

A DARK JEDI BROTHERHOOD STORY

THE TEST

BY

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dramatis personae

Evant Taelyan; Deputy Grand Master (human male)

Pravus; Sith Lord (human male)

krel os'a hmi va ta; Sith Lord (unknown species)



*This must be a test
Otherwise how else could I go on*

Abandoned Temple Ruins

Unknown Planet

Unknown System

38 ABY - Day 11

A solitary figure meditated in the overgrown grass of a temple courtyard. The emaciated man remained motionless for the eleventh consecutive day as the planet's oppressive heat and humidity continued to deteriorate his body at a rapid rate. A circle of dead grass surrounded him as if the very life force of the foliage was being used to sustain his own. Vipers, native to the planet, had sensed the man's body heat on the first day and probed his defenses early and often. Their corpses littered the border of the circle over the first few days but had begun to encroach closer as the man's abilities waned. Several of the predators now injected their poison into the man, their fangs sunk deep into his exposed feet and folded legs.

An involuntary groan, the first noise the man had made in days, escaped his lips. His physical form was perishing as his vitality drained from the elements, malnutrition, and the venom coursing through his veins.

But I'm still right here, giving blood, keeping faith, and I'm still right here.

The man's mind; however, had slipped into the impenetrable deep black waters of the Dark Side. At first, his meditative journey was black emptiness, but now it brought him to the figurative mountain top of the galaxy. He saw himself, sitting with legs crossed, looking down upon the galaxy. Great events played out. Governments formed, tyrants were toppled, and the devious schemed. Even the insignificant flashed through his mind. The birth of a child, the loss of employment, and the unjust imprisonment of the innocent.

The meditation was not for knowledge, it was not to divine the events of the galaxy. It was just a test. To see how long the man could go on.

He was patient.



*In order to survive you, I must first survive myself
I have gone to great lengths to expand my threshold of Pain*

Abandoned Temple Ruins

Unknown Planet

Unknown System

38 ABY - Day 12

The dizzying array of images continued to flood the man's mind as his suffering enhanced his connection to the Force. He was overwhelmed with joy, happiness, sorrow, pain, and despair. It was pain now. He felt nerve endings fray, devices probe his flesh, and smelled the sterile environment of a medical facility. It was torture, barbarism cloaked behind the name of science. It was nearly unbearable, but it was not his pain.

The solitary figure's eyes partially opened as they looked at light for the first time in nearly two weeks. His tongue moved over cracked and bloodied lips as he choked on the dryness in his throat. The Dark Side flashed through his body, venom burned from his system, and the life force of several vipers vanished.

You are unraveled.

I am unraveled.

The Sith Lord, known by many names, but now using his most alien, moved through the tall grass and looked down upon the figure still in meditative pose.

You did not finish.

Pravus unsteadily rose from his seated position, staggering in his own filth, the dead and clenched jaws of vipers still hanging from his legs. He was skeletal in appearance, physically weak, and required the assistance of the Force to remain standing.

What you saw was meaningless compared to what we are doing here.

Pravus looked at krel os'a hmi va ta, turned, and walked in the opposite direction.



*Cry Out Loud.
Bold and Proud.
Of Where I've Been
And Who've I've Been*

Unknown Medical Frigate

Orbit: Elizabeth-II

Cor'neria System — Collective Territory

38 ABY

Two syringes pumped nutrients into pilot's exposed veins. His tattered robes had been replaced with a new set of ill-fitting combat attire designed to fit the man he once was. Multiple alarms in his ship blared as it tunneled through hyperspace without proper calculations. His free arm fumbled with the controls in an attempt to shut off the noise. He had never been a good pilot and the only chance he had was to rely on the Force.

The stolen prototype Severian Phalanx Interceptor punched out of hyperspace impossibly close to the Medical Frigate and penetrated its aft hangar with a shockwave of destruction. The Interceptor's left wing tore from the ball cockpit and sprayed a shower of sparks across the landing bay. The Sith Lord labored out of his crash webbing and popped the overhead hatch of his craft. The twin syringes ripped from his flesh, leaving two thin trails of blood down his arm.

The guard force, now recovered, maneuvered on the lone figure in their hangar. Red fire flashed across the bay at the stooped figure who moved impossibly fast for a man that appeared to already be dead. Pravus fell to the floor as a bolt of condensed energy slammed into his shoulder. The flesh blackened and charred.

Yet, the man rose, and moved on. A central corridor connected the hangar to another corridor and then another. Pravus walked and stumbled through the madness of a ship coming unhinged. The screams of the dying and the stench of the dead welcomed each security patrol as they attempted to cordon the nightmare that had bordered their ship. Security cameras showed the intruder's injuries, showed blasters tearing flesh from bone, but somehow the assailant continued.

An encrypted access panel disintegrated as twin lightsabers tore through its circuitry. The doors of the room opened to expose a sophisticated array of scientific equipment within. Tubes, filled with unknown substances, pumped into a sedated a man that was secured to a medical bed.

The Sith Lord's lightsabers slashed through the machinery and bindings holding Evant Taelyan in place. The Dark Brotherhood's Deputy Grand Master was unresponsive and unaware of his rescue.



*Unable to Forgive
Wear this Like a Crown*

Abandoned Temple Ruins
Unknown Planet
Unknown System
38 ABY - Day 13

A rudimentary medical droid screeched a series of beeps as Evant Taelyan stumbled from his cot and through the doors of a dilapidated hut. His senses were bombarded with brutal heat and the stench of decay. The Dark Side was strong in this place, but he felt weakened by its presence despite his affinity for the Force.

The Deputy Grand Master's attractive boyish looks had undergone a transformation during his imprisonment. His blonde locks had been shorn to the scalp and his clean-cut face sported months of growth. His amber eyes remained, but the intensity of their color had darkened to almost black.

Where am I?

My home.

The question was a thought, but the answer came in the form of real words. Evant's natural speed had yet to fully return and he staggered to face the unknown response. He recoiled at what stood before him.

Grand Master...

Pravus sat in the center of a circle of dead grass. The hood of his robe was pulled back, exposing his gaunt face.

What has happened to...

The former Grand Master of the Dark Brotherhood raised his hand to silence his former ally.

Every lesson the Apprentice learns must come at a price.

Evant's sharp, but muddled mind struggled with the meaning of the words. His head tilted sideways as a blur of motion flashed before him. A pain, fresh and new, burned through his senses and drove his self-preservation instincts into hyperdrive. Evant looked down at where his right hand had been seconds before, but now only a cauterized stump remained. He stumbled and fell down to one knee. Betrayed.

The skeletal form of Darth Pravus labored before him in an effort to resume his seated position within the grass. His lightsaber vanishing within his tattered robes. His back turned to Evant.

You have lost your way. You have become an Administrator. A bureaucrat. You allowed chattel to capture and experiment on you. You have risen while at the same time become nothing. Let this remind you of you are.

Evant rose, eyes searching for a weapon. The destruction of the Dark Brotherhood's former leader the only thing on his mind.

Tisk Tisk.

Evant heard the words, but this time they came from another speaker. A force, perhaps the Force, had slammed violently into him, his consciousness fading in an instant.

The Mandalorians have arrived and will shuttle him back to Brotherhood Space through an intermediary. Perhaps this lesson will help him regain some of the strength we thought he had. He may yet prove valuable to our plans.

Pravus looked at krel os'a hmi va ta.

Yes.

The solitary figure closed his eyes and returned to his meditation. His lesson had yet to finish.

Italic Section Headers are derived from the Tool musical Catalogue. Lyrics loosely borrowed from The Grudge, The Patient, and Bottom.