

Chapter 1

Kamjin stood silently on the bridge of the *Executor*. Beneath his feet the command deck hummed to the rhythm of the hyperdrive engines. He breathed deep the recycled air and smiled as he exhaled. It had been nearly a decade since he stood on the command deck of an Imperial ship. The familiar sounds of the bridge crew in the pits relaying commands and status updates. Like listening to the familiar ticking of a chronometer it had a measured pace that you could lose yourself in.

As Kamjin drifted in the pleasant energy of the ship, he stared at the pulsing blue-white blur of hyperspace and reflected on the recent string of events.

* * *

Kamjin hunched over the large holoprojector looking up at Shadow, Mauro, Dek, and Sykes. "It doesn't matter what reality is in this situation anymore," he gestured towards the replay of the assassination of Master Burcker of The Republic of the Force. "What they have is enough circumstantial evidence to feed their propaganda machines. In the eyes of their fanciful followers we are guilty."

Shadow frowned as Kamjin rotated the projection to a tactical readout of the TRF most recent military activity. "What's your assessment of their intentions?"

"They're going to attack." Kamjin shifted the view again to a system map of Clan Scholae Palatinae's assets in the quadrant. "The problem is going to be their size. They could easily break down their forces into small hit-and-run squads. We'd be stretched thin trying to protect our territory. By the time we reacted to any given conflict we'd have opened a hole they could punch through."

Mauro gave a low whistle at the assessment, "Recommendations then?"

"One, we're going to need to proactively strike them now and pick a battlefield of our choosing." Kamjin once again scrolled the projector to pull up an overlay of the TRF capital city of Tokare. "If we force them to fight here, we can shatter their supply lines, demoralize their volunteer militia, and put them immediately on the defensive."

Dek and Sykes started reviewing the data that Kamjin had transferred to their datapads. Nodding at each other they turned to the Consul and Proconsul. "Kamjin's plan is tactically sound." Sykes spoke first.

Shadow looked down at the information on her pad as well. Her brow furled in thought as she looked over the carefully woven plan.

"Very well, Kamjin you may proceed." Shadow keyed her approval into the pad and the holoprojector beeped in acknowledgement. "One thing, Kamjin...I want you to take personal command of one of the segments of this plan."

"Yes, Lady Shadow, it shall be done." Kamjin bowed to the Summit leadership and deactivated the projector.

* * *

Kamjin was brought back to the present as his apprentice, Duk, came up besides him. "The ship is ready to commence the operation, Master." The taller Togruta stood proudly in his black and crimson robes. Kamjin knew it was a facade judging by how his apprentice's lekku were twitching. Duk had never served in a military unit and had spent most of his childhood as a slave to the Zygerrians. It wasn't until his teenage years that he was able to free himself with his budding Dark Side powers. Since then he had constantly striven to gain power and project an aura of confidence.

"Excellent," Kamjin turned towards the commanding officer, "Time until arrival?"

"We'll arrive in twenty minutes at current speeds."

"Thank you, Captain. Come on Duk, it's time to brief the boarding party." At this Duk's lekku began to rapidly twitch as he followed behind Kamjin.

* * *

As they entered the briefing room a dozen stormtroopers were dispersed through the room. Kamjin took in the clean aesthetics of their armor. He had briefly been a member of the Hammer's Fist command staff but rarely wore the armor. The one element that caught his eye was the symbol of Clan Scholae Palatinae etched into the left breastplate of each of the troopers. Kit, the sergeant of the squad, noticed them enter and called the squad to attention. The clink of their armor as they snapped into formation and rigidly clasped their helmets by their side gave Duk a momentarily shiver. It reminded him of the clinking of manacles.

"Sir, the squad is ready for inspection!" Kit barked out in crisp Imperial precision.

Kamjin surveyed the team. They were young, strong, and each had been handpicked for this operation.

"At ease," Kamjin responded in kind to Kit. As the squad moved in unison to parade rest. "We're fifteen minutes out from our terminus point. Once we arrive, we'll engage the Marauder Class Corvette and seek to temporarily disable its engines. Once aboard, you'll split into two teams. One will make for the bridge in a show of force to capture the command crew while the other heads towards engineering."

Kamjin turned towards Duk, "Duk, you'll be going with the boarding party and will stay with the team heading towards engineering. You'll split off and splice a terminal along the way and upload our virus." Duk looked momentarily surprised, having not anticipated joining the boarding party. Kamjin continued, ignoring his apprentice, "Once the slice is complete you'll feign being overwhelmed by their forces and stage a staggered and 'chaotic' retreat to your ship before departing."

"Sir, yes, Sir!" the troopers responded in unison.

"This is critical, gentlemen, to our assault on Tokare. If you fail here the rest of this operation will become that much bloodier."

"We'll get it done, Sir!" Kit said with confidence.

Kamjin gave his characteristic smirk, "Kit, I do not doubt it at all. To your stations! We're ten minutes out." The squad clamped their helmets on and rushed to grab their weapons and gear.

"Master, a moment," Duk leaned into Kamjin's ear, "I wasn't expecting to go with the boarding party."

“Oh, I know,” Kamjin casually responded, “That’s why you’re going. You need to be prepared for the unexpected and you will be leading troops one day. I see no reason not to have that start today.” Kamjin put a reassuring hand on Duk’s shoulder. “I know you can do this.” Kamjin gave Duk’s shoulder a comforting squeeze before heading back to the bridge. Duk was left in the empty room. *I can do this*, he thought before rushing after the troopers.

* * *

“Prepare to exit hyperspace on my mark!” the captain stood near the forward view port issuing orders to the crew. Kamjin silently entered and took a position next to the captain.

“Helm, adjust our exit point to point two-seven degrees up angle. Rotation z-axis twelve degrees to starboard.” Kamjin said, speaking down directly at the helmsman.

“Aye, Admiral. Adjusting point two-seven degrees up angle. Z-axis rotation twelve degrees to starboard.” the helmsman answers immediately. Kamjin gave the crew credit they were well disciplined and accepting of his rank. The only sign of apprehension was briefly seen on the captain's face as he took in Kamjin’s orders.

The helm’s status indicator flipped back to green as the helmsman finished entering the new commands. “Return to subluminal speeds.” As the captain gave the order the blue-white tunnel through hyperspace broke apart into separate racing lines of light before reverting back to normal space. Through the viewport there was only the twinkling of the stars.

“Tactical?” the Captain barked as he marched quickly to the holoprojector at the rear of the command deck. Kamjin did not move to join him. He already knew where they were. As the captain approached the projector the shimmering image of the Victory-class Star Destroyer was already hovering in the air. Based upon how they exited hyper space the TRF corvette was positioned perpendicular to the starboard belly of the destroyer. By the time the captain took in the positioning Kamjin was already giving orders to the gunnery crews.

“Starboard dorsal batteries only fire a salvo across the engine blocks. Sectors nine through eleven and fifteen through nineteen.” The crew looked at Kamjin and wondered how he knew these precise coordinates while staring up at the blank starfield.

“Now, if you please,” Kamjin said more firmly. The gunnery crew began issuing orders to the fire control squads and within moments Kamjin could hear the turbolasers begin to issue forth their green fury at the enemy ship.

Reaching out in his mind’s eye Kamjin could see the lancing beams of energy connect with the corvette. Green splashes in the cosmos erupted as the shields absorbed the first wave. As the second and third waves began to connect they flickered before violent explosions began to erupt across the engine mounts.

Chapter 2

“Get emergency crews down to the engine room immediately!”

“Aye, Captain! Engine room reports they’ll need to shut down reactors three through six to contain the fires. We’ll be down to twenty percent power on the remaining reactors.” the panicked voice of the ensign responded.

Captain Trevor coughed through the smoke filling the bridge. Rushing over he checked the tactical display. How had that Victory-class Star Destroyer located them? The answer no

longer mattered, they had found them and needed to be dealt with. Looking at the display it appeared that the ship hadn't been expecting them given how their belly was exposed. A happy accident for him and his crew. "Gunner, bring us around and prepare a salvo on their exposed power supply. Hurry, before they realize they're exposed."

"Aye!" the crew member coughed in response. The ship shuttered as it pulled to port. Consoles around the bridge sputtered sparks and bled up more smoke under the strain. Trevor stared at the tactical display as they began their run. The shots sputtered against the larger ships shields and his heart sank. If those shields held true they'd be done for in moments.

"Full left rudder, bring us around to starboard and hit them with the dorsal cannons!" Trevor shouted above the alarm klaxons.

"Sir, engineering strongly advises us to refrain from complex maneuvers."

"No response," Trevor watched as the ship slowly rotated and reversed course on the tactical display. "Hold fire until my order!"

Painful seconds ticked by as the ship shuttered and shook into its new course. Another series of shots connected with the small corvette as the Victory-class ship's turbolasers found their mark. Trevor's head connected with the display and a loud crack could be heard. His vision blurred as he felt blood gushing down his face into his eye. He refused to lose his focus as they came into position.

"FIRE!"

The dorsal cannons rang off in unison. Their brilliant tangerine laser bolts shooting upwards at the primary reactor. Trevor's heart sank as the first round were again diffused across the shields. But then, there was an explosion. Followed by another and another. Something had happened and the shields had fallen. Explosions could be seen on the display erupting from the larger ship and its guns fell silent.

"We got'em sir!" the gunner cried out in relief from his position.

"Sir, engineering reports they have to shut down all reactors immediately to prevent a breach!" the ensign cut in moments before the bridge went dark. As the eerie red glow of the emergency lights illuminated their faces as they heard the dying sounds of the reactors shutting down.

"Time till restart?" Trevor inquired.

"Deputy Engineer Riek indicates at least thirty minutes."

"Riek?" Trevor sounded concerned.

"The engineer is now one with the Force. We need to prepare to be boarded." A shadowy cloaked figure stepped onto the bridge.

Trevor lowered his head, "She is one with the Force and the Force is with me." The rest of the bridge crew muttered the same response following Trevor's lead.

"Captain, prepare to be boarded." the figure ominously spoke before rushing off the bridge.

* * *

Trevor quickly walked the corridors checking on the barricades that had been hastily assembled. Against the crew complement of that Star Destroyer they had a small chance of repelling boarders. As he was making his way back to the bridge Ensign Ami caught up to him.

“Sir, sensors are barely functioning but we’ve confirmed visually there’s only one transport that’s been dispatched to board us.”

Trevor stopped and looked at her with surprise in his face. It was mirrored in her round, baby-face, soot covered face. *Why only one transport? Did we deal them a more serious blow when we took out their reactor?* “Then the Force is with us today. Quickly, let’s get back to the bridge and ensure it’s sealed.”

As they rushed off towards the bridge the cloaked figure moved unheard through the noise. Slipping into a utility corridor he paused. His head slowly turned facing back towards the airlock the captain had just left.

“It couldn’t be?” a male voice muttered into space before disappearing into the shadows.

* * *

“She’s adrift,” the captain reported from the holoprojector. Kamjin turned and joined the captain by the display.

“Engineering reports the plasma venting resulted in a spectacular explosive event.” the captain beamed despite not knowing it had been part of Kamjin’s plan.

“Excellent, Captain. Please inform engineering to continue to cycle power outages throughout the ship. Let’s make this convincing to our prey.”

A console beeped and the captain rushed past Kamjin to open the channel, eager to show his ability to contribute to the fight. “Go ahead.”

“Umm...Kamjin, the boarding party is ready to depart at your command.” Duk’s momentary hesitation at hearing someone that Kamjin was lost to the captain.

“You may commence your oper...” he was silenced by Kamjin raising his hand. Kamjin turned and faced off into the distance. The captain grew concerned when Kamjin didn’t speak for several moments. “Admiral, are you...”

“Duk, have the troopers pull a suit of armor for me. I’m joining the boarding party.”

“Yes, Sir,” Duk quickly responded. The captain heard Duk issuing orders to Kit to pull another suit of stormtrooper armor on the double but couldn’t comprehend what was happening.

“Admiral...wouldn’t it be more prudent for you to remain with the ship during this delicate operation?”

Kamjin snapped back to reality shooting out his hand and clenched his fist. The captain’s hands flew to his throat, gasping for air. Kamjin stepped closer to the captain lifting his hand higher as the captain’s feet left the ground.

“No, Captain. I do not think it would be prudent.” Kamjin’s eyes flared with the characteristic Sith yellow-red glow. As the captain began to turn purple Kamjin dropped his hand. The captain crumpled to the ground. Sucking in deep breaths before wrenching.

Kamjin turned to one of the shocked junior officers, “Remind him when he gets up that we’re to drift until I return. No offensive action is to be taken.” Kamjin glared down at the captain, “And Captain, never question me on the bridge.”

* * *

Duk stared in awe at Kamjin as he changed into the supplied stormtrooper armor. "Master, did I displease you in my preparations for this operation?"

Kamjin huffed as he sucked in to click the chestplate into position. "It has nothing to do with you Duk." He let his breath out and twisted his torso, "Did these get smaller or am I still slightly out of shape?"

Duk noticed none of the troopers moved their heads to respond to Kamjin's leading comment. Kamjin was finishing attaching his belt and checking the E-11 blaster in the holster when he responded, "No, Duk. This has nothing to do with you. I...felt a presence I want to investigate."

Duk paused and reached out himself. He felt the tension in the troopers before the op commenced kept in check by the control drilled into them from their training. Seeking further he savored the panic pulsing like waves off the TRF ship. He lingered there as it fueled his growing power. Yet, he didn't feel anything unexpected.

"Master, I don't sense anything unexpected from the ship."

"It's okay, Duk, I don't expect you to." Kamjin picked up his helmet and locked it into place. "When we board the ship, you stick to the plan."

"Master, what will you be doing?"

"I'll be sticking to my plan." And though Duk couldn't see it he knew Kamjin was smirking under his helmet.

The lights went out as the red lights came on. Duk knew this was the signal that they would be breaching the hull soon. Duk looked at the troopers and wondered if he should say something. He'd never led troops into battle like this before. Personal vendettas and coordinating logistics were vastly different than preparing to die with someone. Suddenly his mouth felt very dry as his lekku began to twitch again.

Clearing his throat, he began, "Men." As the troopers snapped to attention and focused on him he was at a loss for words. *What was I going to say? Something impactful...something meaningful*, he thought frantically for the words. Kamjin always made this look easy. "We all know the plan. When the pressure seal clears we'll load our breaching charges..." *Oh sith, they know this*. Duk was caught on auto-pilot reciting the whole operation as the troopers, dutiful to the last, remained at attention.

Kamjin patted Duk on the shoulder and saved him from further embarrassment. "Troopers, you know the objective as Duk was clarifying." Duk gave a quick series of nods in appreciation for the token Kamjin was giving him. "This is a simple op with a complicated adversary. They're fanatics and they won't be making sane decisions once pressed in battle. Stick to your team, cover each other's backs, and the first ones back drink with me tonight!"

A resounding chorus of "Hoorah!" rose up from the troopers as they drew their blasters. The breaching team moved forward and began setting up their explosives.

"You'll get them next time, Duk." Kamjin pulled out his own blaster and cycled it into burst mode.

"Master, why are you using a blaster?" He never got an answer to his question as the transport shook as it made contact with the hull of the corvette. The transport doors on their ship slid open exposing the external airlock as the breach team moved like precision craftsmen attaching their charges. The troopers moved to the back of the deck as the breach team held up

their hand. As it dropped the explosives began their snaking path of burning through the hull. Duk grasped his lightsaber and drank deep the fear on the other side of the airlock.

* * *

“Hold your fire!” Covar was shaking but tried to make his voice sound commanding. He knew the Force was with them. He’d heard it his whole life. Through the Force all things were possible. No one truly is gone; they just become part of the Force. His mother had been drawn to the TRF after his father had died. He was too young then to remember him but he remembered the healers of the TRF throughout his childhood teaching him of the living Force and how, even if you couldn’t feel it, that it was there.

Now he found himself in command of this barricade to protect their ship from the oppression of the Palatinaeans. He’d hold this line and force them back. He’d be the hero his mother always expected him to be. As the airlock lit up as the breaching charges began to chew through the door Covar wet himself in fear.

Within moments the door forcefully exploded inwards. Pieces of the door narrowly missing his head and tearing the head off poor Tika. Her body stood awkwardly before the smoke from the explosion obscured his vision. Then the blaster fire began. Erupting out of the smoke red darts of super-charged gas lanced through the hallway. Around him his friends began to fall and they had not yet returned to fire. This was his moment. He had to do something.

“Fi...FIRE!” he screamed at last. As his valiant team began to return fire he was left trying to figure out where to shoot. As precision fire continued to take out his team he would wildly attempt to return fire in the same direction.

“Hold the line!” he coughed out as the smoke became denser. Then he loss heart. Emerging from the airlock was a massive creature. Clothed all in black and in his hand a crimson red laser sword. He’d seen the Jedi of the TRF practice with him and he had always felt uneasy around their humming energy blades. Seeing this twisted bloody blade simmering in front of him overwhelmed any notion of heroics. “Fall back! Quickly now, we’ve gotta get out of here!”

“No, we have to hold the line!” Ravonitic chastised Covar as he jumped over the barricades. He rushed towards the borders, his blaster locked in full automatic overheating in his hands. Covar couldn’t look away as the dark shadow twirled his blade. The blaster bolts went wild in the corridor causing bulkheads and panels to shower sparks down into the fog of battle. As Ravonitic came within striking distance a blur of strokes sliced through him. His momentum carried the lifeless chunks of his body past the featureless beast to rest against the floor.

The figure began to advance as troopers began to move in formation through the hallways towards their position. Covar grabbed hold of the person next to him, “We’ve gotta go!” But the person was already gone. Covar dropped him and sprinted back to the fall back position.

* * *

Duk barely noticed the chunks of what once was a person fly past him. Kamjin had been right. They were fanatics but if they were going to be foolish they'd soon all be dead fanatics.

"Kit, they're falling back. Bring up the rest of your troopers." Duk could see the breaching team continuing their regimented advance. They had already reached the barricades that the remaining TRF crew members had abandoned.

"Sir, we've secured our breach point. TK-23134 and TK-93204 hold this position until we return." Kit pulled out a mini holoprojector and brought up the schematics of the ship. "Team one will begin advancing towards the bridge while Team two heads towards engineering." He zoomed in on a section two-thirds of the way to the engineering room. "This is where you'll be able to slice into their computer system without being noticed. TK-49056 will accompany you."

Duk nodded, the smoke having begun to clear enough to see each other clearly. He patted the pouch on his belt making sure the slicing rod was still with him. "Fifteen minutes to complete our objectives and get back before they should have power restored."

Kamjin walked past Duk without stopping, "That was just an estimate. Assume they'll do better."

"Master, where are you going?" Duk called after his Master. Kamjin gave him a dismissing wave of his hand before turning sharply down a service corridor and disappearing.

"Does that happen often?" Kit asked.

"You have no idea what it's been like." Duk sighed. "Come on, let's move quickly. If he thinks they'll be ready sooner he's probably right."

Duk and Team two separated from Team one at the split in the corridor heading aft. Duk was surprised that there was so little resistance after they passed the first barricade. As they ran through the ship the clank of their booted feet echoed in contrast with the blaring klaxons. Soon enough they reached the access point Duk needed to slice. TK-49056 took up a defensive position, crouching down and blaster rifle at the ready behind Duk. The rest of the team continued on towards the engineer bay. Moments later they heard the exchange of blaster fire as Team two encountered the TRF's next defensive position.

Alright...just like the briefing, Duk thought as he carefully removed the panel. He withdrew the code cylinder from his pouch and froze. "Where's the access port?" a touch of panic in his voice. There were bundles of wires, flashing circuit boards, and more electronics than Duk could name. Casually he began moving wires around, hoping that he just missed the access port. As he failed to find one his actions became more frantic.

Elsewhere the blaster fire had picked up in intensity. Team two would have dug into a position to feign that they were held down and that would cause the fighting to intensify. Duk knew he was running out of time.

"Sir, has the slice finished?" TK-49056 inquired looking up from his position. Duk didn't respond as he put the code cylinder into his mouth and began pulling out circuit boards to find the port.

"Sir!" TK-49056 holstered his blaster and sprang to his feet, "if you do that they'll recognize that we were here." He grabbed the circuit board from Duk's hands and inserted it back into position. "Sir, give me the cylinder and I'll get this spliced." Duk spat out the cylinder into the trooper's hand and stepped back. "Sir, for these older corvette you have to slice into the wiring," the trooper explained as he pulled out a bundle of wires and began attaching them to the cylinder. Duk watched as the trooper spliced the wires into the cylinder's access ports.

Seconds after the connection was made the cylinder hummed to life, spinning and blinking as it downloaded its program.

The blaster fire was now interrupted by explosions. Something important must have been hit. Soon the team will begin their faux retreat. TK-49056 watched as the cylinder completed its process and then disconnected it. Stuffing the wires back into their original location he picked up the access panel and replaced it.

"We're good to go, Sir..." was the last words he uttered as he sputtered and looked down to see a crimson blade sticking up into his chest.

"Well done, trooper. But no one needs to know that I wasn't able to complete this assignment." Duk's voice dripped with contempt. As the trooper breathed his last breaths and began to slump Duk extinguished his blade. Replacing it on his belt he pulled out his comlink.

"Kit, we're done here. Begin your retreat," he looked down at the remains of the trooper, "Be careful. We engaged a Jedi and TK-49056 is dead. I managed to fight him off."

"Understood, we'll be on the lookout," Kit's voice responded. Duk began to turn off the comlink and then asked, "Have you heard from Kamjin?"

* * *

Where is it? I know I felt something here and it's...familiar. Why can't I focus on it? Kamjin had managed to avoid most of the firefight as Team one advanced on the bridge. The comlink in his helmet relayed a constant stream of updates as each team progressed. Apparently Team one was having the harder time of it as the original defenders of the corvette had met up with them and fortified their position. Whereas Team two was progressing unmolested.

Kamjin rounded a corner and found his way blocked by a series of pipes. Stepping closer he was able to see beyond a compartment that housed several wounded TRF members. One in particular was babbling incoherently. Kamjin grinned under his helmet, *If this is the best the TRF has then this operation is going to be easier than I imagined.* He lingered a moment to assess the damage done and then he saw him. A cloaked figure that somehow felt familiar and yet distant at the same time. He wore the rough spun brown cloak of a Jedi. The overlarge hood hanging low over his face.

He watched as this Jedi bent low next to the muttering invalid and placed his right hand upon his forehead. The Jedi leaned closer and Kamjin felt the outpouring of energy from him. The Jedi stood and looking around the room he shook his head and began to leave.

Kamjin needed to get to him yet for some unknown reason felt he shouldn't reveal his power nor his lightsaber. *Sithspit, this'll take too long.* Kamjin reached behind him and pulled off the standard issue grenade. Thumbing the activation timer he wedged it into the piping and retreated behind the corner.

7...6...5...it's going to take too long. Kamjin's impatience got the better of him as he reached out, found the trigger mechanism and clicked it over early. The corridor shook from the explosion and Kamjin heard the metal clank as the pipes hit the far wall. The previous groans of pain from the injured crew members crescendoed into desperate pleas for help. Pulling his blaster he rushed into the room. His helmet doing its best to filter out the individuals in the smoke filled room. Whipping his head back and forth he searched for the Jedi. He spotted the

ends of his cloak as the Jedi escaped through the hatch. Kamjin went to pursue him when he got the confirmation that the slice was completed. He began to step over the bodies when Duk's voice came over the comlink. "Kamjin, we're beginning to pull back. Where are you."

Kamjin didn't pause as he continued to work his way over the debris towards the door. "Kamjin, Team two and I are already on the transport. Team one is five minutes out. You have to come now or you'll be left behind." Kamjin looked at the door and thought about being left behind for a moment. He scowled as he turned back. Looking down he saw the injured crew member that the Jedi had helped. Kamjin reached down and grasped him by the collar. Pulling him up from the ground Kamjin pulled him to face level. "Who was that Jedi?"

The man coughed up blood, "I...don't know."

Kamjin reached out pressing into the man's mind, shattering his willpower. "Who is **the jedi?!**"

"I don't know," the man cried in pain, "they joined up with us a while back."

"They're not with the TRF?"

"No, they've just been sheltering with us. Said something about being on the run from the Imperial Remnant." The man's tears smeared his dirty face as he pleaded, "Please...help me?"

Kamjin tightened his grip, crushing his windpipe as he dropped him to the ground. Kamjin looked back one more time and then rushed to the transport ship. Lying on the ground, struggling to breath, Covar wished he had been able to be a hero.

* * *

"Status report?" the captain inquired to the young ensign.

"The boarders have retreated and separated from the hall. We've sealed off that section and repressurized the surrounding area."

"Very good," pressing the com button the captain keyed into engineering. "How're we looking down there?"

"Reactors are coming back online now. We probably have only one jump in us though."

"That'll do. Ensign, set course for Tokare immediately! We can land in the capital and get repairs and unload our injured."

The door hissed open and the Jedi came onto the bridge. Pulling back his hood he revealed the boyish face of elder teenager. His mopyy sandy-brown hair damp with sweat. His deep brown eyes found the captains, "We have to go right now. Everyone in Tokare is in great danger."

"Sir, incoming communication from Tokare. They're indicating a Palatinaean fleet has arrived and is forming a blockade," the ensigned whirled around with fear in her eyes.

"Set course for Tokare and jump immediately!"

Chapter 3

Shadow stood on the command deck of the Imperial-Star Destroyer *Palpatine*. She tugged absently at the purple velvet robes she was wearing. She would have been more comfortable in her usual black armor but Mauro had recommended a more ceremonial look for

the Empress as they formed their blockade. In orbit around them the *Harbinger*, *Subjugator*, *Devastator*, and *Arbitrator* and their various support craft were forming up the blockade over the capital city of the TRF.

“Empress, communication from the *Executor*. Mission is complete and we should expect them momentarily.”

“Very good, Commander.” Shadow smiled as the plan continued to proceed on pace. She turned and looked at the mad dash of space traffic around the TRF capital planet. Most of the craft were turning to return to port but a few foolish ships attempted to run the partially completed blockade. Shadow’s eyes widened as the ships exploded. Struck by the precision fire of her ships.

ProConsul Mauro joined Shadow on the observation deck. “Their planetary shield is powering up and the last of the fleeing ships are landing.”

“You can commence the bombardment.” Shadow didn’t turn away as she gave the order. Mauro turned and snapped at the gunnery crew who began to coordinate their activities with the other ships.

From the planet surface it appeared to begin raining as the clouds parted and streaks of energy cascaded across the planetary shield. The thunderous echo of explosions deflects shattered windows across the cityscape. Shadow just saw the diffused energy splattering against the defenses of the TRF.

“Empress, we have incoming,” the communication officer sounded off. “Appears to be a marauder class corvette. They’re attempting to breach the blockade.”

“Get me Talon,” Shadow commanded.

“Bringing him up now, Empress.”

The static crackled as Talon Jade began to speak, “I read you, Empress.” Shadow looked out and caught sight of Talon’s TIE Defender leading a squadron of fighters between the Star Destroyers.

“Talon, I need you to harass that corvette but allow it to make its way through.”

“Say again...harass but allow through?”

“You hear me, Kamjin has something special in mind.”

The bridge echoed with Talon’s laughter. “If Kamjin has something special in mind then I’ll let it through. It’ll be worth it to see what he’s got planned.”

The channel clicked off as the formation of TIE Defenders banked and dove down towards the racing corvette. With skills only honed by Sith enhancement the TIE Defenders’ shots found root on the ship. The birthing branches of escaping gas and atmosphere looked dazzling to the eyes but ultimately left the ship fully operational. As the ship hit the atmosphere the TIE Defenders broke off their pursuit to avoid the ground based defense lasers.

Ignoring any form of standard reentry flames shot around the corvette as it raced through the sky before approaching the shield. A masterful set of mechanical engineering allowed for a small portal to be opened allowing the ship inside the protective barrier.

“Empress, incoming ship. It’s the *Executor*.”

“Good, Kamjin’s finally made it to the party.” Shadow and Mauro turned and walked to the holoprojector. Before she could even issue the order to raise Kamjin the projector shimmered to life. The bluish hued image of Kamjin and his apprentice appeared above the projection table.

"I'm taking a contingent of troops to the surface." Kamjin's voice was matter of fact. *Where's his usual witty banter*, Shadow thought to herself as she shared a look with Mauro. Judging by Mauro's returned stare he was equally taken aback.

"Why?" was the best Shadow could muster in response to the Elder.

"I have found...someone on that ship. A Jedi that I need to confront."

"Kamjin, there's a planet full of Jedi. What's so special about this one?" Mauro was quicker to react now.

"I...don't know. Yet I will be taking a detachment to the surface." Kamjin glared at the two Summit members. Unwavering in his commitment to his course of action.

"We have time to discuss this. It'll take a while to bring the shield down." Shadow responded as Kamjin cut her off. This was indeed uncharacteristic of his behavior and Shadow was growing annoyed.

"Actually, they should be coming down...Duk, hand me that datapad...now," Kamjin pointed finger from the holoprojector, causing Shadow and Mauro to turn around. By the time their head had pivoted around the shield began to recede and their bombardment fell true onto the cityscape. Buildings began to crumble and landscaping caught fire. The surface began to glow as fires spread across the land. Explosions shot debris high into the atmosphere as the Star Destroyers found the defense batteries and their munition ignited. The shockwave took out nearby equipment.

Mauro smiled at the destruction. "Cease fire and return to station keeping. All crews are to prevent any ships from escaping from the surface."

Shadow turned back to face Kamjin, "Very well, Adept. You may begin your landing."

* * *

"Captain, we're almost to the docking platform. Fire crews are on standby." the ensign's hair had fallen loosely around her face as she maintained control of the ship.

"Just get us down." the captain turned to look at their young Jedi. "Alright, lak, are we in the clear?" The Jedi's eyes were closed in an attempt to look undisturbed by their current plight. He was moderately successful in that the younger crew members were in awe yet the captain saw through it immediately.

"We're through the shields. But they will be coming after all of us," lak put on his best attempt to sound mature. "You are going to have to fight."

The captain rubbed his chin at that prospect. The TRF was prepared to make quite a stand. Looking out the viewport he noticed the defensive batteries primed and ready to return fire at any ships foolish enough to approach within their range. As they glided towards the docking platform he looked at the buildings and wondered how many people were still trying to go about their lives while life and death was parked in the skies above the planet.

"No, lak. We can't fight this battle and win. We have to retreat." The captain sighed as he slumped into his chair. He was getting too old for this same old song and dance.

"Captain!" lak rushed to his side and leaned over. His face was full of youthful energy and certainty. "You have a significant force present. The shield will hold for a considerable time for you to muster your forces and break their blockade."

The captain ignored him as they were on final approach. "Ensign, kick in the respolifters and swing us forty-five degrees to port." The ensign seamlessly executed the commands. As the ship swung around she checked her monitor screens to zero in on the platform. This simple act calmed her in a way she hadn't felt since the moment the Star Destroyer had first appeared. With a flourish of keystrokes she brought the landing gear down and the ship settled gently on the platform.

"Excellent job, Ami," taking a moment to recognize her by name. "Let's get the ship hooked up and download the information we obtained during the battle and begin refueling. Someone tell engineering to try and finish their patch works. We're going to need to leave quickly."

Ami rushed to carry out the commands. The captain stood and walked off the bridge to inspect the damage to his ship. lak followed alongside him. "Captain, this isn't the time to think of evacuation. I know the Palatinaean's. They're not going to let you escape."

The captain spoke absentmindedly to the youth, "And tell me again how you know them? Last I knew you were a refugee that was given some leave to learn more about us. What makes you so special?"

lak didn't have a good response to him, "It's a feeling. Call it a hunch in the Force."

"I never much cared for the Force giving glimpses of the future. I had a Jedi once tell me that I was going to meet the love of my life in a bar."

"Captain, I thought you were married." lak looked puzzled.

"Of course I'm married...who said anything about being in love." The captain's laughter seemed to lift the spirits of the crewmembers nearby as they approached the boarding ramp.

"Captain, that's...ugh...this is serious. You have to comm the defense force to prepare to attack."

Suddenly a dockyard worker came rushing up to the captain. The captain stepped off the ramp and raised up a hand to slow him down. "What is it, son?"

"Sir, there's something odd in the ship's logs. Were your computer systems damaged in the fight?"

"No, the borders were stopped before they reached any critical systems."

A voice started screaming from the platform data terminal, "Shut it down! SHUT IT DOWN!! **SHUT IT DOWN!!**"

Before the captain or lak could take in why he was screaming an eerie sound overcame them. Looking up they saw the shield begin to retreat back to the shield generators. *It was a trap. The computers were infected. That's why they retreated so soon.* lak's stomach dropped as he ignited his lightsaber. Leaping forward several meters to the data cable he brought his blade slashing down severing the cable. But it was too late. The shields were down and the Palatinaean's turbolasers began to tear through the city like a hot blade through softened butter.

"Captain...we need to evacuate now." Then he began to sprint off the platform.

"Where are you going?" the captain called after him.

"I need to make sure my brothers are safe!"

* * *

Duk stood silently besides Kamjin in the cramped head of the AT-AT. Having just exited the deployment pod, Duk was busy taking in the readouts of the other armored attack transports forming up on their position. He hadn't seen his master like this before; silent. Kamjin was always talking, sometimes to his own detriment. Yet ever since his return from the corvette he was reserved and withdrawn. The troops were feeling it too, yet seemed to take it as part of the importance of their mission.

Kamjin reached over the pilot and entered in new coordinates. Duk tried to see what he was doing but it still looked like jargon to him and he didn't want to raise any suspicions about his knowledge. The image of the off-kiltered helmet of trooper TK-49056 flashed in his mind. *Fool, I was going to try that next*, he thought as he scowled at the memory.

A beep sounded and Duk activated his comlink listening to the message. "Master, Mauro wants to know why you're deviating from your defense posuring?"

Kamjin looked back at Duk, "Tell Mauro to trust me."

Duk tried to hide his glaring eyes from Kamjin. *Why do I always have to send these types of messages to the Summit*. Exhaling, Duk keyed on the comm, "Master Kamjin is engaged with the pilot at the moment. He's indicating that the situation is well in hand, thank you."

He grimaced, *thank you? What am I thinking?*

"Inform Kamjin we expect the route from the landing zone to the city to be secured within the next half hour."

"Aye, umm...Roger, ProConsul." Duk switched off the comm and threw it on the console. *Next time I'm letting Kamjin talk to you*.

Kamjin tapped the pilot on the helmet and pointed slightly to the right, "There it is. That cluster of trees on the slight mound."

"Roger, setting coordinates," the pilot responded

Speaking to the copilot, Kamjin continued, "Notify the Units four through seven to concentrate fire with us. Units two, three, and eight are to aim twenty-three degrees to the left of that position."

The copilot began cascading the orders to the other AT-ATs. Duk looked at the mound and wondered what was so impressive about it. It looked like the type of place his former owners would have wanted to picnic on the otherwise bright day. He suddenly hated the mound with a deep rooted and unexplainable rage. His desire for its destruction was exceeded by reality. As the AT-ATs massive cannons roared to life and their destructive bolts of energy connected instead of dirt exploding outward a massive energy explosion occurred.

"Master, what was that?"

Turning back to smirk at his apprentice, Duk was relieved to see a glimpse of the usual Kamjin. "That, my apprentice, was a Force illusion. Watch closely."

Duk continued to look beyond the settling explosion as several landspeeders began to flee the location before being mowed down by the repeating blasters of units two, three, and eight.

"Who were they?" Duk was impressed but not surprised. Kamjin had a knack for these sorts of things.

"Those were the Jedi positioned at this defense location. Hidden under that illusion were their anti-tank cannons which would have caused us a bit of a challenge. This is the flaw of the

Jedi. If they had attacked the moment we were in rage they'd have slowed our assault. Instead, they wanted to see if we would stop before entering the city."

"Then we have them, Master." Duk's enthusiasm showed through.

"No, these are fanatics. While this will open the door we'll find walking through it will still be difficult."

* * *

lak raced off the platform heading towards the platform command center. The platform was already in a panic. Somehow it had managed not to be hit in the bombardment but the city was afire and wanton destruction surrounded him. Shoving past several deckhands lak burst into the building.

"Hey, you're not allowed in here" one of the security personnel shouted as he approached lak.

lak shot out his hand and sent him flying backwards. Rummaging through the console he found a local comlink and keyed in his brother's frequency.

"Who is this?" came the voice over the speaker.

"It's your brother. Where are you?" lak shouted overjoyed that he was still alive.

"When did you get back?"

"This isn't the time for that. Where are you?" lak pressed urgently.

"Trying to get to the wee one. I heard the bombardment was near the school and there's already TIE Reapers in the air dropping jet-troopers."

"I'm on my way to meet you." lak said as his brother cut back in.

"We'll meet you by escape route," there was a long pause.

"Escape route Kilo-Alpha-Mu?" lak prompted

There was an even longer pause before the reply came, "Yes."

lak knew this day would come and they had prepared for it. Never staying in one place for too long. Spending time near this many Jedi, and fanatics at that, wasn't one of their better ideas. Why had Gathe suggested it in the first place. Thankfully Mom was off planet and that was one less person to try and rescue.

lak rushed out of the center and hopped to the ground. Cushioning his fall he landed near several parked speeders. In the panic most people nearby were rushing towards the ship and were avoiding group transportation. lak seized the opportunity and grabbed the nearest one for himself. Settling onto the floating bike he grasped the handlebars and kicked the clutch over. Revving the throttle he spun the bike out and raced off into the city.

The roads were covered with rubble and he found himself pulling back on the handlebars often to hop the bike over the debris. Fires blocked his preferred path and he kicked out his foot, scraping the ground as he muscled the bike down an alleyway. Rocketing out the other side lak leapt from the bike moments before it exploded.

Somersaulting through the air, he drew his lightsaber before landing to the ground. Holding the blade with two hands he parried several blaster bolts sending them back towards his attackers. His blue blade glowed against the smoke darkening the sky. A small squad of jet-troopers were approaching his position. lak quickly assessed there wasn't a Sith amongst them since they all wore the same armor and jet packs. Smirking he sprinted, faster than the

bare eye could follow. A series of quick sweeps side to side nicked the fuel pods on their jetpacks. Stopping some forty meters away he turned back in time to see each the troopers jetpacks ignite and send them careening off in random directions before exploding.

Looking around for another transport he was surprised by a descending figure from one of the burned out buildings. Clad in dark robes he stood as a twisted reflection of the young Jedi. The ignited crimson blade rumbled with a low ominous sound in construct to lak's own blade that seemed to sign with the living Force.

lak raised his blade in the nick of time as the Sith crashed blades with him. A series of jabs pushed him back against the rumble. As the Sith raised his blade for the killing stroke lak kicked out, catching the Sith by surprise in his gut. As the Sith stumbled back his hood gave way and lak saw the Sith couldn't have been much older than him.

"You don't have to do this. You can turn away from the Dark Side," lak pleaded.

"Why would I," the sneering Sith responded, "You would do better to join us. Look around, your city burns, your people scream in pain, all that awaits you here is death."

lak lunged forward slashing at the Sith only to find his blade parried. Back and forth they danced their blades in the ruined streets. A testament to their youth they navigated the rubble like kids on a playground. Swinging off plastisteel poles and slashing at each other's heads or ducking into the rubble to hide before popping back out to attack.

The battle continued on for what felt like an eternity. Off in the distance the sound of AT-ATs could be heard approaching the city and the outer defenses giving way. The two combatants squared off against each other again. lak's mopy hair plastered to his skull with sweat. The Sith's close cropped hair showed glistening beads of sweat pouring down.

The Sith feinted a lunge and as lak stepped back to avoid it the Sith dropped his saber and stretched out his hands. Lightning arced out uncontrolled and uncontained by the novice Sith. lak's lightsaber was knocked aside and he reached out both hands attempting to contain the raging electrical storm. A glowing ball of lightning began to gather.

"Give in you foolish Jedi. You can't beat me," the Sith had become manical with power. "Once I'm done with you then I'll go after the rest of your pathetic lot. First all your Jedi friends and then your family."

A dark storm suddenly sprang forth in lak. A guttural "NO" was hollered as lak sent the ball of energy hurling back at the Sith. Arcs of lightning following from lak's finger tips amplifying the energy wave that struck the Sith. As the energy washed over him the Sith screamed in terror as he skin began to melt and his face wrinkled. To lak it felt like forever but in reality it was mere seconds before the Sith's lifeless corpse dropped to the ground.

"No...No...not again," lak cried as he shook his head violently from side to side. Turning he raced off on foot no longer fleeing the Palatinaean's but fleeing what he had done.

* * *

Kamjin and Duk had dismounted from the AT-AT at the edge of the city. The AT-ATs were continuing a steady pace further into the city to ensure a route to the capital was secured. Kamjin and Duk were exiting a bunker where they had just finished clearing an underground network of TRF troopers waiting to catch the Palatinaean's rear guard.

"Master, I really wish you would stop shooting lightning in doors." Duk's lekku were twitching uncontrollably.

"Duk, you really need to learn to sense what I'm about to do. If you could get the hang of that you'd be far less likely to be zapped." Kamjin slapped the young Togruta on the back. As their eyes adjusted to the light they saw a lambda class shuttle landing near them and several transports being unloaded by the Praetorian Guard. Duk was in awe of the gleaming red armor. Kamjin sensed his eagerness and dismissed him to go talk with the guardsmen as they offloaded. As Duk raced off he turned back to the shuttle and scowled. *What are they doing here?*

By the time Kamjin reached the shuttle the boarding ramp was descended and the Summit was exiting the ship. Kamjin bowed to the Empress, now dressed more comfortably in her black armor, "Empress, what brings you to the battlefield?"

"I dislike being removed from the fight. It seems so...hands off." Shadow purred at Kamjin's inquiry while Dek and Xantros frowned. "Oh, and there were some mild concerns about risking one of our founders on a mission beneath their standing."

Kamjin quickly assessed Dek and Xantros were the ones raising a concern and it definitely wasn't about him being a founder. More likely it had to do with his time away from the Clan and his insistence on leading this assault personally.

"I serve at your pleasure, as always. The Clan comes first and while I was one of the founders I assure you if I had to sacrifice myself to bring our Clan greater glory I would."

Duk approached flanked by the ten Praetorian Guards assigned to the Empress, "Master, they've unloaded all the transports and are ready to advance into the city."

"Thank you, Acolyte," Xantros intervened. His pale blue skin and red eyes staring into Duk. "There will be no need for that. You and Kamjin are to establish our forward operating base at this location and secure the second wave of the assault."

Duk turned to Kamjin shocked at what he was hearing. Yet, Kamjin was miles away seeing the fight of the young Jedi in his mind's eye. *I know that power. I've felt it before*, Kamjin felt it deep in his bones that he'd experienced that same reaction in his past. Turning towards the guardsmen he spoke in an enchanted voice, "Qui excitat dormientem de draconis?"

The Praetorian snapped to attention, responding in unison, "Ignem sibilus."

"Imperat tibi draconis."

"Et est dicendum, quod vocatio draconis." With that response the Kamjin raced towards the transports. The Praetorian Guard following after. Before the Summit could react, such was their stunned expressions, Kamjin and the guardsmen were racing into the city.

"Acolyte, what was that?" Dek pressed Duk for an answer.

"You...don't know?" Duk looked back at the Summit members suddenly aware that he knew something they didn't.

"Acolyte, if we knew we certainly wouldn't be asking you. Now would we?" Xantros snorted back in disgust.

"My Master has been teaching it to me. It's one of the ancient Sith languages. The Praetorian Guard are still trained in the old ways since the founding of the Clan to be fiercely loyal and follow the commands not only of the Summit but also those of the founders. Specifically the founding members of House Acclivis Draco."

"What did he say?" Mauro asked Duk calmly.

“He summoned the Dragon,” and Duk looked off after his master, “And if he summoned them he expects to burn all in his path.”

“Duk, please go after him and keep an eye on your Master. I don’t want him harmed in whatever quest he is on.” Shadow said it softly enough but Duk knew there was frustration underlying it.

As Duk rushed off to get a transport to follow after Dek and Xantros converged on Shadow. “He is a wildcard we cannot afford. Not at this stage.” Dek offered.

Xantros continued, “He could be a great asset but if he continues in this manner he is going to have to be dealt with.”

Shadow and Mauro nodded as they considered what it meant to the Clan hierarchy to continue to have a founder acting loosely as a Clans member and not a member of the ruling class.

Chapter 4

The wind whistled in Kamjin’s ears as they skimmed into the city. Shouting to be heard he turned to the lead Guardsmen, “What were your orders?”

“The Empress wanted us to advance and capture the docking platform with the corvette you boarded. She wants no evidence to remain that we tampered with their shields. She wants the population to believe our ships were able to blast through the shield with our own might.”

“A solid plan. Why did she bring all ten of you?”

“There’s a contingent of Jedi that’s assisting with the evacuation. It appears that ship is going to be one of the main evac ships. We’re to clear any Jedi resistance and capture the ship and platform.”

“I’ll drop you off about half a klick from their battleline and then I’ll need to divert to my target.”

“As you command, Sir!”

Kamjin took over the controls and accelerated the transport faster. Spinning through the newly created arcways of fallen buildings Kamjin treated the transport like a starfighter. Banking high against walls to bounce over the shattered remains of the once thriving metropolis. As they neared the evacuation point if Kamjin had been less focused on getting to his prey he might have sensed the laser wires concealed in the rubble.

A series of explosions rocked the transport causing Kamjin to slam the controls hard to turn into the skid. Crashing to the ground laser fire erupted from various blown out windows of the buildings. Recovering immediately Kamjin ignited his blades, the blood red and blue blades mixed into a purple haze as they deflected blaster fire. The guardsmen were true to their training and formed up activating personal shields to protect the snipers in the middle of their formation.

Slowly they made progress in locating and sniping the TRF gunman. Yet as soon as one fell it seemed two more would show up. It was then that Kamjin sensed it. Several Jedi were approaching on foot. As they came into view their blue and green lightsabers blurred in the haze of the continued firefight.

“Two of you, with me!” Kamjin commanded as he rushed at the Jedi. The remaining guardsmen reformed their line and continued to lay down return suppression fire at the snipers.

Kamjin and the guardsman met the Jedi full on. The electrified melee weapons of the guardsmen snapped and crackled while making contact with the lightsabers. Kamjin was not to be delayed. It was clear these Jedi weren't used to fighting an Elder Sith. Kamjin twirled his blades, deflecting slashes and jabs before striking fast and true. He sliced upwards and cleaved a Rodian in half before bringing both blades down on a blue Twi'lek burning dual streaks through his chest.

The Praetorians were faring well, albeit slower than Kamjin. One continued to parry the Jedi before splitting his weapon into two separate daggers and bringing the second into the gut of the female Jedi he was battling.

Kamjin threw his blue blade forward to slide under the final guardsmen battling the last Jedi. Reaching out he pulled the blade back towards him. The snipers were moving more frequently as the other guardsmen had gotten a bead on their locations.

"Come on, we've got to continue onward." Kamjin yelled only to be drowned out by a skiff arriving with more Jedi.

Kamjin howled out in rage, "Get out of my way!" as he rushed towards the descending Jedi.

* * *

Nahor raced up the stairs to the school. *Thank the Force it's still in one piece*, he thought as the rest of the city continued to burn. With the perimeter defenses destroyed and the anti-aircraft guns unpowered the sky was awashed with TIEs. A few of their defense crafts were able to get off the ground in time but they were hopelessly outnumbered.

Nahor was quickly stopped by a group of teachers. "What is happening outside? Have the defense forces been able to rebel the invaders?"

Nahor shook his head, "No, we're evacuating. How many children are here? Is my brother with them?"

"A transport came by earlier but couldn't take all of them. We still have some fifteen remaining. We're the last teachers here."

"But my brother...where is he?"

"Urakih is here. He said couldn't go until you came for him. We didn't have time to argue with him."

"Alright, gather everyone up. I have a small transport but we should just barely fit."

As the teachers gathered the students, small Urakih, a mere ten years old but still short for his age came up to Nahor, "Rohan, I knew you'd come for me."

"Shhhh," Nahor silenced his brother, "You know not to use our real names here."

"It's okay, we're not going to need to hide for much longer."

"What does...nevermind," Nahor grabbed his hand and led him and the rest of the students to his transport.

As the students buckled in, the teacher looked at Nahor with apprehension, "Are you old enough to drive this?"

"Of course, I'm thirteen," and with that Nahor slammed forward on the accelerator and launched them towards the evacuation point.

Whether by luck or the will of the Force Nahor mostly kept the transport on the roads and navigated a safe path towards the platform.

"There she is, it'll be cramp in the cargo hold but we can get everyone off the planet. A collective cry of relief came from the teachers and the students hooted and hollered somewhat oblivious to the danger they were only. Only Urakih and Nahor stayed silent. Then, they all hollered in surprise as Nahor slammed on the brakes and skidded the transport to the side. A lone figure had emerged in the path covered in a black cloak with the hood drawn up.

"Rohan, don't go out there," Urakih pleaded tugging on Rohan's sleeve. Dropping any sense of secrecy Rohan turned back to Urakih. "Hikaru, if I don't you guys won't make it to the transport. It's just one Sith and I've been training with Gathe as much as our brother has. I'll stall him and then come right after you guys."

Rohan slid open the transport door and emerged holding a black and silver handle. Igniting it an emerald beam sprung to life. Beckoning with his other hand he urged Hikaru to take the students and tears toward the ship.

As they made their mad dash, Rohan gripped the handle with his other hand and planted his feet shoulder length apart. The blade held directly in front of him. "Come on, Sith. You don't scare me."

* * *

Kamjin couldn't help but laugh at the sight before him. This child held his lightsaber like a club ready to swing at a helpless taun-taun. He reached out and sensed his intended query would soon be here. *Let's see what this kid can do.*

Kamjin walked slowly forward, igniting only his blood red blade. The silver and gray handle held loosely in his hand. "And who might you be youngling?"

"I'm not youngling. I'm a Jedi! Like my brother!" Rohan tried to deepen his voice but it came out as a childish growling sound.

"Where did you get the lightsaber? Did you steal it from your brother?" Kamjin continued to slowly advance on the poor child. A skilled dualist would have sought to maintain the distance. Rohan, however, held his ground firmly.

"No, I didn't! I made it!" Rohan's voice was growing frustrated at the baseless accusations from the Sith. Weren't all Sith supposed to be mindless beasts given over to their passions? This Sith seemed cold and calculating...yet, familiar, in a way all children sometimes cheer for the villain in a story before discovering how cruel they could be.

Kamjin raised his blade and tapped the emerald blade. Rohan kept both hands on the hilt and moved with the slash. *Amature, he wouldn't last long in a real fight,* Kamjin thought as he backhanded the blade in the other direction. Rohan's feet shuffled as he took the blow. He was locking his knees.

Kamjin did a one, three, five combination and was pleased the teen could follow at least basic forms. Despite himself, he fell back into teaching mode.

"You need to relax your knees or you're going to fall over." Kamjin offered as he continued to knock the emerald blade around.

"You need to shut up!" Not one of Rohan's better retorts but he was beginning to fear his brother wouldn't make it in time. "You'll be in trouble soon!"

“Something like that,” Kamjin saw the cloaked figure climbing over a pile of rubble at that very moment. “It’s been fun kid but this is over.” Kamjin bashed his blade into Rohan’s, rotating it in a circle and breaking Rohan’s grip. The handle flew from his hands, extinguishing the blade as it flew. Rohan looked shocked at how quickly he was disarmed and then was caught full-force with the blast of Force Lightning Kamjin hurled at him. His feet left the ground as he was hurled backwards toward lak.

“No!!!” lak screamed as he raced next to his brother. “Speak to me?!” lak laid his hand upon his brother’s chest and felt his heart still beating. *Thank the Force he’s still alive.*

Standing he shook off his robe exposing the tired old robes the Jedi had worn from generations. Kamjin drew back the hood of his cloak looking at the Jedi with his own eyes for the first time.

“So it is you,” lak said.

“Yes...Kai...It’s time to come home, son.” Kamjin pleaded as he looked upon the grown face of his eldest son for the first time in ten years. Ever since that fateful night when his wife had stolen them from him he had dreamed of this moment. Father and son, reunited at last.

“No...I’ll never join you. Mom told me all about you and the wicked things you did for the Dark Side.”

“Your mother is right...but only from a certain point of view. She was sent to find injustice so naturally that is what she saw. If she had stayed she would have seen all the good we were doing. That ‘I’ was doing.”

“She showed me enough,” Kai ignited his blade and leapt down at Kamjin. Kamjin raised his blade and blocked it as Kai pressed forward his attack. Kamjin stuck his right leg back to brace himself. *He’s gotten strong. He’s taller than me. I didn’t expect that.* Kamjin surged his blade forward and pushed Kai back several meters. Kamjin followed with a series of strikes that he had used to train Kai years ago. Kai, parried them perfectly.

“Clearly you’ve kept up the training I showed you.”

“You mean the torture you gave me?” Kai spit the words back at Kamjin.

“Torture? Kai, you were given the best training available. The best scholars and dual masters in the sector.” Kamjin was hurt more by the words than by any attack he had received that day. “Look at how well you’re doing.”

Kamjin slashed down at Kai’s leg while Kai moved to block and parry back at Kamjin’s torso. Kamjin raised his blade quickly in defense and then pivoted to strike Kai in the chest with his left hand. “See, you never used to follow through with your attacks.”

“That’s because I was constantly afraid you’d hurt me.” Kai was screaming now at his father.

“I’d never hurt any of you.” Kamjin said earnestly.

“Sithspit, look at what you did to Rohan!” Kai motioned towards the still unconscious body of his brother.

“Ro...Rohan is here?” Kamjin faltered as Kai pressed onward.

“Yes, you electrocuted Rohan. Hikaru is hiding in fear with his classmates on the ship. You say you wouldn’t hurt us yet you clearly don’t mean it.”

Kamjin looked at Rohan and back at Kai, “Hikaru...little Hikaru is here?”

“He’s ten Father and old enough to see first hand what you and your kind have wrought this world.”

"Ten...has it been that long."

"It'll be longer still!" Kai strunk out both hands and sent Kamjin flying into the shattered remains of a store front. Kamjin felt the weakened glass shatter and slice into him as he fell to the ground. The fight had been taken out of him.

Kai didn't bother to look back. As soon as Kamjin disappeared from sight he clipped his blade back to his belt and raced over to Rohan. Picking him up he slung him over his shoulders and trugged up the rubble to the platform. Hikaru was waiting at the hatch. Calmly he asked, "So you saw Dad?"

Kai was shocked for a moment, "How did you know that was Father?"

"I knew he would be coming. We'll see him again and it'll all make sense."

Kai didn't have time to ask a follow-up question. The ramp was already retracting as he finished climbing into the ship. Placing his brother in the small bio-bed he left him in the care of the teachers. Reaching the cockpit he slipped into the copilot's seat as the ship rapidly accelerated in the atmosphere. "Punch in these coordinates and jump in the atmosphere. We can't risk getting into deep space."

The pilot looked at him, "Are you certain about these coordinates?"

"Yes, it's time to go see Mom."

* * *

It was evening by the time Duk found Kamjin laying in what had once been the storefront of some fashion apparel building. "Master, are you okay?"

Kamjin sat up, his eyes a dry raw red. "Yes Duk, I'm okay."

"What happened?"

"That's not important right now. What's the status of the battle?"

"A few transports managed to evacuate the city. I found the Praetorians and they captured the corvette with minimum losses. The TRF forces have dug into defense positions throughout the city. I'd estimate sixty percent is controlled by our forces. Of that maybe half is what you'd consider a green zone. It's going to be a long fight to clear out all the resistance."

Kamjin stood up and placed a hand on his apprentice's shoulder, "Good, I'm in a mood to crush some resistance."

Epilogue

Kamjin exited the command bridge of the *Palpatine* and found Duk dutifully waiting for him. "How did it go, Master?"

"Fine, Duk. I'm not in trouble." Kamjin was back to his usual smirking self.

"But after what you pulled with the Praetorian Guard. I thought for sure," Duk was cut off by Kamjin politely.

"I had to give up a few secrets I've been holding on to since the founding of the Clan. It's a small price to pay for what I discovered."

"You mean your family is alive."

Kamjin's eyes narrowed for the briefest of moments. As with many things secrets never survived a battlefield. "Yes, they're alive."

“That’s great. I don’t know much about my family.”

“I know Duk, but if you’ll excuse me. I want to get a hot shower and rack some bunk time.”

“Of course, Master.” Duk bowed and left his Master to his thoughts. As Kamjin came to the officer quarters afforded him he slipped into the darkened room. Reaching into his locker he pulled out a small duffel with the crest of the Duke of Juranno on it. Kamjin pulled out a small holoprojector comlink and keyed in a code. Several moments went by as Kamjin stared at the darkness before it sprang to life. A hooded figure appeared before Kamjin.

“Warhawk...it’s time to get my family back together.”

“It will be done. Though I’ve lost track of your daughter.”

“Kya will know where she is.”

“Very well, I’ll make the arrangements.”

The figure disappeared and Kamjin looked again into the darkness and knew the time was nearly at hand to reconcile with his wife.