

# *Diplomacy*

*over*

# *Dismemberment*



Fiction

for

You have not yet completed your training

By

Battlemaster Takagari "DarkHawk" KogaRyu (#264)

## **Prologue**

### **Deep Space**

#### **ISD Perdition**

Clan Naga Sadow has taken a serious left cross. The Collective has driven them from their brick and mortar headquarters throughout the Orian system. The entire Clan has rendezvous within their flagship the ISD Perdition. The Clan feeling the after-effects of their recent violent exchanges with The Collective. Those exchanges have caused the Clan to leave their headquarters to be overrun by their enemy. They had no choice but to regroup and formulate future plans to rid the Orian System of these vermin and take what was rightfully theirs.

In order to do this, the Clan needed to rely on its brokerage accords throughout the system to sustain their income. A very lucrative negotiation was made to Shaevalis Prime, prior to the Clan having its last encounter with The Collective. Now that the Clan has based itself in its fleet, those accords are being questioned and are at the brink of being terminated. So the Clan Summit has decided to send their most experienced negotiator to solidify the contract with Shaevalis Prime leadership.

Augur Sanguinius Tsucyra Entar former Consul to the Clan has recently stepped down and Proconsul Battlelord Bentre Stahoes has assumed the mantle of the Clan. The former Consul walked the corridors of the ship headed toward the main docking hanger. His pace slower than normal. His eccentric glide, the formality in which he normally carried himself with did not seem as natural, now almost forced. The last few months have taken a toll on the Son of Sadow.

Only a few would know, only a few would understand it. One such member of the Clan that would certainly see the change, the one person the Augur was tracking down. His apprentice, Battlemaster Takagari "DarkHawk" KogaRyu.

The Augur turned the corner and smacked the control panel and the entrance door to the hanger slide open with a whooooooosh. Two young ensigns hovering over a control panel snapped to attention as Tsucyra whisked past them. One Ensign was confident enough to speak, "Sir the Battlemaster's ship is approaching."

Sanguinius simply nodded as he strolled towards the main hanger. A battered VT49 Decimator was making its final approach to the landing pad directly in front of the Augur. Its blast marks and laser burns across its hull and fuselage added character to the ship. Like it had a story to tell if it could.

The Decimator landed on its designated spot clean and smooth. Sang thought to himself "Nicely done..." The pressurizing pitot tubes blasted hot air from their nozzles as the aircraft commander expelled the ship's residual pressures. The crew door whisked open, three Special Operations Rangers exited the craft, followed by a large black-clad figure. Takagari stopped at the end of the crew ramp and knelt before his Master.

"DarkHawk, I hope you're rested, you and I have an important mission to complete."

Takagari simply nodded and spoke with his head bowed, "As you wish my Master."



## **Deep Space**

### **ISD Perdition**

#### **Main Hanger**

DarkHawk continued to hold his genuflection until Sanguinius motioned his apprentice to his feet. The Shaevalian stood upright and his master motioned him to walk. The Augur walked politically with his hands behind his back, his Equite walked with more of an alert status. Keeping his eyes glued to his Master's words but, profoundly aware of his surroundings.

"I know you just came off mission DarkHawk, but I need you for an important task."

"You know you don't have to ask twice Master," replied Takagari.

"I know, but you are not going to like this much I am afraid."

"Master, there is not much to like these days, I am good, what is the OP?" asked DarkHawk.

"Need to close an import deal that has been somewhat strained and...I will need your backup."

The hesitation was not so loosely hid and DarkHawk picked up on it. "Master Sang, what is the catch, what are you not telling me?"

Sang let out a long breath, "This is not a normal mission, I don't need your brawn per say, I need your intellect. But in order to do that, I must complete some of your training that I have neglected."

DarkHawk walked a few steps silently, thoughts raced through his mind. "As you wish Master, may I ask where this mission will take place?" asked the Equite.

Sang mimicked his apprentice's previous action, walking a few steps and pondering his next words. "DarkHawk, I have been asked to close the deal with the Royal family on Shaevalis Prime, General Bloodfyre has already been notified and has made our accommodations, I did not realize you were still in the Royal's good graces." Sang paused briefly..." Look...I know what I am asking of you is a lot, especially with your clouded history there, but you along with I were asked for by name, there is no room for refusal."

DarkHawk walked with a blank stare, and then suddenly turned to the Augur, "I did not realize I was in the Royal's good graces either Master, I was not even aware they knew who I was."

"Well, a Shaevalian in the Brotherhood how could they not, I would not be a bit surprised if this was more out or paternity rather than heritage. I have spoken with the newly elected Senator there, she is well aware of the situation and she will be one of the representatives alongside the Royals," replied Sang.

"Half Shaevalian Master, and what would my father have to do with this."

Sang gave a blank stare at his apprentice and spoke not a word. But the silence boomed through the Equite nonetheless. Sang went on to inform his apprentice that they will be making a small detour before the reach Royal Palace. DarkHawk simply nodded and continued his pace with the Augur.

The two Ensign's were scattering through flight manifests, the Battlemaster approached the two men. The brooding Equite told the first Ensign to contact the VT49's crew and have them return. The young Ensign dropped his manifest and seemingly dove for the intercom.

The Equite returned to his Master and informed him on the status of the flight crew, "Shall I gather your things, Master?"

The Augur raised an arm motioning towards the bay doors, "Not necessary..." replied Sang as a valet wheeled in some gear with the markings of Sons of Sadow embossed on them.

"Staying a while?" asked the Battlemaster.

"It's good to be prepared in situations like these."

"Indeed Master."

The crew returned and reloaded supplies and provisions in the cargo hold. A fuel's specialist was making final adjustments on fuel load and then a staff sergeant signed the forms clearing

the VT49 for take-off.



## **ISD Perdition**

### **Main Hanger**

#### **VT49**

The VT49 crew once again made their pre-launch adjustments and complied with all checklist parameters. The Decimator inched its way down the tarmac and then blasted into the darkness of space. The copilot echoed across the PA system and informed everyone about the jump to lightspeed. The Decimator spooled up her engines and boomed into hyperspeed.

Sanguinius studied the blank stare that hung from his apprentice's face. "Takagari there is no need to worry, I assure you this will go smoothly."

"Master, I have not been to the city in years and my last time there did not end so well."

"Ahh, you mean when you had that run-in with the Onyx Stalker?" asked the Augur.

"You had to bring that up didn't you?" DarkHawk said sarcastically. A few months back DarkHawk was diverted from a child murder case and had to retrieve a confidential informant hiding out in the dense forest of Shaevalis Prime. Needless to say, Takagari had a very nasty run-in with a mother Stalker. His shoulder where the cat bit deep into the Battlemaster cringed as he shook off the thought.

"Don't worry, there will be no kitty's to distract you where we are headed," Sanguinius said with a near full smile.

DarkHawk scuffed at his Master's antics. "It's not the Stalkers I worry about Master, it's the politicians..."

The Son of Sadow, simply smiled, never looking at his apprentice. He sifted through more of the contract papers not paying any attention to his Equite.

"I assume we will be staying in the capital city Master?" asked Takagari.

Sang's eyes scanned his documents and his only reaction was a subtle gesture of sliding another set of documents over towards Takagari.

"What's this...?" asked the Battlemaster.

The Augur continued to engross himself in his documents. He briefly looked over at his Equite and simply stated "Your copy...familiarize yourself with all facets of the details." Sang returned his eyes back to the papers and studied them intently.

Takagari knew by the tone and control of his Master's voice there was no facetiousness in the request. Pausing for a moment, the Battlemaster slid the papers in front of him and began to scan over them.

Sanguinius simply smiled...



## **VT49**

### **Outer Rim Edge**

The Decimator was cutting its way through space, smoothly and efficiently. The Co-Pilot broke the silence of the ship's passengers through the PA system. "We are leaving the Outer Rim and entering Wild Space, we will be coming out of lightspeed soon and making our approach to Shaevalis Prime."

The Rangers were making equipment and weapon checks. Though it was not necessary for the elite militants to accompany the diplomat on such occasions, it was more of a formality. DarkHawk watched the two Rangers make their final adjustments. They were monotonous in their checks, double and triple checking everything. The Rangers were completely unnecessary in this endeavor, especially heading to Shaevalis Prime. They were not aggressive in their political or social means whatsoever. Matter of fact, it had been eons since that civilization was anywhere near a war or skirmish. DarkHawk knew his good friend and mentor Sith Bloodfyre and his family lineage kept the peace and protected the Royal family with efficiency and prestige.

The PA system squawked, as this time the pilot's voice boomed through the fuselage, "Coming out of hyperspeed, Shaevalis Prime will be directly ahead."

The Decimator crew pulled back throttles and locked the sticks within the throttle quadrant. Making a few more switch adjustments the VT49 came out of lightspeed, escaping the hyperlanes and poised itself right into its final approach. DarkHawk scanned his viewport and noticed that the Royal Palace/Temple of Gyssh'tyn was not visible. He looked over towards his Master, still scanning the documents never making eye contact with his Apprentice.

"Takagari...your feelings are filled with angst...I told you we had a diverted stop before we go to the Royal Palace.

DarkHawk returned his viewport and scanned the terrain. "We are West of the capital city Master."

"Indeed we are" replied Sang.

A long sigh came from the Augur, "Do you not make preparations before every mission?" asked Sang.

Before the Battlemaster could utter a word, Sanguinius cut him off. "We are headed West, towards the dense forest and we will sojourn at the Temple of Souls until the day after tomorrow. General Bloodfyre will send a transport for us to bring us to our accommodations at the palace."

It seemed like a millennium since DarkHawk was at the Temple of Souls. Fragments of broken memories flashed within his psyche. All these years and he still could not put the pieces of his life together. Like a massive jigsaw puzzle that was missing pieces. DarkHawk tried to shrug that empty feeling away, but to his core, so many questions left unanswered regarding his life.

"Takagari, you must relax, I can already feel your frustration consuming you, clear your mind, as you will need your wits about you to endeavor the training you require."

The Equite expelled the air from his lungs, filling them with another deep inhale. Clearing his mind and allowing himself to settle back and he began to control his emotions. His connection with the Force began to increase as he felt the energy flowing through his body.

The VT49 made its way into the planet's atmosphere. The pilot's precision movements put them on a direct course over the dense forest of the planet. Then a clearing containing a large rock formation at one end and what looked to be a skull-shaped structure melting itself into the mountainside appeared out of the thick green woodlands. Sanguinius studied the formation as the pilot made his final approach to the clearing. The rocks strategically placed in the shape of a rudimentary symbol of the Sun God Gyssh'tyn. The rocks arched at the top of its formation, closing in at the two points at the bottom. The pilot settled the VT49 at the far edge of the clearing facing the mountain.

The ramp whisked open and the two Rangers exited, within a few moments one of the Rangers gave the all clear and both Sanguinius Entar and Takagari exited the ship. The Rangers had already set the two diplomats belongings out of the cargo hold aside and well clear of the ship's exit route.

"Transport has been confirmed Sir and will arrive here in forty-eight hours and thirty-seven minutes."

"Thank you" replied Sang.

"We will accompany General Bloodfyre to escort you both to the palace. We will make our arrangements with the General's staff as soon as we land in the capital city."

"Very well, Ranger we will look forward to your safe return."

The Ranger made a small bow towards the Augur and made his way back aboard the ship. The Decimator roared back to life and lifted off and raced towards the direction of the city.

Sang turned towards his Equite and calmly spoke: "Your training begins now..."



## **Shaevalis Prime**

### **Temple of Souls**

It was not long before the two Sadowans had a makeshift camp set up. DarkHawk noticed that as they finished there was only one cot to sleep on. Bewilderment came across the Equite's face as he continued to scan the area for a second sleeping apparatus.

Sanguinius chuckled at his apprentice's demeanor, and Takagari continued his blank stare.

"I am not spooning you, Master..." DarkHawk spouted sarcastically.

"Indeed, you will be slumbering elsewhere" replied the Augur.

Sanguinius walked over to the large center flagstone within the rock formation. He stood towards the deformed face embedded in the mountain wall. He motioned his Apprentice to him. DarkHawk stood before his Master and knelt before the Augur.

"Takagari, you have been a most faithful adherent of the Clan, you also have been one of my finest pupil's. I have sent you across the galaxy to study under the best Masters throughout. You have not disappointed me, but your training is not complete. You have learned many aspects of yourself, The Force and the ways of the Sith. Yet, the one thing you have not learned to control...is mastery of yourself. Today you will begin, within the hallowed ruins of this mystic structure you will face your worst fear...yourself."

"I brought you here, in the heart of your homeland, to not only pay homage but to teach you that control. You act out of sheer emotion, lurking to slay those who oppose you. Though those qualities are indeed a necessity, you do not have the instruments yet to truly embrace the darkness. Whether you agree or not, diplomacy is a powerful weapon. You will learn to control your emotions, speak when words need to be your blade and determine when those words merely fall on deaf ears and use your other assets to complete your tasks at hand. You are about to embark on an undertaking that will either make your connection to the Force stronger, or you will completely lose yourself within your own mind."

DarkHawk held his position paying respect to his Master. As the Augur approached his Equite, leaning in he unsheathed a knife from Takagari's utility belt. Grabbing the Battlemaster's arms and placing them palms up in front of him, cutting the wrists in one quick motion. Blood began to flow steadily from the small wounds. DarkHawk never wavered as the Augur pulled a small vile from his tunic pocket. The blue liquid shimmered in the sunlight. The Augur poured the liquid over the Equite's wounds. "This is Agonizer poison, it will affect your psyche and cause tremendous amounts of pain," said the Son of Sadow.

"You will see horrors beyond your limits, and you must control all your emotions learn that your blade is not always the answer. Clear your mind and ready yourself. Escape to your mind's eye and be one with the scheme of totality".

With those very words, the assassin fell into a deep trance, his connection to the Force was pure for the moment.

Takagari fell deep in meditation and began to levitate above the rocky floor.



## **Shaevalis Prime**

### **Temple of Souls**

#### **Dreamscape**

DarkHawk's eyes blackened as his connection to the Force strengthened. The brown pigment turned to blood red as the malevolent power of the Dark Side Force consumed the Sadowan. He was completely embraced within the darkness of the Force. Over the years he has learned to accept the merger, growing stronger as he lengthened his relationship with the darkness.

The poison raced through the Equite's veins, his psyche was being attacked from all sides. Unspeakable horrors raced through Takagari's mind. His muscles constricted as he tried to fight off the effects of the poison. The effects took him deep into parts of his mind he never knew existed. Former adversaries raced through his mind striking at him, splitting his flesh wide open. He screamed with each blow as the pain resonated through his entire body.

In a muffled intrusion, DarkHawk could hear his Master's words. *"You are on the precipice of your rage, your vulnerability is you have always allowed your rage to control you before you can become stronger you must learn that you are the conductor of your own emotions. You must both give in to the Darkness as well as control it. Remember you control your scheme of totality..."*

A surge of power rushed through the Equite, DarkHawk struggle to gain control of his emotions. The poison tore at his very soul, breaching his mind and implanting a continuous barrage of unspeakable horrors. Monsters and spirits ripped at his appendages, tearing them from his torso. Leaving the Equite in a pool of blood and visceral, only to reanimate and begin all over again. The screams of terror echoed through the temple and reverbing off the dense forest.

Sang started a fire and place a kettle of water for tea in the coals. He sat facing his apprentice and watched as DarkHawk fought the affliction that was consuming him. The kettle whistled and still could not drown out the Equite's screams. Sang sat tentatively, sipping the hot liquid, ignoring the calls for help from his apprentice. With a small wave of his hand, he called out to the Force and made another connection to his disciple. *"You must traverse this path alone, rely on yourself and your intelligence. Control your emotions and you shall control your surroundings"* Sang instructed.

DarkHawk's breathing became slow and shallow, his once racing pulse began to subside. This process was long and drawn out. Though the Augur could ascertain that his pupil was gaining ground. It will be some time before Takagari gained complete control, as the sun settled the



screams diminished. Sang settled in for what likely seemed to be a restless night.



## **Shaevalis Prime**

### **Temple of Souls**

#### **Dreamscape Day 2**

The winds bellowed through the temple ruins. Sang awoke from his slumber and focused in on the condition of his pupil. To his astonishment, DarkHawk had gained control of his emotions, he crawled through the deepest parts of his mind and stared into the darkness. Sang heard the screams from Takagari through most of the night. Now there were no sounds, no screams of pain or terror. DarkHawk was no longer sitting on the center stone with his legs crossed. He was now inverted in a one-armed handstand.

His pupils were still blood red and the whites of his eyes were a dull black. He was no longer sweating, the wounds on his wrist where the Augur had cut him were almost healed. Just a small visible scar was remnant from the action. If he truly was successful with this, the poison would only last for a few more hours. Preparations would have to be made as Takagari exited his dreamscape and re-entered reality.

Sang went to one of his small satchel's and pulled some small herbs from it. The herbs purple in color had no fragrance to them. The Augur ripped up the plants and placed them in a small stone bowl, using a small pestle he began to grind the contents working the herbs into a fine powder. He poured the contents into the kettle of water and allowed the coals from the fire to heat the contents.

The sun blazed its rays down upon the temple ruins. Sang poured a cup of the herbal remedy he concocted as well as a cup of freshly brewed tea. He again sat in front of his Apprentice, watching him. The position he was in would have been torturous for the mundane. Years of putting his body through all of this training allowed him to endure the physical pain and endurance to maintain the feat. He had been in that handstand for hours, no expression on his face, a blank stare accompanied.

Slowly DarkHawk's eyes started to dissipate and returned to normal coloring. His breathing maintaining a steady and strong pace. Deep inhale, long exhale, that continued for a few more moments until Takagari crossed the scheme of totality and re-entered reality. A few quick blinks and a loud inhale followed.

"Master..."

"Come now" the Augur instructed motioning his apprentice to come to him.

DarkHawk shifted his weight and snapped a half cartwheel to stand upright. His legs felt light, almost like wet noodles. He regained his composure and knelt in front of his Master.

“You have traveled far Takagari, you saw just a snippet of what the Darkside has to offer. Your relationship with the Force is now stronger Equite.”

Sanguinius offered his apprentice the herbal tea. DarkHawk now consumed with thirst started to guzzle the cup. The Son of Sadow pulled at Takagari’s arms only uttering one word “slow...”

“We only have a few hours before our transport arrives, I suggest you get cleaned up and get some rest. You are going to need your wits about you to close this upcoming accord.”

DarkHawk nodded and walked to the tent. His legs still trembling a bit but gaining strength with each step. A small basin of water and towels were laid out and the Battlemaster plunged his face into the cool water.

Though the Sadowan did not sleep, he sat upon one of the large boulders outlining the temple and meditated. What seemed like an eternity of recapping the events that just took place, his mind seemed more streamlined. He was able to coherently make out different levels of his mind that were not present before. At the present moment, he was at a very high state of enlightenment.

Sang cleared his throat and DarkHawk widened his eyes. His Master stood before him with a strange onset of clothing in his hands. “These are for you,” Sang said.

“What is this?” asked the Equite.

“More traditional garb for our proceedings with the Royals. There is no need for your battle uniform here DH, and I am not asking you to wear them...”

“Understood Master...” replied the Battlemaster.



## **Shaevalis Prime**

## **Temple of Souls**

## **Royal Palace**

The whining of the ION engines could be heard for some distance. The Executive shuttle broke into the clearing and hovered over the temple floor. The pilot landed the craft at the far end and crew door opened. The two Rangers exited first followed by a very distinguished formal military uniform. The man was of medium height and dark black hair. He wore the uniform well and was it quite obvious of his fit physique. His arms opened wide as he placed his feet on solid ground.

“Ahh Sanguinius, always good to see you old friend.” the man stated, taking the Augur into a bear hug.

“It’s always my pleasure General, maybe if we get time I would like to recoup my credits back at the Pazaak table,” Sang said with a smile.

“Ha you may try my friend, surely we will try to position ourselves for a quick negotiation eh?”

The General now turned his attention over to DarkHawk, “Now is this the apprentice you spoke of Sanguinius?” asked the General.

“Yes, this is Takagari, or as you know him as DarkHawk.” stated the Augur.

The General walked over to the large man. DarkHawk started to bow, but the General cut him off. Extending his right hand and placing his left arm on Takagari’s wide shoulders. “Master Bloodyfyre speaks quite highly of you DarkHawk....a pleasure”

DarkHawk continued to shake the General’s hand, his grip firm and enthusiastic. “You know Master Bloodyfyre Sir?” asked the Battlemaster.

“Ahh yes, cousins, we speak when we can, but the Brotherhood keeps him quite....engaged in other affairs,” the General said with a smile.

“Come let us not waste any more time, shall we move to more suitable negotiation chambers.” the General stated as he gestured for everyone to move to the shuttle.

Everyone embarked on the shuttle and the pilot, after flipping a few sequential toggle switches lifted off from the forest terrain.

DarkHawk watched the Temple of Souls disappear as the shuttle cleared over the ridges and the green of the dense forest engulfed the landscape.

Sang and the General discussed winnings from their most recent Pazaak conquests. The two have known each other for some time. DarkHawk reminisced the events of the last few days, it was not until this last encounter with The Collective has the Shaevalians questioned the abilities of the Brotherhood to safely and securely deliver their goods. So they sent their best negotiator and his apprentice. Then the thought of “What the hell am I doing here...” kept crossing the mind of Takagari. Sang would occasionally look over at his apprentice with not a look of concern, but a look of confidence.

“*Remember...*” Sang’s voice boomed in DarkHawk’s consciousness.

The city was now visible and the shuttle made its approach to the Palace. As the pilot made his way to the landing pad, three Shaevalian Royal Guards stood poised and ready. As well as a lone woman, her elegant gown flowed with the jet wash from the shuttle.

The shuttle landed and the crew door opened. All the occupants exited the shuttle and made their way to the landing pad. The General welcomed the woman and then turned towards both Sanguinius and Takagari.

“This is Senator Lorissa Dekan, she is our newly elected senator and will be accompanying us during the negotiations,” the General said proudly.

Sanguinius approached first and offered his hand. The Senator shook the Augur's hand and exchanged formalities. DarkHawk dropped to one knee and bowed before his new host.

"Now, no need for all that just yet," she said laughing.

"My name is Takagari KogaRyu Senator, and I am at your disposal."

"Let us hope the negotiations do not go that far South Takagari," she stated.

"Come, the Royal Family awaits us in the Throne Room," the General said.

The newly formed political party walked from the landing pad across an ornate suspended bridge overlooking the Palace grounds. DarkHawk pulled and twitched at his new formal garbs as he walked.

"Stop fidgeting like a child" whispered Sang.

Senator Dekan chuckled at the exchange and DarkHawk turned to see the Senator holding in a more robust laugh.

The party reached the Throne Room, a pair of Royal Guard snapped to attention and opened the massive doors. Two equal size thrones were positioned side by side at the end of a marble walkway. More Royal Guards surrounded the Thrones and the General stopped the party just short of the thrones. Within seconds another door opened and the King and Queen of Shaevalia entered and was escorted to their designated thrones.

The negotiation party bowed as the Royal party was seated. The General was first to stand and introduced Sanguinius Entar first. The Augur approached the Queen kissed her hand and bowed before the King. Next to be introduced of course was Takagari, he followed suit and paid his respects. Both King and Queen did not take their eyes off the large Sadowan.

The King was first to speak..."Augur Sanguinius Entar, it is a pleasure to have you here, and I see you brought what I may assume is your apprentice."

"Yes my Liege, Takagari has been a valuable asset to me and the Brotherhood," replied Sang.

"It is apparent he is more accustomed to let's say more hands-on delegation." The King said with a small smirk.

DarkHawk could feel the ocean of frustration already brewing inside of him. Surprising to everyone present especially to Sang, Takagari stood more erect and offered the two Royals one simple and direct statement.

"Your Majesties, I may be the Brotherhood's typical tool of let's say discretionary negotiations, but I assure you I am here on your behalf, and to reassure you of any doubts regarding our transference of exports in which you need. I am not, nor do I claim to be adept in this arena, I am here to show you that the Brotherhood has your fullest attention. Additionally, we will ensure that to obstruction will interfere with your shipments."

The King sat back in his throne, never taking his eyes off the young Equite. Finally, the King settled his eyes on Sanguinius, "You openly admit that this is your apprentice Sanguinius Entar?" asked the King.

"Yes your Majesty he does belong to me" Sang replied in more of a stern but proud manner.

The Queen spoke next, "Takagari, it has been made aware to the both of us that you have Shaevalian blood flowing through your veins."

"Yes, this is true your Highness." DarkHawk replied confidently.

"Is this a simple ploy to gain our trust in order to solidify these proceedings?" asked the Queen.

Sang cut off Takagari before he could answer, "Your Highness, the fact that DarkHawk is born of a Shaevalian has no bearing on our dealings. I only offer him as a tool to enhance this negotiation."

The King's raised his eyebrows in almost astonishment, "So if these proceedings do not lean in your favor, will you strike us down Assassin?"

DarkHawk took a step forward, the guards surrounding the thrones laid their spears down aimed directly at the Battlemaster's throat. In an instant he let his mind play out what damage he could have caused had he allowed his anger to control his actions. But instead, DarkHawk knelt one more time, the Guards following the neckline of their intended target. Takagari bowed to the Royal family and spoke both passionately and fearlessly.

"Your Highness, as Master Sanguinius has stated, my lineage has no bearing on these proceedings. Though I may be a proud adherent to my lineage, I still have many unanswered questions, I am here only to ensure that you feel safe and sound with this accord. Despite the Brotherhood's entanglement with the Collective, Shaevalia is of the utmost importance to us. We have made assurances that your shipments will be maintained under the provisions that you have requested. Five hundred tons of Durasteel and 100 tons of produce. Those shipments will arrive four times a year for the next five years. Those deliveries will be satisfied by us, this you have the word of my Master as well as his Assassin."

Senator Dekan moved to the side of the kneeling Battlemaster. "Your Majesty, your Highness, regardless of our apprehensiveness to solidify this accord, I find that Augur Sanguinius and his apprentice make pure statements. They will see to it that our shipments will be kept under a very keen eye. Instead of taking up accommodations here within the palace, our two associates stayed at the Temple of Souls, so young Takagari could further embrace his heritage and studied his lineage within the temple confines. They could of easily indulge themselves in the Palace amenities but chose more humble accommodations. That tells me a lot about their character. I feel that without this accord we will not be able to accomplish our goals for the people and our future sustainment. I am in favor of strengthening our ties with the Brotherhood and accepting this agreement."

DarkHawk was a little taken back at the Senators words, "*Did she just do what I think she did...?*"

The King stood, taking one step towards the kneeling Battlemaster, He placed one hand on the shoulder of the Equite and offered his other hand to Sanguinius. "It seems that he will fare you well in future negotiations."

Once again, Sanguinius bowed before the King. The Shaevalian Queen followed her King and shook the hand of the Augur. DarkHawk held his bow, The Queen spoke next, "Rise Takagari, these formalities are over."

DarkHawk stood before the Queen, she took his hand inside both of hers, “You will make it a point to return so that The King and I may speak with you on all things Shaevalian. And possibly answer some of those questions you have.”

Takagari nodded, “It would be my pleasure, your Highness.”

A Royal Guard snapped to attention and the Royals exited the room. Two more Royal Guards escorted the General, the Senator, and the two Sadowans out of the Throne room and made their way back to the landing pad. DarkHawk could not help himself on the walk out to the shuttle and positioned himself next to the Senator.

“Ma’am I have to ask, why did you steer the Royals in the wrong direction regarding why we were at the Temple?” he asked.

“Did I? I merely steered them as you so susceptibly put it, in that direction they ultimately desired, only to show them that you have faith in our culture. That part, you have not lost. Augur Sanguinius assured me of that prior to your arrival. Just because you finished training that I don’t quite understand means little to them, I was assured it was for the betterment of all of us. The details of that are not really necessary to reveal to the Royals at this time. Besides, I may need your services at some point, and now as you say, you owe me one...” she said with a chuckle.

A small smile crested the lips of the Battlemaster, “Nicely played Ma’am, nicely played...” Takagari whispered.

The VT49 was already on the landing pad and the two Rangers awaited the party. The General and Sang exchanged their goodbyes, with the General telling Sang that on the first shipment he expected the two of us to accompany the shipment and invited us to stay. He laughed when he brought up taking more credits from the Son of Sadow.

Both Sang and Takagari entered the Decimator and buckled in. Sang had a very strange look apparent on his face.

“Master what troubles you...?” asked the Equite.

“Nothing DH, I must say I am very impressed with these events. More so, your training though brief has given you some insight and will aid you in the field. We will continue these excursions when it is called upon. Keep these at your forefront Takagari, remember your saber is a powerful weapon, but your mind is the most powerful tool in your arsenal...”

The Decimator pilot lifted off of the pad and slowly pushed the throttles forward. The Pilot circled around the Palace and punched the throttles forward speeding thru the sky and breaking the barrier into space.

