

Zodac wasn't even given an option to opt out. He was *forced*.

The desert world offered no comfort in its long days and even longer nights. The trenches built, made to protect the troops only served as makeshift graves for those who were unable to carry on. Food was scarce, water even more so, and each passing moment felt like days under the blistering sun. Combined with the fact their armor, despite being made to withstand almost any environment, grew heavier upon the weary shoulders of the weakened and blistered the skin of those who were unlucky to wear them. Soldiers often died where they stood, entire conversations passing before the other realized those they were speaking to were dead. The inevitability of death feared the weak to run off into the desert night, with nowhere to go and doomed to wander the endless night until they died or until they were killed. Zodac was almost one of these people, the thought of deserting crossing his mind on several occasions. Everyone from his platoon, who were stationed to safeguard secrets sealed from the rest of the galaxy, either died in battle, in beds, or from their own gun.

The young man was well aware of the atrocities that his military had committed, but his blind optimism for a more unified galaxy left him putting his faith into a wrong and dying cause. He just had to justify their actions, how else was he to cope knowing that billions of people died under the orders of his superiors?

The sandstorm was overwhelming visible in the setting sun of Jakku. Troops were scattered attempting to prepare for such a large disaster nobody expected, but then without warning, it was already atop them. Combined with the dark desert night and the sandstorm, visibility was reduced to near zero. Soldiers attempted to scurry into the bunker to escape their inescapable death, but an officer fired upon the retreatants. "Fools!" He called out as he delivered killing shots upon some of the troops. "The Empire demands your loyalty to death! Imperial troops do not run away!" Zodac witnessed this and stood frozen, but he didn't know what to do. The howling winds of the sandstorms blurred out the screams of dying soldiers at the hands of their own superiors. A chilling chant stopped those who survived the wrath of the officer, who then commanded them to the trenches. And so, despite the fact he just witnessed the murders of his own brethren, the young soldier still followed his orders.

When blasters began to fire, Zodac shot, though he didn't know what he shot at. Into the night he supposed, but he didn't know. He heard screams, to the left and right of him, but he couldn't tell if it was his allies or enemies. Their trench was being raided, but he shot on into the desert storm. He was able to make out a few thumps before him, bodies dropping as per the shots from his blaster, but they masked they very near steps of his enemies, prepared to strike him. Before he even realized, Zodac was on the floor with the side of his helmet cracked, taking a near fatal hit from a blunt object. His vision blurred and his face turned warm, blood streaming down. He

wanted to scream in agonizing pain, but he couldn't. He just laid there motionless, which prompted the insurgents to carry on with their killing. His shaky, low breath and twitching hand did catch the attention of one rebel. He looked down at the dying man and laughed, who then proceeded to spit onto the soldier's visor. This is why he fought for the Empire, not because he was forced, but to put down terrorists who incited violence and who obstructed order. Though, his time was due. He felt his eyelids grow heavy, the screams of his fellow mates slowly fading until a silence overcame him.

The howling of the wind grew ever so loud, pit-falling into screams of the damned. Shadowy figures clouded him but he was unable to move, the pain overcoming him. He opened his mouth to howl his pain, yet nothing came out. He saw the figures of, not only his platoon who died one by one, but of the most important person of his life, his mother. As she came closer the yelps of the dead softened, but before Zodac and her were able to take hands, he awakened.

He sat up in a cold sweat, his eyes darting all about with a horrific chest pain. He bellowed and held his face in his hands, the third terror in the last two days, all ending the same way- with his death and visions of his mother. The fan in the room vibrated with each turn, and the lights outside indicated that night had come around, Zodac finally arising from the bed after what felt like hours sitting motionless. His shaky sigh came about with a few stray tears which were swiftly swiped away, then he finally stood and changed back into his usual gear; Included with it his old hovertank armor, the same he wore on Jakku. He never really knew why he kept the aging gear, it often brought him more harm than good as he often became a target to those who still carried a hatred from the Empire, but he found it served as a constant reminder of what he was, and still is. After putting on the last of his gear, he didn't what he was to do. He didn't have any jobs or obligations, or any bounties he could search for, he just had to go somewhere, anywhere. Lighting a cigarette after he left the rented room, he knew what he wanted to do.

“I need a fucking drink.” And with that, he was off.