

COST OF POWER

By Blade Ta'var

Fallax, a budding and ambitious Sith, sat in front of the red glow of a holocron. The black haired, adult human was dressed in all black with a Sith insignia on his collar. His focused gaze was near-unbreakable as he watched the Sith of old recite their ancient teachings. The pale-skinned male was a voracious reader, and it was his sincere hope that his dedication to knowledge would gain him unimaginable power.

Dreams of conquest and the raw power of a Sith Lord fueled his fire. Those passions even gave him the power to sit through another monotonous holocron. It gave him the strength to conquer his rivals, and the power to take what he wanted as he saw fit. Victory alluded him still, but it was only a matter of time. He would be an almighty Emperor, free to do what he wanted.

Only a matter of time, he thought as he squeezed his hand into a fist.

The chime of a comlink broke Fallax's reverie. He grabbed it with a sigh and answered with an annoyance that froze most to the bone.

"Yes...Who is this?"

"Now, now. Don't be grumpy Vorak or I'll cancel our reservation." An alluring female voice filled his small study.

"What did I say about using my real name, Nessie?"

"Well, you like to call me Nessie instead of Vanessa. So I figure we are even, Vorak." The woman challenged him as she took special care to say his name once more.

Fallax fought back a smile that turned into a smirk, and chuckled just a bit.

"Well, Vanessa. Just remember the power of a name. You don't want to be my enemy nor meet any of mine."

“If you want a fight, we might as well skip dinner and go right to the festivities. I’ll beat you just like last time and wipe that silly smirk off your arrogant face,” threatened the female Sith.

The drone of his long dead teachers took up much of his time, but there was one power in the universe that could ground Fallax solidly back on the ground: Vanessa. She liked to kick his ass and pushed her luck far more than she should, but she was special to him.

“I haven’t forgotten, Nessie. I’ll be there. See you then.”

Fallax killed the connection and shook his head in amusement. She was his favorite possession, even if she violently disagreed with him. In any case, an Emperor needed an Empress, and she would do the job quite well.

“...remember that unlimited power comes at a cost. Many have fallen prey to the allure of lo—”

The budding emperor shut down the holocron for the day, marked his progress, and threw out his disregarded lunch. As he left his study and prepared to head out, he couldn’t help but smile. It was rare for him, but he couldn’t show such weaknesses in front of his colleagues. He might as well enjoy the comforts of home.

Three hours later

Fancy restaurant across town

A cloaked man surreptitiously followed a pair of humans across town, taking mental notes as he watched the two Sith try their best to not show overt affection. The spy knew better, and his assumptions proved even more correct as he watched the two of them enjoy dinner together yet again. Formalities were kept and official names were used, but only a fool couldn’t see the attraction between them. It was the small things: the twinkle in their eyes, the relative lack of attention to their surroundings, and the fact that Fallax was only agreeable in her presence. One could even call it love, the most dangerous of emotions for a rising Sith.

The man smiled as he ran off to complete his report. It had taken several weeks, but he had what he needed to finally take down his rival: a weakness.

Your time has come to an end, Fallax...

Dark Council Chambers

Several days later

Fallax briskly walked down the corridors leading to several of his Sith masters, trying to contain his excitement. He absentmindedly smoothed over his already crease-free robes, while he wore an arrogant smirk. He had received a surprise summons, which usually meant he was receiving another promotion. The ambitious Sith took a calming breath, wiped the smirk off his face, and knocked on the council chamber's door.

"You may enter."

Despite the late hour, three of his masters sat waiting for him on one of the higher-tiered benches. Their old, waxy complexions were revolting but their power was undeniable. As he bowed before them, he saw a newcomer from the corner of his eye that caught him off guard. Derrick, his old rival, was sitting on a lower-tiered bench, hidden in shadowy corner. A surge of hate flooded through him as he glared at the man that happened to be one of his fiercest opponents.

What is he doing here?

"Fallax, rise."

"Yes, masters. How can I serve you?"

"Derrick has brought to our attention some disturbing news. He reports that you and Vanessa have fallen in love. A most dangerous emotion, don't you agree?" asked one of his masters with a malicious undertone.

"Yes, of course, master." Fallax cursed internally, wondering just what Derrick had found out.

"We didn't think it was possible that a Sith of your standing could fall prey to something so petty, so we checked things out for ourselves and guess what we found?"

"What, master?" Fallax responded a bit too calmly.

"Disappointment. One of our very own, a promising disciple hand-picked for our training, had given himself a weakness any common rat could exploit!" What had started as a quiet disapproval crescendoed into a yell of cold rage.

His master's eyes bore into his skull, he was caught all right. Dread washed over him, and he dearly hoped he had not lost everything he had worked for so far. He collected himself before responding back, weighing each word carefully.

"Vanessa is an object of pleasure. No more or no less. I promise you, my master, that she has not given me a weakness."

"Then prove it. Kill her and bring her broken body before me. Prove you a Sith worthy of our teachings," demanded his other master with a malicious fury few could match. The rest of his masters nodded in agreement.

A hatred for all of them, especially Derrick, threatened to consume him, but he had his orders and he knew what had to be done.

"Yes, master. I'll prove to you I am worthy. Then I'll gut that rat where he stands." Fallax snarled as he glared at his rival.

"You are dismissed, Fallax. If you succeed, you can have his head too."

He bowed himself out, wondering if he could do it.

Vanessa's apartment

Morning after

Fallax looked preoccupied as he stroked the female Sith's hair. He had pleasantly surprised her the night before, selfishly enjoying her company while he could. He kept thinking of ways to get rid of her without killing her, but Derrick was smart enough to catch them once, why not again? Many schemes chased themselves around his head but they all led to the inevitable decision: love or power, not both.

Angry tears started to roll down his cheeks as he rolled over and grabbed his lightsaber. He pressed the emitter against her back and took a deep breath. Then another, and another. He couldn't do it. Making matters worse, Nessie was already waking up, senses still dull from a late night.

"Vorak, is that you?"

Her voice was the very definition of pleasure. He felt as if his tears were not enough to express his grief, but then thought of his master's cruel faces. Her fate was much worse in their hands than his own. He could give his Nessie a quick death at least.

"I told you to call me Fallax."

His activated his saber with a *snap-hiss* and deactivated it seconds later, watching as his red saber stabbed her cleanly through the heart. Her form went limp in his arms as a piece of him died inside, only to be filled by an all-consuming rage. He held her dead body tight against him until his tears faded. She was a weakness for him, but she was his weakness. They would all pay the price, especially Derrick. None of them would be safe in his new empire. None of them.