

He deactivated his lightsaber and continued on through the forest until he reached a large natural corridor, perhaps fifteen meters wide and twenty-five long. Thick gnarled trees that supported upper canopies lined its length at somewhat even intervals. Thick shrubbery stood on the far side of the path, opposite the brush Aleister Mavros had entered through.

Sa Ool stood in front of the shrubbery. He wore a dark cloak over his Jedi robes.

“Mavros,” Sa said, his voice showing surprise, but his tone turning Aleister’s name into a slur. “You were fighting in the temple.”

“I am fighting in the temple.”

Sa understood the implication. “I knew you would cross my path one day.”

“Then you know I am here for you.”

Sa ignited his lightsaber, shed his cloak. “For me, yes.” He chuckled. “I understand you, Mavros. Understand you quite well.”

“You understand nothing,” Aleister said, and stepped into the corridor.

Aleister felt the forced peace pouring off Sa, the rigidity, but it paled in comparison to the rage and hate roiling in Aleister. In his mind’s eye, he saw himself killing the Jedi. It poured fuel on the flames of his rage.

Sa, too, stepped into the corridor. “Do you think that your presence here is a surprise? That I have not foreseen this?”

Aleister chuckled, the sound loud in the quiet trees. “You have foreseen it but you cannot stop it. You are a fool, Jedi. And today you die. The Jedi are not here to protect you. No one is.”

Sa scoffed. “A Jedi is never alone with the Force. Its power will protect me.”

“Then show me its power.” Aleister said, smirking.

Sa sighed and held forth his left hand. Lightning crackled from his fingertips, filling the space between them.

Aleister interposed his lightsaber, drew the lightning to it, and started walking toward Sa. The power swirled around the red blade, sizzling, crackling, pushed against Aleister, but he strode through it. The skin of his hands blistered but Aleister endured the pain, paying it as the price of his cause.

As he walked, he spun his blade in an arc above his head, gathering the lightning, then flung it back at Sa. It slammed into his chest and threw him back several paces.

“Is that the power?” Aleister asked, still advancing, cloaked in rage. “That is what you wished to show me?”

Sa stood up straight, his robes singed and smoking. His face passive.

Aleister picked up his pace, turned the walk into a charge. His boot thumped off the dirt. He moved with a predator’s grace. But Sa struck first with a furious series of blows: an over hand slash that Aleister parried; a low stab that Aleister easily sidestepped; a side kick that connected to Aleister’s side, broke ribs, and pushed Aleister across the narrow axis of the corridor. He stopped himself against a tree with his foot and spun around.

Aleister fell fully into the Force, raised his defenses, took a single handed high guard, and parried Sa's two-handed overhand slash.

Blades locked, sparking, their eyes met.

Aleister's dark eyes burned with a rage that knifed through Sa. The anger he radiated was tangible to Sa, made the air feel greasy, polluted. But he felt something unexpected, an odd ambivalence.

"I know what you've done," Sa said, his voice a hiss from behind his respirator.

Aleister smirked and shrugged. "You have no idea how little that narrows things down."

"And now I will avenge them." Sa said. "All those left in your bloody wake." He leaned into his blade, pushed Aleister back a step, and unleashed a Force-augmented kick at his ribs.

But Aleister was quicker, vaulting off the tree behind him and flipping over the Jedi's head. He landed in a crouch behind Sa and rose up aiming a shattering spear at the Kel Dor's head. A blow that the Jedi was only just able to dodge.

"You will find that difficult," Aleister goaded, and danced back from the Jedi. "Especially since you won't be leaving alive."

The Sith held his saber directly in front of his face, then swung down in a rapid X shaped flourish, before turning to face Sa side-on. His lightsaber held with his thumb pointing down the length of the blade, near his face with the palm facing inward, the blade parallel to the ground pointed towards the Jedi.

"Now come and embrace your death!" Aleister taunted.