

Great Jedi War XIV: Phase 1 Combat Fiction  
TuQ'uan Varick di Plagia

***Nesolat Platform - Hallway***

***Arx system***

***38 ABY***

The lights flickered sporadically in the eerily quiet hallway of the \*Nesolat Platform\*, occasional blaster fire, explosions and indecipherable yells could be heard echoing through the hallways from off in the distance, but from where exactly, TuQ'uan couldn't be quite sure. All of this had put the di Plagia on edge not that it took a lot to do so at the moment, he was still on thin ice with Ronovi for his act of defiance during their skirmish with Clan Vizsla and had to watch his back lest one of the Dread Lord's other lackeys decided it was high time he step aside either by choice or by force. TuQ'uan was never quite sure if he should respect or be disgusted by the lust for power at any costs that drove so many Force users to do despicable things.

Infiltrating the platform had been easy enough for the mercenary but now came the hard part, finding and stopping the Collective agents from taking full control of the platform and based off of the pair of bodies laying face down in the middle of the hallway with blaster marks peppered across the backs of their Shadow Academy uniforms, he was headed in the right direction. He could still smell the burned o-zone in the air from what appeared to be an excessive use of blaster fire on a few of the support staff, they couldn't be much further ahead of him.

Flanking each side of the long cold hallway were doorways into offices, classrooms and training facilities some. Some of the doors remained open with ransacked rooms inside, others looked untouched and ignored by the infiltrators, the rhyme or reason behind which rooms were untouched escaped the Plagueians' understanding. He pressed on without giving it much additional thought.

A wide doorway stood open at the end of the hallway with a third member of the Nesolat staff, a Zabraki male, kneeling in the corner by the retinal scanner that opened this section of the platform, his forehead pressed against the cold durasteel wall and neck set at a crooked angle. The Kel Dor moved towards the Zabrak as quietly as possible, careful not to alert anyone who may be nearby to his presence. He gently placed his hand on the shoulder of the white jacket and gave a tug, like a sack of lamta the corpse of the Zabrak fell backwards with a dull thud, his face a bloody mess and his eyelids forcibly peeled back. The sight of this freshly disfigured face made TuQ'uan want to retch but the sound of voices just inside the next room snapped the mercenary's attention back to the mission at hand.

A large monolith stood just inside the door, a few feet wider than the passageway in and quite a bit taller, blocking the majority of the view into the large, domed room beyond. Molded into the

wall were emptied hooks and shelves designed to hold the equipment used in the sparring arena just beyond.

“Captain,” a youthful voice growled. TuQ’uan couldn’t see who the voice belonged to but he could see the shadows of the collective agents dance across the bare grey floor and up onto the walls.

*How many are in here?* he pondered.

“Yesss, Commander Dreen,” a female voice hissed.

“Take your squad on ahead and clear a path, I’m going to take a look around here and see if I can find anything of interest. Encounter any resistance and you squash it with extreme prejudice. Leave no Force user or their sympathizers alive.” From the sound of his voice TuQ’uan could tell he was enjoying this. “Today is an auspicious day, today is the day we purge this blight on the galaxy.”

“Yesssir! Let’sss move!” She snapped at her squad.

Creeping towards the edge of the monolith, TuQ’uan chanced a peek at the scene playing out on the other side. Boots echoed through the room as the squad to Liberation Front goons made their way around an identical monolith on the other side of the large open room and out into the hallway. The well-built Falleen stood alone in the centre of the room with his back to the di Plagia, watching his subordinates follow his every command with a smirk on his face. Konnus stood with impeccable posture, his jet black hair pulled back in a headache inducing ponytail and hands held in the small of his back over a black cloak that didn’t look like it had ever seen a spec of dust, let alone combat.

*He looks like a kid imitating a military commander in one of those old holos* TuQ’uan mused. This was going to be easy.

Slowly the Kel Dor crept around the edge of the monolith carefully choosing where each footstep fell on the floor, closing the distance like a loth-wolf stalking its next meal. Reaching down, TuQ’uan removed his Inquisitorius Stiletto from his belt, readying to plunge the blade into his quarry. He was now just a few feet away from the Falleen, who had yet to move a muscle. Something was wrong here but he was too close now not to strike.

TuQ’uan thumbed the small activator on the stiletto and jabbed the blade forward directly at the deep green jugular on Konnus’ neck. As the blade neared its target the Falleen spun as if anticipating the attack, the commander lifted his shoulder and turned towards his attacker pushing the blade off course leaving just a small nick across his chiseled jaw, drawing a small trickle of blood. Unprepared for the sudden course correction of his attack, the Kel Dor lost his grip on the blade, throwing it across the floor.

The blade landed with a clatter that echoed across the room as the di Plagia and the Commander locked eyes.

“You’re much more skilled than I anticipated,” the Collective agent spoke with a hint of amusement. He reached up, wiped his jaw and inspected the trickle of blood left on his hand with a look of amusement. “Let’s see. Big hat, skilled with a blade, you’re clearly working for the \*Brotherhood\*,” he spat the last word out with contempt. “That must make you the Proconsul of Plagueis.”

“My reputation precedes me,” TuQ’uan replied, straightening his back with pride. “And let’s see, Falleen. Looks like you have a stick shoved up your rear end. Obviously have something to prove...Nope, I have no idea who you are.”

The amusement on the Commander’s face quickly melted away, transforming into a scowl. In a fit of rage Konnus clenched his fist and threw a wild and untrained, yet surprisingly powerful uppercut directly into the Plagueian’s stomach, catching him off guard and driving TuQ’uan backwards. Stumbling on his own feet, the di Plagia fell backwards landing roughly on his back. His face flushed a deeper shade of crimson from embarrassment as he lay prone on the floor. Konnus took a deep breath and tugged sharply at the hem of his uniform, straightening whatever imperceptible wrinkles had formed in his cloak.

*Well, time for plan B,* the mercenary thought to himself as he subtly moved his hand down towards the DL-44 blaster holstered on his right thigh.

“You aren’t even worth my time,” Konnus spoke with a very matter of fact tone as he pulled his blaster from its place hidden beneath his cloak. “Don’t worry, it’ll all be over soon.”

Before the E-11 could be leveled at the Kel Dor laying on the floor, TuQ’uan wrapped his hands around the grip of his still holstered blaster and squeezed the trigger over and over again tearing a hole in the leather guard and spraying a volley of red plasma directly at the smug Falleen standing a few feet away. He may be a great shot, but locked to his leg the blaster fire lost its accuracy, the bolts went wide of their target as the young Commander dove to the side with a fresh hole burnt through his otherwise impeccable cloak.

Konnus rolled into a somersault and launched himself back to his feet and swung his rifle around, training it on TuQ’uan. The Plagueian had rolled onto his stomach and was scrambling to his feet as plasma whizzed by his head, scorching the wall ahead of him. Free of its leather prison, TuQ’uan fired his DL-44 blindly behind him as he made a b-line for cover back behind the wide monolith keeping the room’s entrance from sight. Dropping to his knees, the mercenary slid behind cover.

Blaster fire filled the room as each man hunkered down behind cover, kitty-corner from each other firing blindly, just hoping that they would outlast the other. TuQ'uan pulled the trigger as quickly as he could, keeping a steady blanket of suppressing fire laid down on Konnus' location.

*Click.*

Frak. The DL-44 had overheated under the constant use. Ranged combat was no longer an option. Noticing the lack of returning fire from his opponent, Konnus stepped out from his hiding place and began advancing on TuQ'uan's location, his E-11 tightly gripped in both hands and a steady stream of blaster bolts leading the way.

Thinking quickly, TuQ'uan holstered his blaster and unhooked an EMP grenade from his utility belt, lobbing it over the wall and across the room. As a blast erupted from the grenade the blaster fire in the room was finally silenced. Without wasting any time, the Plagueian bolted out from behind his cover heading directly at his quarry. The lights in the room dimmed momentarily as the Falleen's soft grey eyes widened in surprise when his blaster failed to respond to the pull of the trigger, over the barrel of the blaster an angry Kel Dor was running towards him at full speed.

Tossing the useless blaster aside, Konnus attempted to draw his blood red rapier. Before the rapier had a chance to escape its scabbard TuQ'uan bowled into the Collective Commander fist first landing a blow directly to his jaw, the jet black ponytail flailed as Konnus' head whipped to the side. The rapier slid back into its resting place. TuQ'uan readied another swift blow aimed at the Falleen's kidneys, as the crimson fist was less than an inch from impact Konnus spun away and in one smooth move successfully drew his blade.

Using the momentum of his spin, Konnus swung for TuQ'uan's exposed throat. Light glinted off of the red ceramic blade as it sliced through the air, without a moment to spare the mercenary dropped his head and felt the blade brush across the back of his neck. A strip of his hat floated to the ground, separated from the rest of the di Plagia's signature hat. He would pay for that.

TuQ'uan grabbed at Konnus' wrist, wrestling for control of the blade. As the two combatants struggled for the weapon their legs intertwined in an attempt to throw the other off balance. Red and green flesh became one as TuQ'uan drove his forehead into his opponent's nose drawing a spurt of blood, in one swift movement the Kel Dor pulled his leg back, still wrapped around his opponents. The two bodies still tangled together went crashing still fighting for the blade.

Crashing to the ground the two began rolling, attempting to be the one to come out on top. As they rolled across the floor the rapier flailed wildly with no one taking full control. Exhausted, the two fighters rolled apart, panting heavily as they laid on their backs side by side, each with a hand gripping the hilt of the rapier, tugging back and forth with their remaining strength. TuQ'uan looked over at Konnus, both of them had been sliced by that damn blade in the struggle.

An explosion rocked the station as the battle raged on both inside and out causing the power to fail, momentarily throwing the training room into complete darkness. An utter silence filled the room, the only thing TuQ'uan could hear was a dim ringing in his ears from years of being too close to explosions and blaster fire.

Pain spread through his entire body like fire burning slowly starting from where he had been punched in the stomach to wounds he wasn't even aware he had. He blinked once. Twice. Three times. The lights began to fade up, revealing the room around him. It was different, familiar but different.

As the room came into focus he recognized the long forgotten room, he was back in the cargo bay of *The Wild Rancor* and standing over him was his former partner in crime.

"You betrayed me Varick." Contempt dripped from every word as Vos spoke. "Cut me out and left me for dead."

He remembered this night but it was all wrong, he should be the one standing over Vos, angry over betrayal. TuQ'uan struggled to get his feet beneath him, before he could stand fully Vos' hand grabbed the side of his head and smashed it against the durasteel hull of the smuggler's ship cracking open his antiox mask. When his head collided with the wall TuQ'uan heard the sound of distant explosions and felt his entire world rock. Struggling to keep his balance, the Plagueian saw his former partners fist flying towards his face, with a sickening crunch his mask cracked open even further. His lungs burned as the oxygen seeped through.

The bloodied hand that broke open his mask grabbed his collar and gave a mighty shove sending TuQ'uan tumbling backwards down the open cargo ramp. He rolled down the ramp reaching out for a handhold to stop and steady himself finally coming to rest on the ground outside.

"I'm just returning the favour, Varick."

*This is all wrong, this isn't how it happened,* TuQ'uan thought to himself as the cargo ramp closed, Vos turned and walked away without another word. The ground around him shook violently as the ship took off, the heat from the engines washing over his body. He struggled to breathe through the oxygen leaking through his broken mask. Laying on the unnaturally cold ground, the world around him faded to black.