

*JORM NA'TREJ*

*CLAN SCHOLAE PALATINAE*



*THIS ONE IS MINE!*

*A CSP/CNS "SHATTERED TIES" FICTION*

Heavy breathing.

That was all that could be heard for a few moments, accentuating the stench of seared flesh, blood, emptied bowels and ozone; and the sight of a perpetually grinning madman surrounded by maimed bodies in the red emergency lighting.

Jorm sheathed his lightsaber and took in the scene of slaughter he had created. A handful of Warhost soldiers laid in a rough semicircle where he had first charged, then obliterated them with his blade in a matter of heartbeats.

And a dozen steps down the broad corridor and to his feet, the Sadowan Knight - *Sebz Janren*, *wasn't it?* - who had lasted only marginally longer under the Marauder's onslaught.

It was satisfying, yet he couldn't shake the feeling something was amiss.

When he checked for his charge, the jigsaws fell into place.

*That damned apprentice 'napped my loot!*

The artifact he had secured, dropped in the moment he was ambushed by this posse, now in the hands of their survivor.

"I will bloody find you and get my loot back, and if it's the last thing I do to you, *pedunkee!*" he yelled from the top of his lungs.

*Now where did he go...*

Jorm looked around, but the ferrocrete floor didn't show tracks. Snorting in disdain, he knelt down next to Sebz Janren and planted his fingers on the dead man's temples.

*It's good to be a Kiffar.*

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*A corridor. Footfalls around him. A quick glance; his junior comrade is still at his side, the Warhost soldiers flanking them both.*

*Suddenly, a man ahead. Definitely hostile; no Sadowan would dress like that. The clothes tell him "pirate", the lightsaber snapping on tells him something else, the toothy smile adds its comment; he doesn't like the result.*

*He notices the duffel bag on the man's shoulder and the aura it emanates. As the Warhost surge forward to engage, he stops his clanmate.*

*"That one's dangerous, Ingram," he cautions him, "I'll hold him, you grab that bag and get out. For the Clan."*

*The urgency in his voice seems to get through. A solemn nod is all he gets for an answer.*

*He turns his eyes forward again and witnesses his Warhost dying. They are half a dozen, disciplined soldiers and good shots, but their opponent is too fast and the corridor not narrow enough to hinder him, not even deflecting their bolts as he cuts them down.*

*He ignites his own lightsaber and charges, hoping to break the momentum. His clanmate is a step behind and arches out to pass by the duel, using his master as both cover and distraction.*

*Blade meets blade, and thoughts fall silent in favor of training and instinct.*

*He suspects it will not suffice.*

*He makes the effort anyway and is proven right after two dozen blows exchanged as his enemy's yellow blade cuts through his own hilt and the hand wrapped around it.*

*Before the agony even hits, that yellow blade is plunged through his chest, and he cannot breathe anymore.*

*But behind his grinning murderer's back, he sees Ingram flee the scene, clutching his prize, towards one of the garages...*

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Jorm broke contact before Janren's body's memorized agony and death throes hit him, and broke into a dead sprint. The reading had only taken seconds, but Ingram Thorpe would not have waited for him to catch up.

Following the trail was trivial for the Marauder. He let a hand trail the wall as he ran by it, augmenting his perception with an overlay of foreign memories only moments old.

It gave him a heads-up a few intersections down the way. The memories betrayed a Warhost squad's presence at the next intersection, and Ingram Thorpe's orders for them, seconds before he ran into their impromptu ambush.

He broke contact with the wall and focused on going faster. He was little more than fish in a barrel in this corridor and had no time to track around.

*The way out is through!*

A weathered face appeared from the left corridor and took on a look of surprise as the Kiffar charged faster on foot than most cities allowed vehicles to travel within their limits.

Jorm ducked under a hasty blaster shot and managed to sidestep another, then he pushed his assailant back into the side corridor and upon his comrades.

When his hand separated from the man, an exceptional spectator might have noticed the grenade pins that came with it.

Jorm continued on his chase without looking back at the ensuing carnage.

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They found each other in the garage. Thorpe already mounted a speederbike pointed at the open gate. With brief eye contact, the Sadowan apprentice hit the throttle and made for the opening.

Jorm, covered in sweat and half deaf from the recent detonation, wasn't about to let him. A brief moment of focus, and the Marauder wrestled the bike's controls away from afar.

The effect was predictably catastrophic. The bike veered off course, spearing a parked loader with its leading stabilizers, careening out of control in a destructive hailstorm of twisted metal and fragmented plastic.

Thorpe was caught in the middle of it all, and his situation only got worse when his flight stopped on the ferrocrete floor. He tumbled for a dozen meters before he came to a halt amongst sharp splinters and his own blood.

Through this ordeal, he still had managed to hold on to Jorm's bag. He even started struggling again.

*Impressive.*

The Kiffar walked over to the fallen Sadowan, unholstering his massive Enforcer in the process. As he reached the Human, he didn't hesitate to shoot a bullet in his back.

Thorpe's struggle weakened. Jorm lodged a foot under his torso and turned him over onto his back, establishing eye contact again, not caring about his accent coming to the surface.

"Told ya 'dis would be the last thing I'd do to ya."

And he ripped his bag from Ingram Thorpe's cold, dying hands.