

Preparing for the Showdown

It had been a busy month. Most of Hyle's days had been spent in meditation, strengthening his connection with the forces, refining his technique. He now had some control over his abilities, and the nightmarish visions that had plagued him for years seemed to have abated.

He slung his kitbag over his shoulder and boarded the shuttle, deep in thought. He was sorry to be leaving the Village, it had acclimatised him to living on a planet if nothing else. The sounds of wind and water were less strange to his ears now. He had received his new instructions, it seemed he would once again be living on a space station. Even that felt strange, living in one place, having spent all his adult life living and working on ships. It was connected to the planet by a space elevator, so he could still visit the surface.

He barely heard the comm exchange clearing the shuttle for approach, only registering his arrival at his new home as the shuttle touched down at the landing platform. When he stepped off the shuttle, into the hangar, he was mildly surprised to be greeted by his new master in person, a short, dark haired Miraluka some years older than himself.

"Greetings Master Junazee."

"Welcome Hyle"

They took a lift transport to the West Tower, where it seemed most of House Satele Shan's facilities were. The room she took him to seemed to be some kind of training area.

"I'm going to be honest with you Hyle, the situation in this region of space is deteriorating, and it's only a matter of time before tensions lead to bloodshed, and we need to be ready."

"I understand."

"You will be expected to fight, and you will be expected to be able to rely on yourself, and to be relied upon."

"I have six years of Militia service and I'm a qualified combat pilot."

"We will need every pilot and soldier we can muster, but what we also need are Jedi, those who can face our foe on an equal footing, that is what we are facing here, the Dark side. I need to be sure you can overcome it, be sure you can survive facing one trained in its ways."

She drew her lightsabre, adjusting its setting, the hollow, high pitched whir indicating that it was switched to training mode. Hyle drew the sabre he had spent years cobbled together over the years adjusted the settings, before igniting its yellow blade. Even going through the basic katas, her technique was fluid, even elegant. Hyle made a few clumsy parries, but never came close to striking home.

"You need to be able to use that against someone who can fight back." She said. "Let's see how you can survive against shooters." She opened a box in the training room, releasing a training drone with a low powered blaster.

He blocked the first two or three shots, but the drone seemed to adapt to his tactics quicker than the reverse. Junazee then handed him a helmet with a shade covering the eyes.

“You’re joking, right?” She said nothing.

“You expect me to fight blind?” Again no response.

“You expect me to fight blind. Right then, here we go.”

He blocked perhaps one shot before a quickfire volley hit him in several different places.

“Ok, so I really need to know how to use this thing, are you going to teach me anything, or carry on seeing just how useless I am right now with a lightsabre?”

“Focus.”

“Focus on what? The sound?”

“Just focus, on your surrounds, on The Force.”

Another volley of shots, again, he blocked one, but the all the other shots were square hits.

“You must learn how to defend yourself with a sabre.”

“Putting it through someone usually works.”

“Not if they get a shot in first, not if they have a sabre and know how to use it. The Force and enhance you physically and mentally, allow you to perceive in ways none can conceive.”

“But what of the here and now? How can I concentrate on what’s happening around me while I’m distracted trying to draw upon The Force itself?”

“For those who possess the aptitude, using the Force is a skill like any other, mastering it takes time, understanding, and practice.”

“Just like using a lightsabre?”

“Perhaps. Take your helmet off, breathe, focus, and follow my lead.”

She led him through the basic moves of sabrework, cuts, thrusts, blocks, slowly at first. It was difficult at first, concentrating on breathing, footwork, and coordination, but he found himself slowly moving from thinking about it to acting on instinct.

“Let’s try again.”

He put the blindfold helmet on again and ignited his sabre.

He strained to hear the movement of the shooter drone, but there was something else. He shifted the angle of the blade even before the shot had fired, although he couldn’t explain why he did. The impact jarred up his arm as the blade absorbed the shot.

“Good, you’re learning. We’ll be doing this every day, and blade exercises too.”