**THE IMMORTAL**  
  
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Antei - 24 ABY  
  
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“SHOOM-PAKOW!”  
  
Sediment choked the air, shell smoke wrapping its ghostly tendrils around and atmosphere rife with grime and violence. Fonts of gravel and dirt sprayed in choreographed unison with the thunder of explosions, and all he tasted was blood and loam. It trickled from his mouth in watery red strands, bleeding into a nebula of mottled flesh the way the light of Antares swam into the vast gloaming of the galaxy beyond.  
  
He, who had traveled deep into the realm of stars, eyes seared by blinding flashes and dimmed by sudden blackness. A dark passenger whose inheritance was dominion, and legacy violence.   
  
He, who would die here, on the surface of Antei.  
  
Thanadd Mawgath watched his life spill, without resistance, into the *tableau vivant* which was the reclaiming of Antei. The scent of heat-mended flesh pervaded cavernous nostrils, which flared with each desperate, labored breath. It was not, however, this grisly odor which disturbed the Pau’an – it was the sound.   
  
The sound of others dying. Screaming. Bristling. Struggling. Fighting – *living*. They existed without him, executing their imperatives and experiencing each graphic nuance and tragedy of awareness. He could hear it all so clearly…  
  
…and they didn’t need him. Limbless and dying slowly in this earthen channel, a putrescent blemish on the skin of this troubled planet, Thanadd Mawgath was *alone*. The longevity of his people would leave him forever, soon, and he would not share in the spoils or glory which belonged to the victors of this war.   
Centuries slipped through his fetid veins, and the fear of impending death could not stir his body to gesticulate, for agony and regret could not be channeled through severed limbs.  
  
Thanadd could no longer turn his head far enough to recognize his sundered arm, a bloody hand still clutching the dull hilt of a lightsaber. His eyelids became simply too heavy to restrain, pitch black orbs peering out in their final moments at the man who had collected the Tarenti’s remaining eons.  
  
The Jedi.  
  
The whirring of the sapphire blade might have been calming to one more gentle, but to Thanadd Mawgath, it was a mocking drone. It teased him for his failure, word of conversions having penetrated even those ranks deep behind enemy lines. The forces of the Iron Throne were succumbing to the Light, and Thanadd had set out to extinguish the missionaries.  
  
It cost him his life.  
  
Now, the quiet figure pulled his hood atop his skull, strands of chestnut hair framing spherical oceans. The Pau’an’s impotent rage passed into blackness, and he was not awake to see how long the blue eyed man stood there, watching him.  
  
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Castle Tarentum - 35 ABY  
  
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“WHAT?!”  
  
A massive gauntlet, molded into a hammer-like fist, fell upon the table. Nobody flinched when the sound of buckling wood followed.  
  
“Now, now,” Scion Tarentae advised, watching the ice melt in swirling scotch.  
  
“That is no way to behave. You are among peers, *Knight*, but also your betters.”  
  
Thanadd Mawgath bowed in reverence, the metal prosthesis seeming to carry his hoary skull like some ghastly chalice. Rage, for a Sith, was to be measured. Directed. Utilized. Not simply dumped upon polite company. He knew this well.  
  
“Sir,” he growled, deferring to the Quaestor of House Mortis. Behind him, Geosh Romanae grinned with a sinister sheen, a satisfied accomplice to Scion’s considerable influence when not wielding his own. While he was not an equal warrior, Thanadd respected the Falleen’s wiles and command of the Force. He was a worthy second in command, one which the haughty Pau’an could tolerate.   
  
This news, however, could not be tolerated.  
  
“How did this happen?!” Mawgath demanded, his hand still clenched in an eternal cudgel. He pulled his great-cloak astride as he paced, searching his thoughts for answers he knew he did not have.  
  
“Where is Frosty? Sith Bloodfyre?”  
  
The Pau’an was well aware of his Master’s whereabouts, but the charade persisted. It was simply to the will of something greater – even greater than this. Intrigue, however, was not the massive Knight’s strong suit. Scion had his suspicions…  
  
…but that was a topic for another time.  
  
“The Consul of our clan does not deign to heed your bidding,” Scion explained, his silver hair groomed into a perfect ponytail. Although dwarfed by the size and weight of his vassal, Scion Tarentae exuded power and authority. It was notable that this projection seemed effortless, lacking the obvious arrogance of field soldiers like Thanadd.  
  
“The philosophies of these rogue clansmen – some formerly Sith – are under investigation by the Summit. This is not a *witch hunt*, Mawgath.”  
  
The towering Pau’an turned with a reflexive shudder, a sincere shock scrawled upon the furrows of his face.  
  
“Oh, yes, *Knight*. I know of your ties to the Inquisitorius. Did you think I would not find out?”  
  
Mawgath froze, awaiting whatever reprisal had been reserved for his duplicity. The moment seemed to pass in silence, and Scion again spoke.  
  
“It was clever, recruiting one with your particular… *talents*. Not the obvious choice – but a good one.”  
  
The old Battlelord grinned, still nursing his drink. The closest thing to absolution he would offer.  
  
“Rest assured, our opportunities for *readjustment* are upon the horizon. It would be best that you do not go seeking –“  
  
“Me,” the voice purred, a quiet power resonating in its timbre. It seemed to float from behind the deep folds of the cloak, nearly a dark enough blue to be confused with the robes of the gathered Sith.  
  
“Anshar?”   
  
Scion repressed a gasp, slamming the tawny liquid to the table. It was hard to tell if his posture carried fear or reverence.  
  
The veiled figure stepped forth, evidently in response to his name, and paused as the left foot fell parallel to the right. Immense oblivion bore its tension – its potential – upon the room. It was a threat Thanadd remembered too well.  
  
“Jedi…” he snarled, as if the word were a stench or a taste. It filled his lungs, a heady memory which brought his humours to a hastening simmer.  
The one called Anshar, having heard the creature in black armor whispering in ragged tones, turned his head with a curious lilt. He met the Pau’an’s gaze, as if sensing something nobody could see.  
  
Not a single being spoke as Anshar dropped his hood, the length of the cloak now hanging from his shoulders with a dignified nonchalance. His hand moved with an unearthly grace to his hip, hidden inside the drapery which concealed his person.   
  
Everybody recognized what he withdrew, the beryl edge extending with an ominous hiss.  
  
“JEDI! RRAAAAARRRGGGH!”  
  
Thanadd Mawgath cried out with a shattering roar as his lightsaber snapped to life, hoisted over his head as tremendous strides carried him towards his murderer - the one with the brown hair, and those fathomless blue eyes.  
  
“NO!” Scion cried out, somewhere from behind the Pau’an’s rage.  
  
It was too late to stop him. This time, he was not alone. This time, he could not die.  
  
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