

The Pinnacle
Aliso
34 ABY

Abadeer tugged on the collar of his new cloak as he strode towards the office of his Pro-Consul, Selika Roh. He'd been summoned in a somewhat secretive manner. Taasii was very curious as to the nature of his meeting with the woman, who frankly intimidated him. She commanded respect, and not without reason. The long hallways of the new Plagueis base seemed to go on forever, as duracrete, durasteel, and stone all melded together. The Togruta took a moment to pause outside the Pro-Consul office, preparing himself for a moment before stepping inside the lair of the terrifying presence that was Selika Roh.

"Come inside," the cool, yet attractive voice rang out into the hall, breaking Abadeer's pondering, "I don't have time to wait on you." Taasii never wanted to leave Selika waiting, he enjoyed his head right where it was. Abadeer quickly stepped inside, standing tall, but respectfully before the seated woman. She sat, coldly staring at Taasii, withering away at his resolve.

"You summoned me, my Lady?" Taasii asked, trying to break the silence.

"I did Aedile. This is not Clan business, and this meeting does not leave this room." Abadeer nodded, showing his understanding. "Good. As you know, I have many interests throughout the galaxy. One of these interests is knowledge, and all of the greatest knowledge lies in holocrons, both those of the Sith as well as those of the Jedi. This interest has afforded me a position in the Brotherhood, that of Tribune over Holocrons." Abadeer listened intently, but he was unsure of what any of what his Pro-Consul was saying had to do with him.

"Just recently I received word of a forgotten holocron on the Antei system."

"Antei!?" Abadeer couldn't help but bursting out, immediately snapping back to attention.

"Yes.. Antei," Selika glared at the Togruta as she continued her thoughts, "You are too young to have been there and seen what happened, but you are aware that Antei is now an uninhabitable, and desolate graveyard. Much to my surprise though, there is report of a holocron that survived the destruction. It's said that it will be deep underground in the Dark Hall." Abadeer was a bit shaken, he knew exactly where this conversation was headed, and he didn't like it.

"I have need of someone to confirm or deny the reports, and if they are true, I would need you to retrieve and return to me the holocron." Selika's dark stare continued to rest on Abadeer. He was not excited at the prospect of traversing a desolate and hazardous planet, but he was less keen to upset his Pro-Consul in any fashion. Again, his head would preferably stay attached for years to come.

"I will.. accept my Lady. If I may ask though, why myself?" Taasii asked tentatively.

"Indeed why you? Well you have proved not entirely useless over the last few months, and you have shown some promise as a Shadow. The problem that you face with this endeavor is that you are not the only person in search of the holocron," Taasii's brow raised questioningly, "Apparently word has gotten out about a rare artifact, and everyone is interested. I don't know quite how far this information has travelled, but I need you to get that holocron." Abadeer slowly nodded, pondering on the chance at combat.

"Understood Master. The holocron will be retrieved, if it's truly there. Any enemies that I find will be destroyed." Abadeer bowed slightly to the seated woman in front of him.

"See that you do Aedile. Bring me back that holocron."

Outside the Dark Hall
Antei

Abadeer stepped outside his ship, the ashen landscape still burned around him. It had been years since the Ritual, but still the planet's surface smoldered as though the event had happened only hours before. Taasii covered his mouth in a futile attempt to ebb the flow of smoke into his lungs, but he let out a heaving cough instead.

"Damn this planet.. I mean more than it already is." Abadeer said to no one in particular. The wind swirled around the lone figure, causing his cloak to billow out around him. "Let's get this over with." Taasii swept the cloak back with a flourish of his arm.

The massive ziggurat that used to be the Temple of Okemi towered above the Togruta. He glanced up at the towering structure that loomed before him, akin to the landscape, still smoldering. Abadeer strode quickly towards the temple's blasted entrance, anxious to get inside and out of the howling wind.

As Taasii stepped inside the building, the wind quieted significantly, and he began to glance around, opening up all of his senses to the max. He even began to reach out with the Force, trying to scan for anything or anyone around him. There were intricately designed pillars and walls that were scorched and scarred, scattered about all around the entrance hall. The Force here was Dark, the feeling was only that of death, and Abadeer shuddered slightly.

Taasii continued to focus his abilities, pushing out with all of his senses, extending them as far as they would reach. It was difficult to sense anything more than the overwhelming presence of the Force in the temple, but after several moments, Abadeer was able to sense two Force sensitives. He couldn't distinguish any information more than that, except that they had already made it to the lower levels.

Not wanting to bring the somewhat delicate balance of the structure crashing down, Abadeer decided to pick his way down to the lower levels with care. This was his first time on Antei, and definitely his first time in the Dark Hall. Picking his way through the rubble Abadeer made his way to an elevator shaft, that had already been pried open. There were two grapple lines that had been left hanging, dangling farther into the darkness than the Sith's eyes could peer through.

With gloved hands Taasii took hold of one of the lines, and made his descent. It was several floors before Abadeer came to the bottom of the line, which was curled on top of a crashed, and overturned lift. Quietly the Shadow made his way through the halls. Occasionally having to double back from time to time, as the paths he would choose were blocked by rubble. After several minutes of slowly continuing through the dark of the halls, Abadeer began to hear quiet whisperings. The individuals were close.

"How are we supposed to get this open?" one voice started to carry through the halls.

"I've no idea, my saber can't penetrate it. It just looks like durasteel to me." said the other.

"Maybe it's enchanted with Sith witchcraft." the first voice responded. The conversation continued on as Abadeer slowly made his way carefully closer and closer. As Abadeer finally came to the entrance to the room, he focused for a few moments, allowing the Force to cloak him, allowing him to sneak in and assess the situation.

As he came around the corner he saw two figures, one wearing a long brown Jedi robe, with the hood pulled up, and the other wearing light combat armor overtop of almost pure white robes. As Abadeer reached out with his senses, he could now tell that these two were both Jedi, and that neither of them were as powerful as he was. A dark smile crossed Taasii's face. He'd not been trained enough the last time Plagueis faced the Jedi, but now, now he was more than ready to hold his own.

The Togruta stepped out of the shadows, unveiling his presence.

“Ahem, gentleman?” The pair wheeled around at the sudden appearance of the towering figure across the room from them. Abadeer raised both arms, extending his hands out. In his mind he saw both men pinned against the wall, and tapping into the Force, he willed it to be so. Taasii slowly began to tighten his fists, and each Jedi before him began to desperately gasp for breath. “You seem to have located the entrance to my holocron room, and unfortunately we can’t be having that. No Jedi allowed.” Taasii let absolute malice drip into his voice as it resonated around the room. His fists continued to slowly close, and the two men started kicking, but not finding any purchase.

The Jedi with white robes stopped struggling for a moment, then drew out a lightsaber. The azure saber ignited its blade, and a moment later two cross guard blades ignited. The Jedi threw his blade directly at the stationary Togruta. Abadeer ducked out of the way as the saber flew past him, clattering to the ground where it deactivated. Taasii’s eyes shot back up to see the armored Jedi drop down to the floor, his concentration had been broken. Taasii smiled, bearing his long canines.

“Let’s see what you can do, my young Jedi friend. Come and taste death.” Abadeer sneered.

The Jedi began charging forward with his arms outstretched, his shoulders low. Taasii sidestepped the charge, still holding his left arm up, crushing the hooded Jedi beneath his grasp. Abadeer reached over his shoulder to remove from its holster his lightsaber, bringing it low and letting it spring to life. The violet blade hummed a song of death as Taasii raised it high, and flourished it back to his side, a salute to the armored Jedi.

“Pick up your saber, Jedi scum. I’ve need to stretch my muscles.” With this the Sith Warrior turned fully to face his opponent. The hooded Jedi had lost consciousness and Abadeer allowed him to slump to the ground. Cautiously the white robed Jedi reached for his blade, instantly igniting as he soon as he retrieved it.

“You’ll pay, I’ll kill you for touching Xolarin.” Abadeer raised his brow at the statement, sensing seething rage coming from the Jedi before him. Taasii made no move forward, but instead let the Jedi come to him. Abadeer’s moves were defensive, deflecting powerful blows from his opponent. The Jedi’s swings were powerful indeed, and they could have overpowered Taasii, but his training in Makashi allowed him to merely redirect the blows away from his body rather than bear the full force of the attack with simple blocks.

Abadeer slowly retreated around the room, continuing to deflect the heavy handed blows. As he directed one particularly ferocious blow that sent the Jedi sprawling past him, he felt a chill down his spine and instinctively raised his saber behind him blocking a blow from the Jedi named Xolarin. Abadeer turned to face the two Jedi Knights, saber outstretched at a slight angle in front of him.

“We’ll take him together Ryan.” Xolarin said, nodding towards his companion. Ryan only growled in response, the rage could still be felt flowing from him. Abadeer watched as both Jedi took a ready position, analyzing his opponents. The hooded man stood somewhat awkwardly, saber in both hands. He was in the basic stance of Form 0, Abadeer noted, his form somewhat lacking. The raging armored Jedi was standing with one leg forward, one back, his hands placed one high and one low on the saber’s hilt. He was practicing Djem So, his skills were also lacking compared to Abadeer’s easy control over his saber.

“Well unfortunately my preferred style probably isn’t going to cut it against two trained and powerful Jedi Knights. Although I might have to wait for some to arrive,” Taasii taunted, watching as the Jedi’s expressions turned from one of slight hope, into anger, “Also quite unfortunately for you, I’ve trained in other arts, and I will still kill you.” This was emphasized as Abadeer reached behind his waist and drew out his second saber, igniting the twin violet blade.

“You mock us, but we will not fall so easily.” Xolarin said. He jumped back while the armored Jedi charged at Abadeer. Taasii decided to stop toying with his prey, again deflecting one of the

incoming strikes, and he quickly stepped in close inserting his right hand blade through the chest of the raging Jedi. The light quickly faded from Ryan's eyes as he toppled to the floor. "No!" Xolarin yelled. He outstretched his arm and rubble flew up towards Abadeer at high speeds. The Togruta Warrior twirled his twin blades in a mesmerizing dance, blocking the largest pieces of debris.

The Plaguein charged forward, his blades still twirling, working together in a dance of death. He began raining down blows from all angles on the desperate Knight. The Jedi didn't have the skill to keep up with Abadeer's onslaught. Abadeer raised both arms above his head and brought them crashing down from above onto the emerald blade that was held aloft in a desperate, but useless attempt at defense. Taasii's blow pushed past the defense of his opponent, and continued straight through the shoulders of the hooded man before him. The appendages fell to the floor, shortly followed by their owner who crumpled to the floor. Taasii deactivated his second blade, and plunged the first into the heart of the Jedi before him.

"*Pathetic.*" Abadeer spat in his native language. He deactivated the first saber, before stowing both in their homes. Taasii walked over to the door that had confounded the two Jedi. It took a few moments of searching for Abadeer to find the lock on the door. It was a small circular panel on the right side of the door, that looked like several interconnecting gears. Taasii raised his hand, reaching out with the Force feeling the mechanism, and how it was supposed to move. He willed the lock to move in its proper pattern, and as it did some power seemed to hum around the room. The door slowly started to open, a significant amount of dust shifting with it as it became unsettled.

Abadeer peered inside the dark room before him, the only light source being a single prick of sapphire light on the right side, towards the back of the room. Taasii strode towards it, where he found a small intricate glowing blue square. He recognized it as a Jedi holocron.

"I suppose all knowledge as one use or another." Abadeer stated as he bent over to pick up the small artifact. He stowed it away on a small pouch on his belt.

The journey out of the Dark Hall was much less adventurous, the Togruta being more easily able to pick his way back through the underground maze towards the lift shaft. He used the grapple to make his way up the several flights of shaft before reaching the main entrance hall. There Abadeer took a short moment to rest, unwilling to make his way back out into the hell scape of Antei.

After several minutes the Sith steeled himself and exited the building. The stifling smoke was still blowing through the air. Taasii hurried towards his ship, anxious to make his way back to Aliso. Only a few yards away from his ship, Abadeer heard a deafening sound that caught him off-guard. A medium sized fighter craft maneuvered between him and his ship, bright spotlights shining right into Abadeer's face. He attempted to block out the light with his arm, raising it to shield his eyes. A loud voice came from the ship's speaker system, overpowering even the loud roar of the engines.

"Attention Togruta, you have in your possession a item of great importance to me and my benefactors. Now if you would kindly hand over the holocron, I'll happily be on my way."

Abadeer squinted his eyes, trying to peer through the blinding light were he caught glimpse of a pilot wearing a typical Mandalorian helmet.

"If you don't return the holocron, I'll be forced to activate my ships guns until you are dead. I somehow don't think you'll survive." The voice carried over the wind. Abadeer was unsure of what to do, until things got worse. Two more ships entered the space right above him, spotlights and guns trained on him. He raised up his hands in surrender. If it was just one ship, maybe he could have done something to escape, but with three, he hardly stood a chance.

"One of my associates here will be coming to appropriate that lovely holocron from you." As if on cue, another warrior in Mandalorian armor came running out of the ship. This was had a

slimmer build, probably female. She ran up behind Abadeer, and kicked in the back of his knees bringing him to the ground. With one hand holding her blaster to him, she used her free hand to search his person. It didn't take long before she searched the pouch retrieving the glowing square. She sprinted back into her ship, just as quickly as she'd exited.

"We thank-you for your cooperation, and hope you have a great day. But just to make sure it's not too good.." the voice trailed off. The first ship turned towards Abadeer's fighter, and shot a round of energy, impacting right into the engines. Taasii watched in shock as his only way off planet turned into a smoking husk, just like the planet he was now prisoner on.

The Mandalorian ships wasted no time in taking their leaving, heading out into space. Abadeer continuing to stare at the useless heap before him that was his ship. He mumbled a quiet Togruti curse to himself, not sure which was worse: being trapped on the treacherous Antei, or facing Selika if he ever got back to tell her that he'd lost the holocron.

Taasii walked back towards the Temple of Okemi, pulling out his communicator. He dialed in a frequency as he walked up the smoldering steps, the call ringing out as he entered the main hall. Abadeer walked over to a large piece of rubble and collapsed onto it, totally exhausted. It only took a few more minutes before a familiar stern face appeared before him. Arden Karn di Plagia, Quaestor of House Karness Muur.

"What is it Abadeer? This channel is only for emergencies. This better be good." Arden's annoyed voice came through, breaking in and out occasionally.

"Define good?"