

# Winds of Change

A Submission to the Competition:  
May the 4th Be With You!: Legendary Encounter II



Written by  
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## **36 ABY**

### **Caelestis City, Ragnath**

Reiden Palpatine Karr drained the remnants of amber colored liquor from his glass and set it down on the table in front of him. It had been a long day and he needed to unwind a bit. Preferring to have some space and took a seat in a corner booth, away from the bustle that was found at the bar. He glanced at the bottle of rum that he had purchased from bartender that sat on the table. He reached out and slowly spun it between his fingers before pouring himself another glass. He didn't take a drink, though. He simply stared at it a moment as his mind went over various events — some recent, others from many years ago.

There was just so much death, sadness, and anger in his life. It was hard to shake it all off sometimes. It may not have been the healthiest way to deal with such things, but he never knew what else to do. He figured it would get easier with time, but he had yet to see if that was true. It had all started with witnessing his parents' murder at the hands of a thug when he was a young teen. After that, he set out on his own on Corellia. He met and befriended a Nautolan around his own age, and they grew close — Reiden came to think of the other boy as a brother. The two decided to work together as debt collectors to make things easier on them. What would have been difficult to do alone was safer and easier together. But the one Reiden viewed as a brother betrayed him, turning on him for a chance at money that their target offered in exchange for letting him go. The target got away and the two partners fought. A blaster was pulled on Reiden, and he tried to stop his friend. But in the struggle, the blaster went off, accidentally killing the Nautolan boy. Reiden shook his head to free himself of the memory and drained his glass before filling it once again.

After Corellia, Reiden had wandered about, travelling to various planets. He had always felt like there was something special about him, and had heard rumors of people called Force users. He wanted to know more so he searched out information. It was in a bar, more run down than the establishment in which he presently found himself, that he discovered a lead. That lead came in the form of Kadain Thorne, the man that would become Reiden's first master. The old man trained Reiden in the basics of the Force and some simple combat techniques, taught him how to better survive if left on his own. On Nar Shaddaa, Reiden's anger flared up when he was forced to fight for his life when a local crime boss wouldn't pay on the debt that was owed to Reiden's employer. Something inside the teen snapped, and he lashed out with the Force in a way that he had not expected to happen. He used his skills to kill a small group of thugs under the crime boss's command. He spared the boss himself and collected the debt — but the event left Reiden shaken. He told his master what had happened, and the older man counseled the boy on the importance of finding balance in one's self, of not letting emotions get the better of him.

The Corellian snapped back to the present and took a pull from his drink as he remembered the events on Kashyyyk. Having reigned in his anger and emotions as best he could after Nar Shaddaa, things were looking up for Reiden. However, on the forest world, the teen felt the familiar flames of rage within him once more. He witnessed a trio of

hunters murder a pair of Wookiees in cold blood. He wanted to lash out, to make them suffer. But he held back, remembering the words of his master — “...try to find a balance within you. Don’t let your emotions get the better of you. When you feel something inside you welling up, just breathe and let it go”. The words helped a little, but the anger at the injustice he had seen was too great. The coals of anger were tamped down, but they still smoldered within him.

The next incidents involved his two masters. Kadain, the one who trained him, had grown ill. Reiden did what he could for the man, but feared that he would soon die. During their time together, and even briefly before that, Reiden had heard whispers of a Dark Jedi Brotherhood. He wanted answers. He wanted to join them if he could. He had never known anyone else like him before, except for Kadain. The old man had initially revealed himself as a member of this brotherhood, but would not tell Reiden anything, putting off any requests for information until “later”. Reiden began to grow angry, convinced that the man was toying with him, keeping the information to himself with no intention of telling his apprentice. And so, Reiden confronted him, turning the older man’s blaster on himself. Kadain finally relented and told Reiden what he wanted to know and where to find the Brotherhood. Pleased, but still furious at a perceived betrayal, Reiden shot him before setting off to find a ship that could take him to where he wanted to go.

Upon joining the Brotherhood, Reiden was assigned a master, a man named Angelo Dante. He was a good master and taught Reiden much. However, it was a short-lived collaboration. The Brotherhood was dragged into war, and his master was killed. Once again Reiden became full of rage at having been abandoned but yet another person. He fell into a self-destructive spiral. He was eventually able to pull himself together with the help of a new friend, but the anger still smoldered.

More recently, there was yet another battle, both on a large scale with the Brotherhood and then a later one when an enemy reared its head against his clan, Scholae Palatinae. Once more, Reiden killed people. True, it was a matter of survival, and Reiden was loyal to the Brotherhood and his clan, but still, there were times when it continued to eat at him. It wasn’t like he set out to kill anyone — it was him or them. Reiden sighed and took another drink from his glass then swirled the contents around as he held it in his hand.

“You seem troubled. Care to talk about it?” a voice off to Reiden’s right asked.

“Yeah, that’s one word for what I’m feeling, sure. I’m not sure it’s something anyone would care to listen to, though,” Reiden replied as he looked over. His gaze fell on a young man with short black hair, wearing an orange colored outfit.

“Well, sometimes people need to talk things out,” the man said, taking a seat at the booth across from Reiden.

Reiden laughed softly and shook his head. “Very well then, I’ll tell you.” The man nodded and gestured for Reiden to begin.

The Corellian took another drink and set his glass down before starting his tale from the beginning. He spared a few of the more gory details of the violence he had wrought, but he didn't shy away from the fact that he had killed people before. He paused every now and then to shake his head, or to take another drink. But before long, he had finished recounting his story.

He sighed and sat back, looking over at the man who sat before him. "There you have it. That's my story, for better or for worse."

The man nodded, "I see. You've been through a lot, that's for sure. I've struggled against my darker nature as well. But I always had people there for me, to help pull me back if needed. It really made all the difference, believe me. Do you have anyone like that in your life?"

"Yes, I do," Reiden admitted softly after a moment of reflection. "But I don't want to put all of that on her, not again. She helped me once before, and I don't want to drive her away by making her do it all over again."

"You'd be surprised at the lengths people will go to in order to help the ones they love," the man countered with a smile.

Reiden thought on his words for a moment before slowly nodding. "Yeah, I suppose you're right. She knows my story anyway, or at least most of it, and that didn't push her away. Maybe there's a chance after all. Thank you."

The man nodded again and reached out a hand, summoning the bottle to it. Reiden let out a low gasp, having been caught off guard. The man took a short swig of the rum and set the bottle down.

Reiden could only look at him. After a moment, he pulled himself together. "Wait, what? Who are you, anyway?"

The man grinned, "The name's Ezra. Ezra Bridger."

"Thank you, Ezra," Reiden said. His appearance may have remained more on the calm side, but his mind was suddenly racing. He didn't recognize the name, but at least he didn't sense any malice coming from the other Force user.

"Don't worry. I'm not here to cause any trouble, just offer some support. We all have our struggles at times. Sometimes all it takes is a friendly ear and some words of advice, even if the advice has been given before by someone else. You'll find your balance; I've seen it."

The other man's words only puzzled Reiden. "What do you mean, you've seen it?"

Ezra shook his head. "I'm afraid I can't tell you anything more. Just don't give up hope, no matter how small it may be. When all else seems lost, there's always hope."

Reiden sat there, trying to process everything, and wondering who this man really was, and what his purpose here might really be. Before he could form his next question, Ezra stood up.

"Sorry, but I have to get going. I told Dume that I wouldn't take too long."

"Dume? Who is that? How did you know where to find me?" Reiden questioned.

"He's just a friend. And I've already told you all that I can, I'm sorry," Ezra replied. He stood up and began to head towards the door. He stopped and faced Reiden once more. "May the Force be with you, Reiden." With a nod, he turned and headed towards the door, exiting the bar.

"And with you as well..." Reiden responded as he sat there, continuing to wonder what had just happened. He shrugged his shoulders and drained the last of the rum from his glass before standing as well. It was time to head home. He had someone waiting there that cared for him and would stay by his side. He didn't know what the future held for him, but he suddenly felt certain that, somehow, he would make it through all right.

Reiden went to the door, stepping out into the night air of Caelestis City. He pulled his hood up and began walking home. His mind still puzzled over this Ezra Bridger, but he pushed those thoughts to the back of his mind. It did not seem like an immediate concern at the moment. He would figure it out — some day.