***Watch And Learn***

***A Dark Brotherhood Tale***

GJW14: Homefront

Author:

Sith Bloodfyre-Tarentae

Marka Ragnos of Naga Sadow

PIN 756

--[OPTION 2: *STOP THE DEPUTY GRAND MASTER*]--

*Sit.*

*[Gather ‘round, and we will share the details.]*

***We survived the incident.***

*-Was it a slaughter?*

*[For some; for others, such as us, a mater of instinct and survival. We survived, because we read the battlefield. We saw the outcome. It was apparent. All moved as one, but some could not escape.]*

*We did. We survived. And we will share, so that we may all survive the roads ahead.*

***Listen. No more questions. We will all understand together. Partake, ponder, then let us share insights.***

*[It was a unique setting. The Betrayer was with us. He knew the layout of the base well. Of course, he would, he was part of the leadership, the body that builds and defines the enemy.]*

*Of course, he would know.*

*[He led us down tunnels, hallways, corridors with swiftness. We met resistance, but his presence with us made a successful impact. His presence stunned and shocked them. They were open to our power. Many fell quickly. Some fell back into retreat. It was hardly noteworthy up to a certain point. All things went according to plan.]*

***At some point, we happened upon a trio of enemies. We knew it was purely chance, because of the faces of the two women. The beast women. One of them in particular shared a link with the great beast, the other woman the obvious student. Yet, there were three of them, the Force-users. And the beast. We will discuss the beast later. It initially seemed unconcerned with us, and at the time, we didn’t realize it would be controlled or guided by them. It seemed so unconcerned with any presence. Perhaps it may have been in some form of hibernation.***

*[Unlikely.]*

***Yes, unlikely. Perhaps it has periods wherein it must have dormancy. Unknown. We will research. However, as we happened upon them, there was genuine surprise on the faces, particularly the younger female. The third, its visage was covered in shadow. The two women were certain surprised to see our group. The Betrayer mocked them. Yet his words seemed to have no effect. The women seemed to care little for him. Still, there seemed to be an effect upon the third.***

*There was an effect. There was a palpable sensation to us. We felt it. Rage? Perhaps. There was certainly animosity towards our numbers. We were the target of that one’s ire.*

*[The battle ensued. We can all see how it transpired…]*

It was obvious in the mind’s eye of each that one of the women was certainly a lesser, but the other three were something of a match. The Force-users would refer to them each as Masters of some level. The Betrayer was a warrior and quick. He was agile. He was speed. He was something like lightning, a nimble swoop or pod racer roaring across the track well ahead of its peers and competition. No matter the position of the women, the Betrayer seemed to be one step ahead. Which seemed to be a bit misleading, because the women themselves were agile and fast; but the Betrayer seemed quicker. He simply moved perhaps one second ahead of a strike or managed to turn at the right moment. The Betrayer played defense and was rewarded. The two women were entirely offensive and pressed the attack at every moment.

*-The other seemed motionless. That presence seemed to contemplate the actions and attacks of the rest of them.*

*[Do we understand why this one was even present at this point? It seemed disinterested in the entire showdown.]*

***Perhaps. We will learn in the future.***

The battle progressed and the Betrayer seemed to be wearing the two women down. Yet their endurance and resolve seemed bolstered by some unseen or unknown Force. To those without such knowledge or reception to the unseen, yet very real powers that bound the entirety of existence together, it might seem unreal or fantastic. It was the touch of a Master’s hand, for certain. And as the fight wore on, it became very obvious that the Collective forces were studying the Force-wielding combatants. At an almost mapped out moment, the Collective forces began their attack. Blasters began firing with precision and ridiculous aim that turned the attention of the lead women. She called out and suddenly the creature seemed to become aware. It went on a rampage.

The stun and emotions felt by the hive mind of the Collective forces made the mental image become all too scattered and chaotic. Feelings and insights gave way towards a need to retreat and survive, to live beyond this engagement and share the collected insight and intelligence with the rest that the unified whole would become greater and more capable at the next battle. It seemed as though the Force-users were lost in the conflict, but one of the Collective warriors suddenly seemed to focus its attention and gaze upon the combatants. All of the gathered understood, one of the dying had turned its attention onto the Force-wielding warriors that the rest could learn.

Arcs of lightning flicked from the fingertips of the Elder woman. She began to focus her powers and rage upon the Betrayer, seeking to draw his attention. Her weapons had been stolen from her hands as she turned both spread-open hands and all of the flaming, fiery fingertips of Force upon the Betrayer. Her weapons had been taken by the third.

The younger woman had also given up her own energy blades and had unleashed her fury with a glistening blade. She was raw with this blade, but still pressed the attack. It became very apparent to the combined intelligence of the gathered minds that her intention was not to become more potent, but to give an advantage to the third. This one began to flex its fingers and seemed to prepare for battle. And then several weapons leapt into the fray as though borne upon the wings of angels or demons and unseen warriors of death and destruction seemed to bring battle against the Betrayer.

The beast now tore through and consumed several of the Collective at that battle, apparently to include the one who had focused upon the Force-users, because now the perspective changed. At this point, it seemed as though a cloud of weapons had begun to churn and swirl about the Force-users, beckoning all to come within and yet promising death to any of the Collective that would dare to intrude upon the mystical and enlightened arena of death that was to be held sacrosanct by the members of the hated Brotherhood. Even the Betrayer was one of them, though he had chosen to bring doom upon them by the Collective forces.

The joined minds of the Collective forces seemed to focus back upon the bestial nightmare and its rending, terrible claws. It had painful, gnashing teeth and promised death. It seemed resilient to the blasterfire and weapons of the Collective, though it did noticeably slow with time. It was obviously wounded and hurting, and yet seemed caught up in rage, anger drawn out by those who were hurting it. The joined minds understood. The beast wanted to rend those who were hurting it. A new strategy was needed. Exit the battle and return at another point. Perhaps the beast would die from its wounds, perhaps it would hibernate or go dormant and rejuvenate. Whatever the case, it would be best to allow the beast to withdraw. The Betrayer would be left to his own devices.

*A wise decision, one that brings us intelligence and clarity.*

*-We will stand against them better in the coming engagements.*

*We must understand what will be arrayed against us.*

*-What was the determination of the battle?*

***There was none, as far as we can interpret. The last, fleeting images were of pieces of the station being ripped from their foundation or torn from their anchors and hurled at the Betrayer. Who can say with these types? We image the Betrayer will survive. Their kind always seems to survive. And if he is still unharmed and secure, he can be used.***

*[Perhaps.]*

*-We imagine we will find out soon enough.*

\* \* \* \* \*

The hive mind marines were no longer available for aid. The monstrous she-beast had dealt with many of them, while others had taken a strategic retreat. Perhaps they would circle back around in time and reinforce him. It mattered little at this point. While not ever in his favor, it seemed that the odds were at least momentarily stacked against him.

Of the three now arrayed against him, the Betrayer was only familiar with the one. He’d known The Dragon for many years and had been counted as ally and friend to the Shaevalian for a time. Evant was familiar with the disgraced former Consul who now chose to stand with Naga Sadow. These two were perhaps allies and henchmen, perhaps lovers or otherwise. They seemed accustomed to each other’s presence, but they were neither Tarenti now Sadowan. They smelled of witchery.

*They will feint first and then the younger one will lead the way. A quick, nimble strike meant to turn my attention away from the teacher, while the Dragon remains at bay. A backwards leap will bring myself away from current strikes, causing the two to leap in to press the attack. Bloodfyre will remain at bay; he seems lost in thought, perhaps. Reminiscing on past glories, no doubt. The Elder female will stride forward as if sliding upon the ground with an upward strike; easily defended and turned away with a twist of the blade. The younger will leap with a downward slash wherein I was only moments ago and will be rewarded with a pommel strike to the shoulder. An insult, nothing more, but it will tell.*

The Betrayer spoke no words, though his powers of foresight and understanding of the ebb and flow of the Force rewarded him with seemingly deified understanding, prescience and foresight that others would call omniscience. It was experience, nothing more, but enhanced with the powers of an Elder disciple of the Grand Master. The two female Marauders danced and wheeled with the Deputy Grand Master for moments of time that seemed dilated into years of anticipation and reward. Riesling Pyn was certainly no match for the agile and quick Betrayer, but her role was to help provide openings for her mentor and to keep Taelyan from having definite advantages over a lone opponent. And yet the powers of the male Marauder were focused on agility, speed, foresight and athletic prowess. The man would leap or jump, slide or skid or simply sidestep away from a strike that would otherwise have rung true.

*And still The Dragon holds himself back. He is a cowering fool, nothing more. Whatever glory days he believed himself to possess are nothing more. He is here to witness power. He is here… ahh, a glint in his eyes. He is here to make a deal. He is a fiend. Forever has he hated the Dark Council. And now the fool will watch his servants wear me out, and then he will offer himself as ally and aid. Ah, deft attempt, young lady. Lean back, easily away from the blade. And the ever-churning storm of weapons around us, controlled by the fallen Dragon. Perhaps he will change his name from the Ghost Dragon to the Ghost Of A Dragon. A slight chuckle: yes, I deserve one. Ha-ha.*

Yet there was a nagging doubt at the back of the Betrayer’s mind. Something still wasn’t right. What *was* Sith Bloodfyre doing here, if not to attack? Was he a waiting ally? If so, why was he allowing his lively females take the battle to him and only simply stand back and watch? The churning maelstrom of weapons did nothing except erect a barrier to isolate the foursome away from any outside threats. It wasn’t even menacing to Evant; his powers of foresight and precognition would allow him to understand any threat to himself. Even this exercise of enmity was nothing more than a chance to loosen muscles and warm the cold souls of darkness.

A loud, metallic groan broke the soft whispers of combat. All four took notice, and Evant in particular took notice that each of them had been caught off guard by the sound. Another metallic groan. It was loud, agonizing. The two females gasped slightly and turned their focus momentarily towards the Dragon. The Shaevalian Master seemed lost, unaware, his attention elsewhere. A crack, and then a metallic cry of pain and rage; the floor above was collapsing down. The two females leaped away. Evant seemed to smirk and then aimed away, ready to speed away from danger. *Live to fight another day; my plans will conti—*

Evant’s eyes went wide. His body was not moving. He was caught in… something. A firm grasp, the cold hands of the Force. He locked eyes with Bloodfyre. In all his years, he had known Bloodfyre favored the shadows of his hooded robes, the man had light-sensitive eyes. Yet he was able to see those light blue eyes. The former Consul and former High Warrior, the fallen leader of a dead Clan; the eyes were mirthful, and there was a smile upon his face. Though Evant and Sith were not bound by any means, and shared no mental connection, he could almost sense words coming from his former ally and friend, and now enemy.

*We will die together, Deputy Grand,* the Shaevalian seemed to be saying. *You chose our enemies, a noble aim for any Sith. Yet you chose the Collective, the doom of Tarentum. And now you will meet the same fate as any in the Collective. You will die with me here.*

Whatever retort Evant might have had, or even any thought into whether Sith had truly said those words ends with not only the floor above, but several floors and tons of durasteel and other material crashing down upon them. The sounds of thundering destruction rained down from above. Tavyn Sheen and Riesling Pyn fled as hastily as they could, and ultimately seemed unable to gain enough distance but were drawn under the bestial form of the Terentatek *Adrestia* and sheltered from the rubble under her behemoth form. The she-beast was hurt under the falling mass but would likely survive as Tavyn sought to maintain the connection with her favored pet. As the two women made their way out of under the rubble and debris, they became acutely aware of two forms with them. *Sith and Evant must have survived,* Tavyn thought to herself. As she emerged and began to recognize the two forms ahead of her, she shook her head, a slight pout upon her lips. No, these two were neither their Shaevalian ally nor the Deputy Grand Master. They were different.

“Where is the one called the Ghost Dragon?” one of them, a male asked. “Where is Sith Bloodfyre?”

“Where is your Shaevalian friend?” the other was also male.

“If you are here to assault him, you are too late. Good fortune seeking him under the rubble,” Riesling answered, but she was preparing to fight. Tavyn laid a hand upon the forearm of her apprentice.

“Who are you who seek Bloodfyre?” Tavyn prepared for a fight. This was too strange, too ill-timed. *Too perfect a setup,* she thought to herself.

“We are the sons of Bloodfyre,” the first announced, “and we seek an audience with our father.”

“We sensed his presence, and we came to his aid,” the second continued.

Tavyn’s eyes went slightly wider. The two looked nothing like her old friend. As the dust settled, she could see they were easily large and broad-shouldered, which perhaps spoke of a connection to the Shaevalian kind. Yet these were very obviously Rattataki. Their pale skin, hairless heads and tattooed faces spoke of their genetic legacy. Their words rang hollow.

“You are not the sons of the Ghost Dragon,” Tavyn sounded bitter. “You are imposters, and whatever your course of action, I will ensure you are proven false in your accusations.”

“Be at ease, woman,” said the first.

“We are who we say we are,” continued the second, “and if you are a friend of Bloodfyre, then we hold no animosity against you.”

“Sith Bloodfyre may have been in there,” the first announced, “but he is not dead. We would have sensed it.”

“I do not sense him here,” the second turned his face slightly to the first.

“Nor do I sense the other with him,” the first nodded his head.

“Let us leave this place, warrior women,” the two brothers said in unison. “Come; though you trust us not, we should all work together to get free of this carnage.

\* \* \* \* \*

The man was battered and bruised. He felt broken. He was neither agile nor nimble, and was certainly not quick. It had taken days to unearth himself. His pulse was feint, but his heart was strong. His powers had held him onto this plane. He would not meet oblivion under mountains of nothing. He was power. He was force. He was a god. His throne would await him in this life, not the next. And though he had certainly been hurt, he was not crushed. It was hard to tell what had survived underneath the rubble. Who had brought down this place around him? He slowly craned his head upward; it was a struggle. His muscles ached; his bones creaked. He yearned to lay down and sleep once more. He was certain that many days or longer had passed while his body had healed. Yet he would not go back into the cavern, into the coffin of resurrection. That must have been what this was about. Resurrection. Restoration. What had once been was no more. And he would become anew. He was power. His was a beast. He was—

*Who am I?*

The man’s head turned slightly. A name was upon his lips. It had been close to him, and now floated away. So quick had his identity been to flee from him. As though a nimble warrior had flown away on lofty, warm winds. His identity, his name seemed to be leaping away on building tops and deftly leaping across the horizon. It was disconcerting. After a moment to attempt to right himself only to realize that his name, his true self would not so easily return, the injured men became speed – as much as he could, in such an injured state – and left the rubble behind. It was time to find safety and solitude to return to power.

**Reference**

*Sith Bloodfyre*

<https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/character_sheets/11236>

*Tavyn Sheen*

<https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/character_sheets/11528>

*Riesling Pyn*

<https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/character_sheets/11529>

*Evant Taelyan*

<https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/character_sheets/10634>

*Collective Forces* [Hive Mind Marines]

<https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/non_player_characters/781>