The troopship was dimly lit like all troopships seemed to be. Dull red lighting illuminated the interior enough so the troops inside could see each other but that was about it. Of course, the windows provided plenty of illumination in the form of strobing red, green, and blue bolts flashing back and forth as the Collective's forces struck at their hated adversaries.

The intercom crackled, "30 Seconds, troops stand by."

Rakkas Kat, a doctor by any definition of the word, checked first his medical equipment. Stims? Check. Bandages? Check. Tools? Check. Next were the weapons. Rakkas turned on his twin vibro-abir blades for long enough to ensure they were functioning then turned them back off. He did the same with his stun baton. Ideally, he'd nab at least one of the Brotherhood's Force users today. If not, oh well. There'd be another day.

Despite the inertial dampener's best efforts the troopship still jarred violently as it slammed down into the bay of the Brotherhood station. Like most Brotherhood structures it was an arrogant monument to their love of the Force. The lights bracketing the door turned green as the door swung down to form a ramp and the platoon of troopers charged forward. Sergeants barked quick orders to their people, keeping squads moving towards their objectives. The platoon Rakkas was assigned to was tasked with heading for a bank of escape pods, to prevent the Brotherhood from fleeing with their precious artifacts.

One of the doors into the spacious hangar bay opened, and beams of coherent light flicked back and forth with misleading beauty. Rakkas settled his riot shield in front of him and charged with a few other troopers who preferred to get in close, screaming "Cover me!" as he ran. The rest of the Collective troops in the bay poured fire into the doorway until Rakkas and the three men with him reached the door. Rakkas spared a glance to the opposite side of the corridor as he rounded the corner nearest him, running right into a Brotherhood soldier. The human had an average build, which meant that he lost when Rakkas charged at him with his shield, falling to the ground with a crunch. One side of Rakkas' blade licked out, opening the soldier's throat as he struggled to regain his footing.

Rakkas looked around the now calm corridor and hangar bay, noting a few wounded, one severely. He set his shield and blade down and got to work. The blaster bolt had punched through the trooper's breastplate, almost dead center. Blood seeped through the black-crusted hole while the trooper coughed up almost as much blood. Rakkas gave the trooper a stim, then covered and sealed the wound, packing it with enough bacta-infused gauze to keep the trooper alive, probably. He dug a marker out of his toolkit and marked the trooper's forehead with S/T. Any follow-on medic would know he'd been given a stim and the damage was on his torso.

There was nothing more he could do for the young man so he turned his attention to the rest of the bay. Most of the wounded were up and had been treated for minor blaster burns or shrapnel, either by themselves or their buddies out of their IFAKs, their individual first aid kits. One of the wounded had not been touched.

Rakkas made his way over to the Brotherhood trooper who was trying in vain to staunch the blood flowing from her leg. Rakkas looked it over with the practiced eye of a doctor. The blood was flowing swiftly and smoothly, without the spurting of an arterial wound. Left to her own devices, she'd probably be able to save herself, but she was losing blood quickly enough that it was by no means guaranteed she'd be awake long enough to finish binding it. Rakkas wordlessly pushed her shoulder down, and she complied, laying on her back so he could elevate her leg. Rakkas took one last look at her leg then fished a scalpel out of his belt. A quick, deep cut across her throat and she no longer had to worry about her leg-- or anything at all.

Rakkas collected his gear then rejoined the troops forming up in the corridor. Their tech specialists shouted, equal parts triumph and warning, as the door opened to their touch and the scene from earlier repeated itself with coherent light flying back and forth. Unlike last time, however, far more fire was coming at the Collective troops. That wasn't the biggest threat, Rakkas saw; He watched one of the troops clawing at his throat. The smooth, unblemished skin told Rakkas that a Force user was nearby. A quick peek showed him one of the hated heretics. A trooper screamed "Grenade!" as he threw a detonator at the Brotherhood troops, only for it to be stopped mid-air.

The explosion provided enough cover for him to charge, and charge he did. Another shout of "Cover me!" had the platoon at his back pouring as much fire as they could down the corridor while Rakkas charged the Force user. Clearly taken by surprise, she dropped her hand to her belt in order to draw her lightsaber but was not quick enough. Rakkas' stun baton licked out to tap her arm but she was quick enough there, at least, to ground out the energy from the baton. Rakkas screamed in her face, bashing her with the shield while he dropped the baton in favor of one of his vibro-arbir blades. That blade struck true and she reeled back from him, clutching at the ruins of her stomach. A second cut, this time to the neck, and he was free to notice the fact that he was standing out in the middle of a corridor with bolts of violent energy flying in both directions.

The platoon leader, ever mindful of their lack of time, shouted "Go!"

Rakkas raised his shield and slowly advanced into the Brotherhood troops at the end of the brightly lit hall. Lucky for him, he was not alone, half a dozen Collective troopers had joined him and the Brotherhood routed, cowards that they were.

Rakkas turned back to the corridor at the call of "Medic!"

He took off, full-tilt, back the way he'd come while troopers flowed forward around him. Rakkas knelt by the trooper who was holding his friend, cradling the man's head. Rakkas just shook his head. The bolt had struck the man in the eye; he'd died instantly.

Rakkas dragged the trooper who'd given the call to his feet. The two of them then rejoined the column. The tech specialists were doing their work again, egged on by the impatient platoon leader.

"What's taking so long?" He growled as the two of them fussed over their equipment.

"This door is far better protected than the others, sir."

The platoon leader nodded, "Rejoin the stack, then. Demo up!"

A swaggering trooper joined the platoon leader and started laying charges on the door. He signaled he was ready, then he and the platoon leader fell back a bit. The door disintegrated, sending shrapnel whirling down the hall to a chorus of screams. The troopers rushed the door, each trooper pushing against the man in front of him, then spreading out when they entered the massive hall. The troopers were careful to maintain fields of fire and not catch any of their fellows but it was an unnecessary exercise this time. Most of the Brotherhood in the massive vaulted gallery were either dead or wounded by the massive door-turned-shotgun that had just filled the room. The few that weren't were unarmed, hiding behind displays and stands holding sinister objects.

Rakkas took a closer look at the objects, the wounded were all Brotherhood, after all. Every item was different: from weapons to robes to slate tablets inscribed in a language Rakkas didn't know and frankly didn't want to know. Every item on display, however, had one thing in common.

They all radiated a sick, undeniably *evil* energy. No sane person could not be repulsed by them.

Rakkas shook himself, then tended to his duties. A quick survey of the injured showed that only two of them would likely survive without serious intervention.

"Get everything you need from them, sir?" He looked at the platoon leader, who nodded.

Rakkas went to work. Quick, surgical cuts, no point prolonging their suffering. He looked up to see the platoon was stacking up on the other door from the massive hall, minus a fire team that he'd designated in order to secure the hall for Collective scientists. Maybe some good would come of the sinister displays here, but Rakkas doubted it.

Rakkas joined the stack and elbowed the trooper in front of him to indicate he was ready. The "tap" went up the line and the first trooper moved into the next corridor. Again coherent light flickered, reaping its death toll. Interspersed was the somehow lighter, but harsher *crack* of a slugthrower, and one of the troopers, a reeled back from the door with a harsh grunt as his breastplate shattered. Rakkas abandoned his position in the stack, and pulled the trooper out of

the line of fire, and undid the clasps holding his armor in place. The slug had cut right through the plate since it wasn't designed to defeat slugs, especially ones that big. Rakkas slapped the trooper with a stim before probing the wound, ignoring the trooper's screams. *No time to let the anesthetics do their work*, Rakkas thought, as the wound made a cruel sucking sound and foamed.

Rakkas scrubbed the wound clean as best he was able, then applied a chest seal and cleaned up the wound as best he could. He looked over the trooper and noticed a few minor cuts, but no other wounds, so he marked the man's forehead and packed up his medical gear. Treating the wound had taken a good minute but the Brotherhood had apparently found some courage and were still resisting.

Rakkas shrugged his riot shield into position and drew one side of his vibro-arbir. It was easier to use the shorter, single blade with the shield. The sharp, rippling report of a series of grenades exploding rolled down the corridor and a dozen Collective troopers stood up and began screaming as they charged. Several went down but the charge was able to carry through the Brotherhood's positions. Rakkas leveled his shield in front of him and ran after the charge. He didn't make it in time as the last Brotherhood soldier fell before he arrived. While the platoon reformed he set his shield down and checked over the wounded. A few minor blaster burns, one had taken a graze from the slugthrower, but no serious injuries this time. The dead were another matter but they were beyond anyone's help.

Rakkas spent a few minutes ensuring bandages were applied and nobody was leaking too much, then nodded to the platoon leader who began issuing orders. "This should be the last time, guys. Stack up and get ready."

The techs didn't get a chance to try the door, this time. The platoon leader didn't want to give anyone inside any more warning than necessary and risk anyone escaping. The door shattered as the charges on the door exploded, sending shattered bits of door howling into the long bay filled with escape pods. The platoon filed into the bay as a few of the pods blasted out of their cradles, emboldened by the knowledge that this was the final effort. Rakkas shouldered his way to the front and began rushing forward, shield held up to protect him as it had done throughout this entire action. Yet again, bolts flew through a once spotless bay, cutting down men and women on both sides of the conflict. Despite their losses, it was clear the Collective had the initiative and were pushing the Brotherhood back. A few Brotherhood troopers abandoned their positions for the imagined safety of fleeing the station. Many more died where they stood.

As Rakkas rushed forward, he could hear another slugthrower open up, this one heavier than the last. His shield recoiled into him, giving him a solid whack in the mouth, then his legs wouldn't support his weight. Rakkas fell forward, then rolled over and looked at his legs in confusion. It wasn't his legs that drew his attention, it was the pair of neat holes in his armor, with blood smoothly flowing from them.

Rakkas put his head back, feeling lightheaded.