Corvus Corax, Zirael

Siding with House Hoth (for this fiction)

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One of the seemingly endless errands that were created when a new Battle-team was formed was House-relations, and the drole intrigue of politics. And so, Corvus had arranged for a meeting with the House Summits, a week apart. Hoth’s was a few days away, but he was visiting Solyiat to help judge the character of the Quastor and Aedile. After all, what better way to judge a person by looking at the society they have created? Well, Corvus had read somewhere that art was the ultimate way to understand a person, but he was not much interested in labouring to find meaning from art - that sort of thing is always impossibly subjective.

Corvus wandered the vast caverns beneath Trepus’ surface. Due to the wonders of ice, the caverns were a toasty 0 degrees, compared to the chill weather and wind outside. He had left the safety of the transfer station quite some time ago, seemingly undetected - a benefit of being rather small and talented at hiding (and, though he wouldn’t admit it himself, a fair use of stealth Force techniques). The caverns were vast, and the ice didn’t show any sign of melting. He hadn’t yet reached the edge of the mine, where the thin, creeping tendrils of tunnels shrink into passages more suited to the Aleena’s tiny figure. He intended to look at the work they were doing, if anything, whether the machinery was still active, and whether they intended to continue using the lowest-income demographic to mine what little remained in the stone, as had been done on-and-off before Hoth’s arrival. In the distance, he thought he could hear the whine of machinery.

He paused in his journey, hearing someone approach with thick, thumping feet. The gait was slow - one came about every 3 seconds. The cave’s qualities amplified, rather than absorbed, the noise. For once, Corvus was pleased about having small feet and a light frame. However, without the clink of crampons to accompany the thumps, he thought it must be another civilian - any knowledgeable-enough person acquainted with these caves would come in with good boots and crampons. And no, Corvus had not been smart enough to wear either. And yes, he had fallen 4 times since entering the cave. He went barefoot - something that probably did help against the smoothness of the floor, just not enough.

Corvus put on his metaphorical mask, pulling his cloak around him and shivering like a lost traveller would, if anyone actually saw him. He started wandering towards the footsteps, but found no-one there. He continued his act and his backtracking back towards the entrance. He couldn’t have someone - especially a civilian - finding him alone in a foreign area while he was doing his pseudo-investigation.

As he walked, though, the thumping footsteps grew louder - far louder than mere footsteps - and then, after roughly 7 or 8 pairs of steps, they stopped altogether. All over this, the whine of machinery grew louder too - and with the dread of realisation, he realised it was an alarm. The transfer station, and Hoth, was under attack. Corvus thought for a moment, then gave up on his act and ran for the entrance.

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Outside, the distinctive silhouette of drop-ships spiked up from the icy tundra. Already, the flashes and sparks of combat accompanied the faint thriving hum of battle. The few guards still stationed within the building were rallying a robust defense, and were relatively unconcerned about Corvus as he sneaked past, towards the conflict. His cloak and stature helped, too.

He jogged forwards, saving his energy for the upcoming trials. He also preferred to know what he was getting into before joining a fight. After all, this could be a planned and organised training scenario. But, the somewhat flustered defense at the transfer station indicated the opposite - the attack was a surprise and most likely hostile. Corvus reached a slight rise in the landscape, and gained a relatively good vantage point to see the battle. He was close, and could distinguish lightsaber battles raging at the heart of the conflict. The enemy had Force-users. The Grand Master had found them, despite their precautions. Some fights aren’t worth it, but this one needed everyone they could get. The Light must survive. First the New Republic, then New Tython. It stopped here. Corvus threw his cloak off and started forward.

Ahead, a squad of the enemy were managing to flank round, pinning the Hothites in. Corvus aimed for them, pulling the concealing shadows the Force around him. He would be unseeable. He would dance in front of them, slow them down, then subdue them. They would not succeed.

He reached the outskirts of the group, which had started to separate from the main host - and the enemy had taken advantage, starting to surround them. Corvus darted in as far as he dared, before leaping up over someone’s kicking leg, gathering the Force into a tightly wound coil, and slamming it down to wash over the nearby enemy.

And there he was, at the front lines at last. He would finally have the opportunity to fight for what he believed, instead of hiding behind others. This fight was *his*.

Until he saw who he had knocked over with his telekinetic wave. A sworn member of Satele Shan. The gunman stood, bringing his blaster up. Corvus summoned his lightsaber and prepared to deflect while he worked out what the *hell* was going on. Civil War? Revolution? Training? And here Corvus was, right at the heart of it with no clue as to the severity of this battle. He cursed his specking luck. The *one* time he was around and ready to fight those fracking *tahr* and he’d gotten it completely wrong.

He swiped his saber up to catch a bolt. The gunman had aimed low, at the legs.

‘*Not aiming to kill,’* he thought. ‘*Only to maim or seriously injure.’*

Resolving himself to follow in the gunman’s footsteps, he dashed forward, then with a flick of the wrist, the blaster was cut in two. Corvus promptly disappeared further into the battle. Flitting through and past and under other people was surprisingly easy. He stowed his saber and opened his pouch. At least this… exchange of combat skills was an opportunity for Corvus to showcase his legerdemain with coins. He flicked one up, then propelled its flatside into a Satelite’s shoulder, toppling him over. He flipped another into the air, knocking a blaster off-course. Another pinned a Togruta’s foot to the ground long enough for her to stumble. Before any of them could react, Corvus had jumped backward behind safe lines, to find more opportunities.

Soon enough, his pouch was empty - unprepared as he was, he only had a dozen or so. He had left the Satelites some nice souvenirs, though. The coins were imprinted with a name - Corvus - and a serial number. He faded back into a friendly group of soldiers. Behind him, several men seemed to fall over quite suddenly, and they were slow to stand up. A presence moved between them, toward him. He turned with a hand on his saber, frowning.

Aerin Taggart, an old Ooroo friend of his, appeared in front of him, somewhat shocked to see him.

She hesitated, “Corvus?! Why are you with them?” She added in a whisper. “You were a Agent, remember?”

“Hey, I’m afraid I stumbled into this,” he replied with a grin. “I frankly have no definite idea as to what is going on.”

The Zeltron quirked a small smirk, then her face hardened. “If you’re siding with Hoth now, then I must at least *try* to subdue you.”

Corvus lit his golden blade. “You must allow me to *try* to return the favour, my friend.”

The surrounding soldiers had given them space, streaming around the two Jedi.

Corvus adopted a more suitable stance, akin to fencing - one foot in front of the other, blade hovering around mid-section height. Aerin lit her saber, then smirked as she darted forward. Corvus slapped her thrust aside, then attempted a slow counterattack. She dodged his blade, paying attention to the speed of it, rather than instinct. She’d improved since their last spar. Corvus began to circle around, watching her intently. She’d matured in the last few months - her jawline was sharper, her figure becoming more slender, and --

The Aleena jerked himself to the side, only narrowly missing a swipe from Taggart. The Zeltron had been giving him an unhealthy dose of pheromones. A clever tactic, but a one-trick pony. He parried another slash, noting how she overstepped when striking. He gave a quick flick of the saber towards her, and she leapt back, whacking at his own blade. A large over-reaction; a simple side-step would have been sufficient. Aerin had improved, that was for sure, but she wasn’t quite ready to deal with him.

He continued circling around, waiting for her to strike. She lunged forward, swinging her saber round. Corvus reached into her with the Force and restricted her movement, bringing her to a near-standstill. Corvus ducked under the blade, and hit the other side of it, knocking it out of her hand. Then he turned off his saber, and as she overstepped, Corvus hit his hilt into the back of her knee, destabilising her further. He then dashed back out from under her legs to a safe distance away. She wobbled a bit, but managed to remain upright - a commendable effort. He released his bonds on her, and she began to move forward. He was ready, though. He took his - now empty - coin pouch and pushed it into her face. She snarled, ready to start playing it dirty.

By the time she’d pulled the bag away, he was gone.

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The Ranger picked up his cloak from where it had been abandoned. An abhorrent number of snow crystals still clung to its surface. He sighed. His stash of good-quality starch was quickly running out - and the Kiast nobility seemed to hate the idea of crisp, well-folded clothes, preferring rich, voluminous robes.

He pulled the cloak around his shoulders and started back towards the station. The battle still raged behind him, though its noise had lost the enthusiastic energy of the first few hours. Now, it was turning into a long, hard slog of fight. Corvus wasn’t tired, not yet, but he’d had enough. This wasn’t his fight, he reminded himself. He’d given up House membership when he’d agreed to start Zirael. And fighting Aerin - not sparring, but full on fighting - that was not what he wanted to do. Initially, the soldiers had intentionally tried not to seriously injure anyone, but as he withdrew from the battle afterward, he saw a more primal form of fighting. They were still not trying to kill, but it was altogether more beastly.

Corvus understood the needs of training, but he had limits. Perhaps he’d been affected by training lesser-experienced people, but he thought this was too far. Then he remembered the passion he had felt as he’d initially charged toward the battle.

‘*No,’* he thought. ‘*This training is necessary. We need to be prepared to face the Legion.* I *need to be ready.’*

He didn’t stay for the end of the battle. He went and waited for the next ship back to Kiast. He had a lot of thinking to do...