

*Ragnath, Maqor  
Meraxis/CSP Front  
Late Afternoon*

Red streaks criss crossed over the hastily dug CSP forward trench. The Meraxis defenses beyond this point had been stronger than predicted. As a result the CSP main detached ground force had been ground to a halt half a day ago. Tension had risen among the troopers as the hours passed and they remained pinned to the ground. The mood of the Force users had been slowly deteriorating as well. Their mission was to take the enemies forward defenses by two hours prior and the Empress did not look kindly on failure, or rather the Palpatine's did not look kindly upon failure.

The clank of plastoid armor clanging dully against the dirt walls only served as yet another irritant to Mako. Vestril however giggled with glee as she cleared a path to Raiju as the Krath had requested of her. As the Sephi shoved soldiers out of the way, the Human followed just behind. After several minutes they reached the Grand Vizier and an unfortunate comms operator.

"I don't care what you have to do Trooper, just get the message through to our air support!" The Proconsul screamed at the man.

"Kang, what is the hold up!" Henymory yelled over the defining roar of blaster fire.

"Foce damn it Mako, not now," Raiju spoke over his shoulder not bothering to look at the Krath.

The Dark Paladin shook his head in disappointment and nodded to Vestril. In the blink of an eye the feral woman grabbed the Battlelord by the collar and pinned the man against the dirt wall.

"Raiju, Our troops are not returning fire, they obviously jammed our comms, and they have us pinned down. As the leader in charge of this expedition you need to calm down and think rationally." Raiju glared at the Krath as he spoke, but couldn't deny he was right. The situation had gotten out of hand too quickly, there hadn't been time to reassess.

"You have something in mind I take it?" The Nautolan inquired. Mako touched Vestril's arm gently and she released the Proconsul.

"We'll have cover of darkness soon and we are within a kilometer of their line. You take half our remaining force and I'll take the other. We exit from separate ends of this death trap of a trench and do a pincer strike on their line."

"That's not half bad. We will take more casualties than we originally deemed acceptable for this mission though."

"We already have, might as well try to fulfill our purpose. Besides the rear forces are supposed to arrive tomorrow and if we try to retreat we will just be cut down." Both men sighed at the truth in the Krath's words.

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*Meraxis/CSP Front*

*Evening Twilight +4 hours*

Darkness had settled in over the land and the defenders had ceased shooting shortly after. With their troops in place to charge an anxious tension mounted. With the wave of a hand they poured forth into the no man's land between the lines. Five hundred meters in silence they charged at a full run before the defenders opened fire. Screams echoed from those unfortunate enough to receive a debilitating or fatal blow. But the troopers and the Force users continued to charge just the same. Not a single return shot was fired, no lightsaber was ignited. As their orders had been strick. Make too much noise, shed any light, and the enemy will know your units position.

A quarter of their forces fell during the charge, better than initially expected. The defenders had constructed a wall, 'A traitor perhaps', the thought crossed Mako's mind as he and the other Force users lept to the top. The clang of grappling hooks offset the snap-hiss of lightsabers. The Paladin's unit had begun their work on the eastern side. To the west Mako noted the tell tale red glow of Sith blades. 'So they have begun as well' the Krath smiled to himself.

While the fortification was impressive for the timetable the Meraxis' had to construct it, the defenders were few in number. The eastern unit made short work of their side. Before too long they meet with the western group in the middle.

"Sir, urgent news," a trooper snapped a salute as he approached the Dark Paladin.

"What is Captain?"

"Western side is clear, casualties were heavy and the enemy managed to capture Raiju. They were last spotted some five minutes past dragging him to the north."

"Very well, thank you for the report. Have your unit stay here and begin fortifying our new line. I will take my unit and go fetch the Battlelord."

Mako and Vestril ran with the assistance of the Force, their troopers did their best to keep up but gradually fell behind. As they neared their targets, the enemy troops dragged the struggling Grand Vizier into a bunker. The two Warlords burst through the entrance moments later, lightsabers already ablaze. With a few quick slashes Raiju was free, a few more and the Sith had his weapons back.

The three darksiders took no time in clearing out the troopers. In the first room. The enemy commander however had escaped deeper into the bunker. Raiju stepped forward intent on following when Mako's hand clasped the Battlelords shoulder.

"If we capture their commander we will gain a valuable advantage. We have no time to waste." The Raiju protested.

"I know, though we will just get in her way and waste time if we go as well," Mako paused as he shifted his gaze to Vestril, "Dear one, bring their leader back alive. Kill the rest."

A terrifying grin spread across the Sephi's face at the Human's words. The durasteel groaned from the pressure of her launching herself through the doorway and deeper into the bunker. Raiju shoved Henymory's hand away his mouth poised open as he was about to speak. The words caught in the Proconsul's throat however as a chorus of screams, the protesting groan of metal, and the demonic giggles of the Feral woman.

"You all thought we went on a vacation after that day in the Empresses office. I heard the rumors, Mako became the hand but he refuses to do anything with it. Surprising you lot didn't pick up on the steep decrease in crime against Imperial forces." The Krath spoke slowly, deliberately as the sounds of battle from deeper in peaked as men begged for their lives. Raiju glanced at Mako, a look of concern played across the Proconsuls face.

"Trust me Kang you do not want to be in there right now. In close quarters it's best to let her go alone."

A few minutes later the Sephi reemerged dragging a limbless man dressed in officer clothing with one hand. Her lightsaber pike clutched in the other.

"You said to bring him back alive. I assumed he wouldn't need his arms and legs for what you have planned for him." Vestril's eye twitched slightly, a proud and innocent smile plastered across her face as she spoke.