished the blackness he had poured over the engineer. His arm muscles contracted, and he drove the metal claws into his victim's temples. The body stopped shaking, and a tiny blood river spilled upon the ground.

Up ahead, the Arconan made his way towards one of the larger skyscrapers on the street, its front face sporting a massive banner with glowing letters: C.E.C. He knew if he warned the Jedi

in time they could make a retreat. The small group of refugees was ready to leave, they had just needed to finalize the corvette transfer. Time had run out, though. Bypassing the building itself, he stampeded into the hangar behind it. Inside one of the landing bays were two figures and the hulking corvette. A male Twilek was fiddling with one of the electronic panels, while a bored looking Zabrak female leaned against the gangplank. They both started when the perturbed Arconan burst in.

“Master Zer’ah! You must flee! The Sith are here!” He almost bowled over as he came to a stop. The Zabrak girl gave him a shoulder for support as the Twilek wiped his hands free of grease.

“What’s this, Nemhet? Sith you say? And you need not call me master, my friend. I’m still just a Knight.”

Nemhet tried to get the rest out, but his exhaustion made it difficult. The Twilek Zer’ah laid a reassuring hand on his shoulder.

“Breathe, Nemhet, breathe. Your tale can wait a few more moments.”

Out of seemingly nothing, a voice carried close by. Masculine and gruff, it sounded as though it was beside them.

“Can it?” The voice was followed by a bright red flash as a saber grew from Nemhet’s chest, ending just an inch from Zer’ah’s nose. Kul released his cloak and let Nemhet’s body slide to the floor, a searing hole in his center. The two Jedi took a step back, hands grasping for sabers. Zer’ah spoke first.

“What is the meaning of this? You would slay an unarmed being so callously?”

The Zabrak barked a laugh at that, but his face quickly shifted back to one of shielded lack of emotion. “I abhor cowardice. While his concern for his allies is admirable, he thought only of himself when he ran with tail between his legs. He deserved this and more.” He withdrew his saber and offered a hand, waving it behind him. “Now if you’d be so kind, vacate the premises. I’ll give you one chance.”

The female Zabrak finally spoke up. She gave the Twilek a quick glance before speaking, marking herself as the apprentice carelessly. “Why should we listen to you, Sith? You seem to forget that we are two to your one. The others will be back shortly, and--” she was abruptly cut off as her master jumped in front of her, barely parrying the sweeping strike of the Inquisitorial agent. Crimson and aqua blades crossed in vehement disapproval of one another, reaching with the hope of snuffing out the other.

Kul moved swiftly, driving in with the sweeps and thrusts of his Jar’kai. The Jedi held fast with his own defensive Juyo, but one who stuck merely to defense could never hope to overcome one who came to kill. Zer’ah would need to adapt or watch himself slowly be killed one slice at a time. He managed a quick flick of his wrist as an indication to his apprentice, who strode closer.

Letting the elongated hilt of her saber slide across her palm, she brought it to bear at chest height. Yellow blades whirred forth from both ends and she spun it with the casual grace of a practiced staff-wielder. It almost reminded Kul of his time on Iridonia, until she launched herself into the fray and he had to focus.

The two took their strikes--the master quick and sure, the apprentice a powerhouse of slams and thrusts--and Kul was forced back. The pair certainly worked well together, but they were predictable. The Sith's time with blades had garnered the experience of fighting multiple opponents early in his career. He could see inexperience well enough to find his chance.

His hearts drummed a ceremonial beat. Sweat rolled down the corded muscles of his back as they bunched in resistance to outside forces. Overall, however, he was noticing the dull burn of exhaustion swelling within the precipice of his mind. He needed to end this quickly, lest his advantage be lost.

After parrying a stab at his throat, the Sith slipped to the outside instead of countering with a blow of his own. Having lured them into a pattern, it was a simple matter for the step to throw off their rhythm. The Jedi Knight became off-centered and swung broader than he had originally intended. It was a small slip, but one Kul had allocated within his movements. As the Jedi made to correct his stance, Kul seized the initiative and drove his saber through the Twilek's gut. His pale blue skin dropped an entire shade as death overcame him. The Zabrak apprentice cried out in terror and mourning, the tendrils of a rage whisking through the air on the Force.

Apprentice she may have been, and young by the look of her, but the orders had said the Jedi would be preferable dead. Dragging in a few ragged breaths, Kul took a step towards her over the twitching corpse of her former master.

"When they first found you, what clan were you born in?" She appeared surprised at the inquiry, unsure at why this Sith wished to know her *ru** name. He did not intend to track her family as well did he? He was Zabrak himself, surely he still had some sort of loyalty.

"I will not tell you that, Sith. You would just go and kill them after you're done here."

A grin found its way to his tattooed face. "So you understand the situation, then. Good. I have no desire to hunt down anyone's family. You have fought well, and I would honor that in the traditional way as *akhoi het vyi*** should. It has been a long time since I held traditions." His last sentence trailed off as memories crept in, but he swept them away beneath a shroud of darkness. He had reached a step away from her, her saber held limply to one side.

"Die now, but know that the Inquisitorious will find your friends eventually, as well. Perhaps I will send one or two of them to meet you." He made to run her through, and that is when she struck. Her golden blades roared to life in earnest as she growled to make a final stand. The blade came within a mere hand's breadth of giving Kul a new tattoo in scar form, when it halted before him. The girl struggled to overpower him as he fed the Force into his body. One of his hearts skipped a beat from exhaustion, but he ignored it and gripped tighter with his left hand. The metal claws he bore gripping into the apprentice's wrist. Releasing his own saber to clatter on the floor, the Sith used his now free hand to crack her jaw, skin and bone splitting with a sickening crunch. Her grip faded and her saber dropped, as well.

Staring into her violet eyes, Kul'tak forced her to her knees with his superior muscle. Tipping her head back with his right hand, he carved four red lines across her throat with the claws on his left. She choked out her final breaths and crumbled to the floor.

Sensing a living presence in neither Jedi, Kul made his way up the ramp of the corvette and into the cockpit. The supplies and rations seemed to indicate a long trip. He'd remember to add that to his report. He approached the comm system and put in the coded signal that would send his message to his informant. From there it would be sent to his commanding officers in the Inquisitorious. Along with the current location's coordinates, he made a small note: *Bucket detained. Multiple undesirables dealt with.*

* Clan

** Literally means "Champions of battle"