

# Blood and Dreams

[CSP] Journey's Beginning

Mune Cinteroph (3607)



And the snow-dusted  
Chill mountaintops  
Lay bare the sprinkling  
Of crimson specks  
Of life ripped away  
And broken.

With every drop  
And copper scent  
Senses returned  
And dawning realization  
Left chill the heart  
Of innocence broken.

Paths lay open  
At his feet  
To tread dark or light  
Or to walk between  
Uncertain, unknowing  
A Disciple to enigmas untold.

**27 ABY**  
**Seraph**  
**Nayama Islands**  
**Northern Monasteries**

Drip.

Drip.

Drip.

One drop, then another, slowly fell to stain the snow red at his feet. His breath came shaking in white puffs of ice crystals from past his thin black lips. Wide eyes stared in shock upon the carnage strewn before him, colouring his world in visceral unreality. The smell... the cloying smell of sweet copper wrinkled his nose, nearly gagging him. The scent of fresh death, a mix of blood and other nastier things. His eyes flicked from one body to the next. He could feel the flesh still caught under his claws. He tasted that blood upon his lips, dripping from his chin. He knew his chest rose and fell too quickly, threatening to hyperventilate. The world was a blur, yet the bodies, rent and torn as they were, remained crystal clear within his vision.

He could still feel how their flesh tore and gave under his claws. The scent of their terror still lay just under the smell of blood. He cringed at the memory of a throat collapsing under his jaws. He could feel the flesh and fur, the warmth of blood spraying down his gullet.

Drip.

The Shistavanen's ears snapped back. The world swam in and out, the sound of birds mocking him in his haze of uncertainty, of fear.

"You are coming back with us."

"No!"

"You insufferable brat! I own you. The UCE owns you. You will obey!"

"No!"

He sensed the blasters levelled at his back. The eyes of the man before him burnt with rage. They held within them the promise of violence. Mune feared this man. He hated this man. He could not go back, would not go back.

"Why do you always chose to make these things hard on yourself, Mune. I am your damned father, and you will do as I say or so help me..."

“You are no father of mine!”

“You ungrateful piece of trash!”

Mune blinked, and he felt his air cut off. He was up by his throat, his father’s hands squeezing around his windpipe. Panic gripped him; his heart raced, his mind was awash in a whirlwind of confusion.

Mune blinked, and the man that had called him his father lay broken upon the snow. He stared into the dead eyes of the man, looked into their cold blue gaze. They blinked, and his father frowned. How could he still be alive, Mune thought. How could he be looking back with those same hateful eyes?

“You are useless. A failure. Trash.”

Mune screamed. He sat bolt upright on his sleeping mat, his fur damp with sweat. His heart raced, a rapid pounding that throbbed in his ears. He was quick to bolt from his blankets. He stumbled over only a couple of the other boys before he managed to slip outside past the sliding doors. His stomach heaved, and bile burnt the back of his throat; he vomited the contents of his stomach onto the light dusting of snow on the gravel outside the cabin. Nausea made the world swim in and out of clarity. Tremours ran up and down his limbs; his head ached horribly. He heaved again, tears staining the fur around his eyes.

When finally his stomach calmed and nausea passed, he sat with his back to the door frame. His ears lay pinned back against his head, the slightest spasms travelling through them. His breathing only just began to slow, his heart with it. He made his way back to his sleeping mat and fitfully tossed and turned until the vestiges of dawn began their slow crawl upwards upon the horizon.

He knew he was dragging his feet through his morning chores well before he had reprimanded by one of the monks overseeing him and a hand full of the other boys. As with every afternoon, he made his way to the library. He visited with such frequency that the gnarled old librarian paid him very little mind. They exchanged glances and a nod of acknowledgement. Mune knew to treat the space with the utmost respect. He moved through the stacks, breathing in the scent of ancient paper and ink, old leather and dust. He selected titles he had been thumbing through since the night of the incident and heavily sat to open them to where he left off in each tomb. He remembered precisely which pages those were and readied paper and quill he had brought with him.

The only indication of time’s forward momentum was the drooping of his eyes. The library, trapped in perpetual dusk as it always was, did little to communicate time’s movements to him. He sensed the motion over his right shoulder before the hand came to rest upon it. He could not

help but flinch, ears laid back against his head. He recognized the scent of one of the masters and calmed some.

“You missed the evening meal, Mune,” the man chided softly.

“Apologies, Master Jiro.”

“It is not my body that will suffer from your forgetfulness,” even as he said it, he placed a parcel down and opened it to expose the bread, cheese and slices of fruit.

“Thank you, Master.” He hadn’t realized just how hungry he had become and so accepted the food gratefully.

The monk turned one of the books towards himself and glanced for a moment at the cover. He arched a brow and reviewed the page Mune had just been reading. “Do you continue to have the dreams?”

“Less frequent than before... that day.”

“You have not told me much about your time in the TRF...” Jiro began.

“There is not much to tell, Master. I mean, it was a lot of study and meditation.” Mune stared intently at the bit of bread and cheese in his hand, ready to be consumed. He thought back on the lessons the Force Users had instilled in him. “They told me I acted in self-preservation, that I did what was necessary to survive.”

“And?”

“I still don’t know,” he whispered. “There was darkness in it, and it frightened me. Still does.”

“As it should.”

Mune looked up uncertainly into the eyes of the older Shsitavanen, seeing in his stern eyes all the years of experiences and wisdom staring back. He knew well that in his own eyes was reflected the terror of that day, of the blood in his mouth, the crimson liquid dripping like liquid rubies upon the thin blanket of snow. Just the memory summoned that darkness to well like some leviathan in the deepest recesses of his soul.

“Even so, it is still a part of you as it is a part of anyone, just as light too, is a part of us.” The man closed the book, then the next until the tomes all lay closed on the table before the young boy. The monk stacked them tidily on a corner and continued, “Sometimes, it is necessary to draw upon it, just as other times it is necessary to draw upon the other. It is for you to decide the necessity of your actions.”

“How do I justify what I did?”

“You acted on an instinct to survive. It was your life or theirs. Self-preservation.”

“That is what my mentor said in the TRF...” Mune muttered. “He talked about nature and how every creature has an instinct that overrides all others... an instinct to survive. That the Living Force responds to it, to us.”

“He is not mistaken.”

“He also told me that I would need to leave, soon, to find my path,” Mune met his teacher’s eyes, searching there for answers that neither of them had right then.

“What will you do?” The elder’s voice was patient, kind, encouraging almost.

It was not the first time he sat patiently with the younger Shistavanen, walking him through his questions, his problems. Of the hand full of years the boy had lived within the walls of the compound, they had discussed at length the visions Mune had. It was perhaps why Mune had taken to studying their meanings, perhaps to garner a better understanding of what he saw. The master wondered, however, if there were any understanding of such omens and portents that the younger Shistavanen spoke of.

Mune eyed the stack of books, focussing on them instead of the expectant face of his teacher. He breathed out a heavy sigh of resignation, “I have to go.”

“What is your plan?”

“I’ll return to the UCE,” Mune stared fixedly at his dinner, trying desperately to sort his thoughts. “Avoiding detection by my father’s company... I’ll try and make contact with my mother in secret. I’ll need temporary work so I can pay my way off of Seraph.”

“I see. That is a lot for an eleven-year-old, even one forced to mature quicker than is fair.” The older shista brushed his whiskers back, letting them spring back before rising from where he had seated himself. “I will reach out to some of our contacts and help you get back to the UCE. You will, while there, represent Nayaman interests as an agent in the country’s employ.”

“You will continue to help me...?”

“You will continue your education and keep me informed as to your next steps once you’ve decided.” Jiro eyed the boy; his expression returned to its usual stern and measuring gaze. “I will handle the arrangements.”

Mune watched after him. Left alone once more to his thoughts, he shifted he faze to his hands. The memory of blood matting the fur and dripping from his claws came vividly to him. So to did

the memory of the hands squeezing around his throat, threatening to choke the very life from him. *You did what you had to to survive*, he told himself for perhaps the first time, the words brought with them some solace. The scent of blood faded from his memory. He finished the last bit of fruit and cheese, tidied his notes and replaced the tomes to their proper shelves. He left the library to get some rest.

## **29 ABY**

### **Seraph**

#### **United Corporations of Elaya**

#### **Entertainment District**

The slight boy pivoted and twisted between the bustling patrons, his tray precariously balanced upon a hand. His tail swished ide behind him, narrowly avoiding brushing against the leg of a boisterous man making a pass at an uninterested woman. He moved through the crowd, weaving his way to a table against one of the back walls before finally placing their drinks down before them. They paid him very little mind, just another server in a busy establishment in the entertainment district of the UCE. He was used to being ignored until patrons needed something from him. It made it easy to listen in and gather the more exciting gossip and rumours.

“Server.”

Mune’s ears perked, he turned to glance in the direction of a man sitting by himself at a nearby table. Their eyes met. The man, Mune noticed, did not dress like the regular patrons of the establishment. As a matter of course, he did not even appear to be dressed in any fashion he recognized as being from neighbouring nations. Mune made his way over, putting on his usual relaxed expression, “What can I get for you, sir?”

“What’s your name, kid?”

“I’m sorry?”

“Your name, what is your name?”

The man was human, with dark eyes that felt as if they looked through him. Mune fidgetted some, uncomfortable with the look he received from the man. He shifted nervously from foot to foot, finally responding a little guarded, “Mune.”

“Just Mune?”

“You do not need more than that... What can I get you?” Mune’s eyes glanced his full ale and frowned some. *Is he playing with me?*

“Niko Brewer,” the human offered with a grin.

“I’m sorry?”

“My name. Niko Brewer.” The man motioned to the seat across from him, “How about you have a seat Mune, chat a bit.”

“I’m working right now...”

Mune turned to step away. Before Niko could grab his wrist, the Shistavanen jerked his arm away and shot him a warning glance. Niko’s hand remained up, and his grin widened a little more, “That’s what I thought.”

“Thought?”

“Come, sit your tail down here, kid, I promise, I only want to talk. Trust me; you’ll be interested in what I have to say.”

“I...”

“When you are done work then.”

“Fine,” Mune took the opportunity to slip away and get back to his duties.

The evening was spent as it often was, serving drinks to patrons until they were tipping over drunk. It was well into the earliest hours of the morning before he retreated to the staff room and changed into his street clothes. He mentally scrutinized the tidbits of gossip and the mass of faces he had gleamed throughout the night. There was nothing worth reporting back; no big names or useful information had passed his ears. It was not until he stepped out into the cool evening air and drew his jacket in tight around his slight frame did he recall Niko. He hadn’t seen the man on his way out, so he felt safe, assuming the human had lost interest and finally left. Or perhaps it was hopeful thinking.

Something told him, however, that he was not so lucky as all that.

With a heavy sigh, he started down the sidewalk. He had walked two blocks before nagging at the back of his mind told him he was not alone. His ears cupping back captured distantly the sound of footsteps easily five metres distant.

Clomp.

Clomp.

*Well, at least he is not trying to be sneaky about it.*

Clomp.

Mune reached into his jacket, hand closing around the hilt of his vibrodagger. The exact moment his hand closed around the handle of the weapon, the footsteps stopped. The Shistavanen turned, keeping the weapon hidden. His eyes scanned behind him but saw no one. He still 'felt' something, though, like eyes that followed him, studied him. His ears perked, trying to capture any sounds out of place. All he heard were the sounds of the breeze, distant conveyances, leaves and the hum of a failing streetlamp that flickered annoyingly on the other side of the street. Mune whirled, drawing his dagger at the same time. He stopped with the blade a hair's breadth from driving into Niko's sternum.

"You are quick," the human commented with a grin. "You've had some training; it would appear."

"Who are you?" Mune growled.

"I told you, my name is Niko Brewer."

As close as the young Shista was to plunge the weapon into his chest, the human seemed rather nonchalant about the situation. Mune's ears laid back against his head, his eyes narrowing, "Who are you, and why the interest in me?"

"So paranoid."

Niko grabbed Mune's wrist and pulled him quite suddenly towards himself. Mune ducked the fist, twisted and drove the elbow of his free arm towards the man's gut. He was not as quick as the Shistavanen, but he still managed to dodge the blow. Mune found his wrist released and slashed outwards with his dagger and just missed contacting flesh when Niko's shirt developed a perfect cut in the fabric. Mune was quick to follow up with a stab.

A flash of light and the hiss of plasma lit them both. His stab turned quickly into a roll under a horizontal cut. "A lightsaber?"

"Your reflexes are something for... what... a thirteen-year-old?"

"You're a Force User."

"So are you..."

"You're not from The Republic of the Force, though..." Mune did not recall any of their Force Users using lightsabers.



He only knew of lightsabers from gossip at the tavern. He brought his dagger into a reverse grip, held defensively in front of him but knowing full well it would do no good if Niko landed a hit with his lightsaber.

“I am from the Brotherhood.”

“The Brotherhood?”

“Many of us are Force Users, just like you,” Niko explained. “They can help you become more powerful.”

Mune lowered the dagger some; he did not necessarily care about power. He sought knowledge. He wanted more than anything to understand the abilities he was gifted with and, more than anything else, the visions that were visited upon him since he was younger than he was now.

“My mission is to find young Force Users like yourself and bring them into the Brotherhood.”

“Why?”

“To educate and train them, why else?”

Mune was not so naive as all that, though, to have access to the knowledge they certainly had. He lowered his dagger ultimately, remaining on guard enough that he could escape the reach of the lightsaber had Niko chose to strike. He remembered the limitations of what the TRF could teach him and what little knowledge the monastery could share. Would the Brotherhood be able to teach him more? Finally, Mune sheathed his dagger, and the human deactivated his lightsaber.

“How do I know you are not lying? How do I know the Brotherhood is a thing?” Mune asked uncertainly.

“I suppose you don’t... Meditate on it. I leave tomorrow night.”

Mune was left standing alone on the street.

**29 ABY**  
**Seraph**  
**United Corporations of Elaya**  
**Spaceport**

It had not taken so much thought as he would have thought. It made sense that eventually, his path would lead him away from his home. He had to understand more the images and visions that had visited him since he was young. He had to understand better the abilities he had been born with. He knew well it was not a matter of power but curiosity. He may not have been a scientist like his father, but the need to comprehend was still on his mind.

“Mune.”

The Shistavanen turned at the sound of his name. Niko was leaning against a wall, a knowing grin on his face. He did not seem at all surprised to see the younger man. No words were exchanged, and together they embarked. It was not until they were well beyond Seraph that either spoke.

“Where is it we are going?”

“Antei, to the Shadow Academy where you will begin your education.”

“You’re keeping things from me...”

“Oh? Does it matter?” Niko shot him a sidelong glance.

“No... I have things I need to understand... You’ve opened a path, and I chose to walk it.”

“No matter the cost?”

“There is a cost to every action,” Mune was staring intently at his hands, studying the lines of his pads.

“What cost is too high?”

“For knowledge? None...” Mune muttered.

