

Darth Vader's Castle

Mustafar

Mustafar System

Never before had Erik seen anything quite like Mustafar. He sat in awe of the dark, volcanic planet as he drew his shuttle into its thick atmosphere. He could make out several violent bursts of volcanic activity rising and falling in the distance as the ship descended below the black clouds. Rivers of glowing lava stretched across the barren landscape like ominous veins of power. Reaching out into the Force, he could sense the constant conflict that raged through the surface as lava flowed freely from one place to another. There was something else that caught his attention. Something large and powerful. As he caught sight of his destination the feeling intensified greatly. The dark side was very strong here.

Clan Naga Sadow had made it mandatory to journey alone to Darth Vader's castle for meditation. At first he regarded it as a much needed break from the endless confrontations he faced since becoming a knight. Now that he was landing he questioned the sanity in remaining here.

Once on the ground, he powered down the craft and turned to face his accompanying astromech. "Stay here. Warn me if anyone approaches." A sharp whistle met him in response.

Flipping a switch at the pilot's console, a whirr of servos signalled the lowering of the boarding ramp. The tall human checked that his lightsaber was firmly clipped to his armor's accompanying utility belt. He removed his helmet and set it down on the console, inhaling sharply as he caught his reflection in the visor. His eyes were an explosion of red and gold, replacing all hints of natural blue. The dark energy here was affecting him greatly and he took a moment to adjust to his new surroundings before exiting the shuttle.

Upon reaching the main entrance the sadowan paused to examine the dark, metal surface of the double doors. He had expected the great stronghold to be quite ancient however he now recognized its design as mostly imperial. His gloved hands reached forward and pressed firmly. His muscles tensed as he increased pressure however no amount of strength could move the monolithic doors.

Taking a step back, he reached out with the force to take hold of them again in a fit of rage. There was a low rumble as Erik funneled emotions into a telekinetic shove. The doors abruptly moved inward to reveal a massive foyer sheltered in dark stone. The violent noise of forced entry sent great echoes through the empty castle as if in testament to its vastness.

A deranged grin spread across his face as he strolled into the foyer, eyes darting back and forth to cover every possible hiding place. *This was new territory. Anything could happen.* The thought kept him grounded with a small measure of fear.

Sensing no one, he made his way to the centre of the large room and rested upon the cold floor in a kneeling position with both legs tucked under his body. He waited for his eyes to adjust to the dark before allowing them to close completely.

Time lost all meaning. He wasn't sure just how long he had been meditating but it became immediately clear he was not alone. A very powerful presence was felt suddenly standing before Erik's kneeling form. When he opened his eyes the room grew darker, making it extremely difficult to see. He sensed immense anger directed towards him from a tall humanoid shadow. There was a steady hissing and whining noise from it that filled the knight with a deep sense of dread.

A lightsaber ignited, shedding red light across the room. Shadows danced as the blade was raised and lowered in a powerful downward slash to split Erik in two. He managed to roll to the side, unclipping and igniting his own blade in swift response. The shadow stepped backwards to avoid several more attacks and it was then that he confirmed his suspicions. Somehow he was fighting Vader himself.

Locking blades with the dark lord, Erik confidently dug in his feet in an effort to hold his ground and seek out an advantage. This mistake would send him sprawling onto his back under the Sith lord's superior strength. Rolling backwards the warrior quickly returned to his feet and raised his lightsaber again.

A deep, booming voice sent chills down his spine. "I can sense your fear, boy."

There were several cracks, hisses and pops as the two red blades collided. It was evident that he couldn't support the full force of Vader's attacks and so he did his best to avoid any impact at all. No matter where he moved he was always on the defensive. Sparks were flying after every impact. There was no escaping this nightmare it seemed.

"I also sense great anger in you.... A slave... Now I see. It is not always easy to see the ones who control you, boy. Heed my words. Let the pain of your past flow through you. Your strength will not save you. Strike out in anger!"

Erik was slowly being cornered under a barrage of hits and it took all his focus to stay out of harm's way. He screamed loudly and extended his hands toward the sith lord, sending a wave of telekinetic energy forward in a powerful push. Vader's black cape flapped noisily as a rush of wind blew past him. The tattered fabric started to disintegrate and with it the wearer. Vader's figure fell into ash and blew away down one of the various halls. The oppressive darkness left with him.

Panting, Erik fell to his knees and tried to control himself. His heart was racing as he looked around the room with genuine freight. He wasn't in a corner. He found himself kneeling in the center of the room as he had been when he first started to meditate.

Was it all a dream? Far too vivid. He thought. The sadowan wasn't going to spend any more time finding out.

The knight sprinted through the exit and back to his ship. As soon as he was in the cockpit he started swatting at the controls with the speed of a madman. The ramp started to close behind him and the shuttle came to life with the hum of its engines. Without any warning to the droid the ship was launched back into space and the jump coordinates were set for a return path to the Orian system at maximum speed.