**“The War Orphan”**

By Braecen Kaeth (4520)

*Sins of the Past: Episode II Fiction*

**The Citadel**

**Estle City, Selen**

The alert chirped three times. ***Deet-deet-deet.*** It drew Braecen’s eyes from his desk towards the device. He grumbled something unintelligible about how it kept him from his work. Sprawled across his ornate desk in his office were numerous reports that detailed the destruction of Dajorra over the past several days. The one that remained open, at the center of his desk, was a detailed debriefing about Teroch’s attack on Wuntila. He rewound the holo-video from aboard the vessel once more, watching the pair as they exchanged blows before a nearly fatal, final blow from the Rogue Adept. The old man grunted. He knew the pain from such an attack.

Casually, he paused the video, then turned his attention to his comlink nearby. It flashed repeatedly – the amber light pulsing throughout the dreariness of his office. Upon seizing control of the Dajorra Defense Force, Braecen had beun coding messages in pings and chirps to prioritize the level of communication. Frustrated that it had not reduced his workload, he had created color coded alerts to categorize the type of communication. As the amber hue diminished in his palm, he prepared himself for communication from the Dajorra Intelligence Agency; specifically, he prepared himself for communication from the Director.

“Timeros,” Braecen cooed, “my old friend.” The pair had once been bitter rivals in Braecen’s youth. A time where he had been more preoccupied with standing on his soapbox waxing about righteousness. Meanwhile, Timeros had been laying a foundation – solid brick and mortar – in Arcona to overthrow Taldryan and claim the title of First Clan. The Corellian knew better than to underestimate this particular Arconae. *Better to have him as a friend, than a foe,* Braecen concluded.

“No time for pleasantries, Kaeth.” The peer Elder grumbled. “I have important information concerning Teroch. There is a pattern to his attacks…”

Braecen listened intently as Timeros explained the rotation.

**Agavae-class Picket *Nighthawk***

**Dajorra Space**

The words came through strained, yet clear, as the Intelligence Officer hacked the secure link from the Director to the Quaestor of Galeres. Rulvak hated what he was doing, but he felt it was necessary as an Officer and a Leader within Arcona. Before her departure, Arcia Cortel had confided in the young upstart Sith her suspicions that Braecen was a traitor. That he had purposely sabotaged SCEPTER, then Arcona, against the Perdition forces.

“There is a patter to his attacks in our system. I’m not sure if you were read-in on Teroch’s file, but he had a very high IQ-“

“Not as high as yours?” Braecen inquired.

“No,” Timeros quieted, “not as high as mine, but enough that it makes him decidedly dangerous.” The Entar Elder paused, collected himself, and continued. “I plotted the attack locations, but that did not reveal anything until I also noted the time of the attacks, too.”

The data spooled out an equation that was too complicated for the Officers aboard the Nighthawk to understand. As the information began to slow, an image jumped to life that represented the Dajorra System with red, pulsing lights to indicate locations of known incursion. The attacks had been brutal. Teroch had been privy to access levels,as a member of the Erinos Clan that gave him a decided advantage. No one had bothered to update or change the protocols since the Dark Crusade. Rulvak made a mental note to address the matter personally at the conclusion of this conflict.

“When I started connecting the seemingly random attacks with a single line…” Timeros trailed off. “As you can see, it provided nothing. When I introduced nearly alternating lines or, rather, two teams, a pattern began to emerge.” Two spirals – one in white, one in green – showed a circular rotation. One rotation seemed to be working inwards towards Selen, the other rotation worked outward towards military outposts.

Braecen’s eyes widened. “Does this mean-“

“Yes,” Timeros concluded darkly, “he is heading to Dusk Station.”

The revelation confused the Captain of the Nighthawk. “Pull up everything we have on the Cardan-V space station and send it to my personal holo-pad.” His crew processed his task immediately and information began to spool onto his device. The Equite consumed the words with a scary ferocity, but he simply could not find anything of note aboard the space station to cause such fear in two Elders of the Clan.

Rulvak turned to his helmsman, Karth Orsai, and issued his orders, “Remain cloaked, but I want all ahead to Dusk Station. We continue our pursuit of Kaeth until we know his intentions clearly.”

“Aye, aye, Captain Qurroc,” Karth barked as he turned to the task before him.

Dusk Station

Orbit above Selen

The Lambda-class T-4a shuttle set down on Dusk Station with one metallic thud as the repulsors whined against the exertion. At the rear of the vessel, the ramp begun to lower and several individuals exited in unison. At the forefront, her white braid over her left shoulder, marched the Shadow Lady. Atyiru commanded nothing short of absolute loyalty from her Elders.

She had built her empire on their backs. Some had been cajoled, others bribed, but otherwise they had all become hostage to her charisma and hold on the Clan. To defy her meant certain death from the other Elders, to follow her agenda granted a moment of peace and protection – it was a prison of wills. None greater, none stronger, than the Shadow Lady’s though.

At her flanks came Timeros and Marick – her most loyal Lieutenants. Behind them trailed Braecen and Valhavoc. It was a deliberate move; two from Qel-Droma, two from Galeres. Two she trusted wholly, two she needed to know if she could trust. She had her suspicions about both Braecen and Valhavoc.

Timeros had assured her that he would report anything to her immediately, but the Galeres Quaestor had become wily with time in service. His reports less frequent, his trips not fully documented or logged by Officers aboard the *Darkest Night.* Officerswhom were supposed to be loyal to her first and foremost. Valhavoc had served at the side of the Grand Master for well over a year. She suspected his motives for joining Arcona were false and at the request of the Iron Throne. *Why else would anyone leave the comforts of the Office of the FIST to become a lowly member of a Clan?*

She could not see, but she sensed a more pressing issue as she neared the doors to the inner workings of the facility. As the Lady of the Dajorra System, she should have been received by the station’s Officers with a small parade of troops. Their absence concerned her deeply. She flicked her wrist forward, “Braecen. Valhavoc.” The pair tensed and awaited orders. “Breach these doors and clear a path to the Code White vault.”

The pair darted forward. A pair of white flames erupted from the hilts in Braecen’s hands while an E-11 carbine materialized in Valhavoc’s hands. The Quaestor punched a secure sequence into the doors, but an error message beeped and a red light flashed. Timeros raised his hands and plied his fingers, blowing the doors inward with the power of the Dark Side. Silently, the lead pair entered into the darkness and darted forward.

Atyiru marched deliberately forward. Every step measured and calm. The Force wrapped her in a cocoon and cautioned her against rash actions. While she desperately wanted to charge forward, the Light Side of the Force urged against such reckless action. She would arrive exactly when she needed. No sooner. No later. Her loyal Champions stayed by her side. Neither questioned her actions or her motives.

**White Level**

**Dusk Station**

Valhavoc’s carbine was leveled towards the darkly clad invaders. He pulled the trigger continuously and crimson bolts raced out from the barrel to find their marks. The Eminent dutifully pushed forward from the right flank of the Sith Elder before him. He matched the Juggernaut step for step as the pair began to ingress the defenses of Teroch’s forces.

Braecen’s twin blades created fans of white, brilliant light that intercepted numerous bolts hailing at them from all directions. He could not exert enough will to redirect each bolt – sending them off in numerous directions. The Force directed his hands, though, keeping the pair safe as they worked towards cover. The Mercenary rolled in a quick somersault from the Sith’s right to his left, taking cover from the barrage that met them. Braecen heavily crashed into the large containers beside his fellow Elder of the Iron Throne.

“They seem agitated,” Braecen laughed. “I don’t think they like us.”

“We have to clear the path quicker, Kaeth,” the cold tone of Valhavoc dowsing the joyful light in Braecen’s eyes.

“Alright, then.” The Sith barked. “Behind me.”

The pair emerged from cover. Braecen sped forward as both blades whirled in sequence. He cut through several of the invaders before they could react to the all-out attack. Kaeth drew up short at an intersection and locked his feet to the ground. From here he would rather die than give an inch. Valhavoc slid into position at his side. He barked an order and the Sith instinctively obeyed by creating a barrier before them to repel blaster fire. Two grenades were released from his hands. They beeped madly as they tumbled through the air and landed beside their foes.

An explosion rocked the landscape and tossed both friend and foe violently against bulkheads and hallways. An eerie quiet settled into the hallway as the trio of Atyiru, Marick, and Timeros marched over the corpses – and their wounded allies – towards the vault of Mejas Doto.

Through the Force, Atyiru could sense the insanity pouring outward from the Dark Jedi Master of Clan Arcona. She could also sense a more familiar presence – Teroch. She reached for the beautiful, ornate hilt at her waist. Beside her, the Combat Master and a Combat Master Emeritus reached for their weapons.

The battle for Dusk Station was about to begin.