

Nesolat Platform

Meleu buried his head in his hands. The station alarm warbling had frustrated him for hours, the remnants of orange-hue siren dangled from the ceiling. The warbling stopped, briefly, replaced by a shrill three-tone alarm and a dull automated female voice on the tannoy.

“All non-combatants report to the administrative sector.”

Silence. As Meleu stood up from his chair, he grunted as three more bursts from the high-pitched alarm echoed through his quarters.

“All non-combatants report to the administrative sector.”

He moved over towards the porthole on the starboard side of the room, placing his pale hands above the window and peering outside. Warm blood trickled down from his knuckles to his elbow. No sound, but what was happening was clear. A Brotherhood insignia-laden space superiority fighter came hurtling towards the space station, its port wing completely missing.

Meleu turned on his heel, opening the sliding door to the bathroom with a flick of his hand as he marched towards it. Over the sink, he splashed icy cold water over his face. As he reached for a cloth to dry himself with, he spotted a label reading *Yaladai*.

“Huh, didn’t know that was there, “ he muttered under his breath. Before he could grab the stimulant tub, the whooshing sound of the main door to the cabin startled him. Meleu tentatively reached for the hilt strapped to the right-hand-side of his robe, and cautiously walked through the door back to his bedroom. Though the still-warbling alarm blared through the station, the Sith could feel the vibrations of sound from a pair of boots walking on the otherwise of the wall - just as cautiously as he was.

“Commander! Commander! Are yo-, “ the young Brotherhood soldier cut his sentence short as the Sith Battlemaster stepped out of the bathroom. The trooper held his armoured helmet under his arm, allowing his panic-stricken, widened eyes a public audience with the now displeased Force user. Meleu pulled his hand away from his saber. Echoes of battle from within the platform reverberated through the room.

“Is there a problem?” Meleu quipped.

“Commander, the Collective have breached Hangar Three, we tried calling you but- “. Once again the trooper stopped short of finishing his sentence as the Shadow Academy veteran raised his fist, displaying the dried trickled blood running down his forearm, and motioned towards the smashed intercom screen on the wall.

Meleu did not say a word, instead marched towards the corridor outside his cabin, the soldier swiftly stepping back out of the way of the Sith. A red-yellow flashing filled the corridor, the warbling alarm all but a muffled echo as he waded through unarmed masses running towards him, on their way to the administrative block. As he meandered through the crowd he pressed his temple with his index and middle fingers. Shrieks and screams of pain reverberated through his now clear mind, blaster shots rang out, the hissing sound as they pierced skin resonated within him. His nearby reality came flashing back, he had slowed down now as more and more streamed out of their habitation units and into the corridor. The Battlemaster grasped his hilt, *Blight-bringer*, raised it in the air and ignited it. Amplifying his vocal cord strength, he bellowed out, "Move! Now!"

He picked up the pace in his march, longer strides and lighter steps, blade raised above his head as he made his way toward the hangar bay. The startled onlookers glued themselves to the walls, this brute of a man parting the sea of worried folk before him.

As Meleu neared the final corner before the hangar bay door, a small squadron of lightly armoured Brotherhood soldiers were lined up, backs to the wall, a man with Sergeant epaulettes peeking his head around the corner. The men looked visibly shaken, the Sergeant's blaster rifle shaking in parallel with his trembling right hand.

"Who are they? What are they?" one cried out.

Meleu slowed down his pace, jogging down to a stop next to the Sergeant.

"Tell me the situation Sergeant," the Sith's booming voice caught the man off guard, he spun around in a daze, his eyes identical to the soldier in his cabin earlier on.

"S-sir, Commander sorry, " the man stuttered, " these soldiers are like nothing I have seen ever before." The petrified soul within still evident through his gaze. Meleu grabbed the man's collar, lifting him slightly off the ground before pulling his face opposite his own.

"You're coming with me," Meleu felt the warm, panicked and rushed breath of the Sergeant against his own skin as he lay down instructions to the man.

"You as well," he motioned to the more junior of the security guards-cum-soldiers with his head.

The Sith Battlemaster weakened his grasp on the man's uniform, raised his crimson-red saber into the air once more and made his way towards the hangar door, followed in tow by the band of mildly-trained soldiers. Mere metres from the door, Meleu paused, sensing movement - unified movement - on the other side. In that instant, the hangar doors lowered from the ceiling, before the doors had fully lowered, a barrage of blaster bolts hurtled towards the unsuspecting soldiers behind the Taldryanite. Before they could even cower, the weaponised particle beam energy dissipated before their eyes; Meleu stood firm, his left palm extended, facing the fully opened hangar doors. For the several milliseconds that the Sith had to study the scene in front of him, he

observed four clone-like combatants, their untouched, shiny black armour reflecting the fiery carnage behind them. All in identical stances, blaster carbines shouldered and raised, fingers depressing triggers simultaneously. He sensed no fear, no rage, no courage, just emptiness.

Meleu stepped forward, his thought processing slowed down to real time. Another flurry of blaster bolts charged towards the Brotherhood group; this time the Force could not stop the bombardment. In one motion, the Sith ripped his hilt from the holster, igniting and thrusting it in a right-to-left arcing manoeuvre, deflecting the now arrived beams of energy away from his body. Pouncing forward, Meleu jumped forward high in the air, sideways onto the unwelcome guests ahead of him. In a cartwheel-like action, he cut through the air saber-first. As *Blight-bringer* came down to meet the first assailant, thuds of the bodies of the men behind him hitting the ground caught the attention of the Battlemaster - as well as a newly laid canister on the floor. The finale of his stunning strike delivered no fatal blow, instead Meleu was caught off guard, billowing smoke and flickering flames immediately overcrowded the Sith's senses. He was not happy.

Shaking his head, he quickly composed himself; athletically avoiding a wrist-rocket missile with a sideways roll. The shockwave of the projectile flung Meleu backwards, however still controlled, he softened the blow his back was about to take from the impact and flung his saber towards the general direction of the smoke. He flipped back up onto his feet as the saber began to make its way back towards his right hand. *Thud*

Three of the four combatants flew through the smoke with their jetpacks, slamming their boots on the ground as they landed. Once again raising their blaster carbines barrels inline with the Sith before them, they began to fire. Unfortunately the Collective soldiers were no match for the precognitive Battlemaster, who had already begun leaping through the air, crimson-red saber in tow. Targeting the middle marine, he sliced down with his weapon and separated the marine's left arm from his body. Whilst the Sith had caught them by surprise, the marines on the wings were fast with their reactions, having dropped their blaster carbines and unholstering their blaster pistols. Meleu's initial target could not do the same, with his left hand and as he landed, the Sith thrust his Inquisitorius dagger from its holster towards the neck region of the soldier. The dagger connected, through the gap between helmet and armour, ripping a near-surgical but deep wound from left to right.

Meleu sensed the opponent's blaster pistols being raised and trained onto him. Too close to deflect both opponents with his saber, he swiftly tossed his dagger and grabbed the now-dead marine's limp body with his left hand before it fell to the floor. Dragging the body backwards with him, the Sith deflected incoming blaster bolts from his right with his saber and used the marine's body as a human shield for the attack from the left. Meleu looked around as he slowly withdrew from the close proximity of the Hive-mind marines; somewhere behind cover in order to regroup.

His plan however was hindered in an instant. The marines knew exactly what to expect now, they marched toward their target in a physically robotic manner, yet tactical; performing a pincer manoeuvre to flank the Sith from either side. They continued to wear down their enemy with

rhythmic pulses from their hip-level blaster pistol fire, seemingly not over exerting themselves for the rushed kill.

These opponents confused Meleu, they moved as a cohesive unit, in line with one another, but independently at the same time. They showed zero panic or worry with the death of their two comrades a minute before, they showed no fear of the evidently stronger Force user ahead of them, nor any hesitation at what they had to do in order to get the job done.

The Battlemaster peered round his shoulder one last time, he was getting closer to the hangar bay's forcefield. Through it, carnage; Brotherhood and Collective starfighters erupting in flames, not an inch of space devoid of destruction. He turned back around again, batting off the blaster bolts from his right with his saber, almost with ease.

This was all according to plan for the slave marines though, whilst Meleu was focused parrying, the other marine sneakily reached for a thermal detonator, launching it at the unsuspecting Sith. The Force was on his side today however, Meleu dropped the fallen soldier that he had been dragging for the last twenty metres, and before the thermal detonator had made half of its journey Meleu it exploded. The Sith stood firm, left arm outstretched and forked lightning erupting from his fingertips. The shockwave sent the marine flying backwards, Meleu continued the stream of electricity, redirecting its path at the now mid-air soldier. *Swish. Swish. Swish.* Meleu was still battling the blaster shots from his right.

The horrendous torrent stopped. The marine now lay dead; combined blunt-force trauma from the floor and the back of his head mixed with electric shock therapy did not fare too well for him. Meleu smirked, there was now only one left.

It was short lived. He got cocky and stopped paying attention. Two blaster bolts snuck through his lightsaber shield he had created on his right flank. One pierced his shoulder, the other cleanly amputating his right hand from its arm. His saber fell to the floor, still gripped by his now disattached hand.

He winced. Hard. Rage filled his veins but that wasn't important for the Sith as yet another flurry of ranged attacks came from his right flank. He rolled forward, unsheathing his electro sword and made his way back onto his feet. He marched at the final opponent, weary but eager to finish the fight off. With his now left-hand wielded weapon, he battled away the incoming shots from the last remaining enemy. With a final burst of energy, the Sith launched his blade vigorously towards the marine, leaving him no time to react. The sword separated the legs from the torso, collapsing in an awkward fashion. Mere steps away from the marine, the Battlemaster guided his electro sword back to his left hand, and sliced downwards on each of the marine's arms, nearly completely dismembering the body. With these strange new foes now deceased and with no other immediate threats, Meleu grabbed his last victim by the helmet, dragging it and what remained of his body along the ground towards the hangar bay doors.