***Rooftop Garden Coral-Kast Penthouse***

***Tokare City***

***Seraph, Caperion System***

The kiss of sun was starting to turn her skin a light rosy pink. They had been training for what felt like an eternity and her body was starting to give up. She could barely lift her arms, but she stood strong across the circular pad of grass from her teacher. The crimson lightsaber pointed tip up at his throat and her off-hand rested on the small of her back. This was a hallmark of the Duelist’s form, which had been the subject of their recent study.

“I am tired, Thran. Can we stop?” she asked, panting for breath.

“If you had been practicing your katas like you were supposed to, you wouldn’t be so tired.” He replied, flicking his own burning blade upwards with a small flourish. “Again.” He added.

She sighed and readied for another drill. Before the girl’s stance was solidified, her opponent’s onslaught was upon her. He moved with purpose and fluidity. His strikes were like a viper springing from a coil to tag its prey with spring loaded fangs; deliberate and probing for weakness. She struggled to lift her blade to meet his first swipe from the left. The rays of plasma crackled and sparked as the met. The first strike was followed immediately by another searching thrust.

“Call them out.” He said, as he pressed yet another attack.

“Six. Five. Two. One. Eight. Four. Two. Four. Eight.” She said, through gritted teeth as she batted away the flurry of blows.

“Good.” He replied. “Now again, faster.”

“Eight. Five. Six. Eight. Four. Two. Four. Eight. Seven!” The teen yelped, taking an additional step backwards after blocking an unconventional low upward attack.

“You’re shuffling your feet. Your arms aren’t’ long enough to stay so stationary. You have to move more. My reach is a third of a meter longer than yours, you’ll never manage a riposte if you stay planted like a Namana tree.” He said judgementally, whipping his blade in a small downward circular motion before deactivating the blade.

“I blocked it didn’t I? Besides, You cheated! Position Seven is not a Makashi philosophy!” She replied, returning the Duelist’s Salute before deactivating her own lightsaber.

“Your enemies will have no respect for what is in the philosophy of their forms, you must be prepared for any attack. You were prepared enough to parry, but it left you open for another attack. If this were a real fight, you’d be dead. You are improving, but a master you are not…Not yet.” Thran replied, clipping his lightsaber to his belt and gathering up a pair of towels.

He draped one of the terrycloth rags over his shoulder and tossed the other at the girl. The wadded-up rag hit her in the chest and she fumbled to hold on as her exhausted arms flailed in the attempt to catch it. The thin Bakuran man wiped the beads of sweat from his face and torso, letting the towel hang free over one arm after completing the task. She too dried her sweat soaked hair and damp brow and hung the towel over her neck. She grabbed his arm and lifted it to her shoulder, nestling her head against his chest.

“Thank you for teaching me, papa.” She said, with all the sweetness she could muster in her state of near collapse.

“You’re welcome, little flower.” He said, squeezing her tightly. “Go on now, get cleaned up. Emily has us attending some dinner tonight. There will be boys there, so you won’t want to smell like you do right now. They’ll run away from the stink!”

She slapped his chest with the back of her hand and scoffed before sauntering off to prepare for dinner. The majority of her life had been spent without her father and these precious moments meant the world to her. She had been at his side for weeks now, acting as a personal aide while he audited and restructured the Clan’s military assets. When they weren’t cataloguing and recording the number and quality of every rifle in the Clan’s Arsenal, they would spend time honing the techniques and skills she had developed in the Shadow Academy. Her father was a renowned duelist and he had all but mastered The Contention Form. Part of her wanted to emulate his own path to darkness, but the other part was just searching for common ground to share with him. Often times that meant extending outside of her comfort zone to meet him. In honesty, she didn’t care for the Way of the Ysalamiri, she was more interested in a defensive form. Yet, she practiced his form as an excuse to steal him away from the rest of the galaxy for a few moments of tutelage. Exhausted, but beaming with happiness she disappeared through the open door-wall and into the darkened penthouse. He watched her until she was out of sight.

Thran turned away from the penthouse and back to the garden. The sparring with his daughter had done well to re-invigorate his personal training regimens. Through years of practice, the Bakuran had a developed a habit of ending ever session with another set of kata demonstrations. He always found it wise to train the body to remember what the mind could not under the duress of combat. The Warlord took to the grass patch and began his routine. He closed his brilliant green eyes and began the pattern of classic cuts and strikes.

His mind’s eye filled with the sounds of the city far below their impregnable penthouse home, his nose filled with the scent of the exotic flowers littered around the rooftop garden, he could sense the position of everything around him as he fought away invisible rivals and his form was practically flawless. If he were scrutinized by the blademasters that touted the virtues of Form II, they would find no err. The practice continues uninterrupted for nearly half an hour.

 After some time, a haze began to settle in his mind, the hustle and bustle of the streets below became a soft din of muddy noises. He could no longer differentiate perfumes of the Soerian chamomile from the Electine roses. The emptiness of the posh garden was suddenly broken. His eyes snapped open.

Before him, six figures in tattered and ripped burgundy robes stood before him. Each had a thick leather belt tightened around their waist. Chains emerged from the sides of the belt, attached at their terminating ends to bindings about the wrists. Each of the assailants’ faces were obscured in masks of polished chrome, except where grime or battle damage had permanently tarnished the material. Each was unique, but they shared common features. The masks were decorated with skeletal horns, and cut off mid-face, where the same chains that bound the wrists obscured the mouths of the wearers. Between the gaps in the chains, he could see pallid flesh and black rotting teeth. Further examination of the individuals revealed rotting flesh behind the holes in their torn robes. These beings were bound to life by unnatural means and their purpose could only be corruption and death.

The one among them who must be the chieftain, given that the mask it wore bore the largest set of curled horns, stepped forward. Its’ voice was like an unholy combination of grinding gears and clogged and gurgling fetid plumbing. “Thhhran Ocasssss-sus. You have been judged. You are marked for cleansing. Come with us and you may live.”

Before another word could be spoken, the Sith catapulted into action. Each of the cultists drew their rusty weapons. Here, he did not employ the form of a disciplined duelist, instead his lightsaber swung with deliberate, powerful intention. This was the Way of the Krayt. It was not as polished as his preferred lightsaber technique, but what it lacked in fluidity it made up for in violent displays of force. To his surprise, the rusty bidents and decaying hand axes shunted away his strikes. He leapt over a pair of timed attacks from his flank, vaulting over another pair of attackers. He landed, executing a broad sweeping one eighty Jung maneuver. They moved too quickly and they were upon him in an instant.

The Sith exchanged blows with them, but his defense was quickly overwhelmed. A jab from a spear found purchase in his thigh, hobbling him. Simultaneously, a club or cudgel impacted the side of his head, ripping open his scalp and showing the off white of the parietal bone. He collapsed into a pile. A pair of the eldritch horrors lifted his motionless body up by hooking their sickly arms under his armpits. The Cheiftain stepped forward, jagged spear in hand. Its’ tip like that of a tribal harpoon used for hunting wild beasts, dripped with a black ichor.

“Where is Caliburnus?” he spat, pouring his hot stinking breath over the dazed Sith.

He suspected the day would come that some evil would emerge from a forgotten part of the galaxy to claim his prize. Despite his best efforts, he had not held the relic in his hand for nearly a decade. His mind flashed back to the fateful day on Ptolomea, where he gripped the hilt of the legendary blade. He recalled his upward trajectory after he had come to know the power of what was contained in that musty tomb. These zealots were chasing a power that had long been released.

 He’d never spoke of what happened in that place, only the few who were there to witness what happened could have any suggestion of what had occurred in the vine covered chambers of that hallowed burial ground. When he emerged with the blade in hand, he had not released a new power in him or given him abilities beyond his own. In truth, he had been enlightened to the power contained within himself. The spirit that occupied the blade entered him and upon discover of the potential of its’ new host, vacated the vessel for safer and more easily commandeered transport into the universe. At that point the blade became not more than a symbol, its power fled into the void. It hardly executed its function as a weapon anymore, losing potency and power to the crawl of time. Even though he could no longer run his fingers over the delicate gold filigree or sharp kyber crystal activator, he had never given up his claim to hold the symbol. Members of the Clan assumed it still held some kind of mystic power that he lusted over, but in truth the lightsaber was just a badge of pride for him. Nothing could be gleaned from it and it would not bestow the skill of some ancient swordsman in whomever held it. He wanted it because it was his first trophy of success in the Brotherhood. However, that prize lay firmly in the hands of the Grandmaster, who he suspected held the weapon for the sole purpose of taunting him.

Ever defiant, the Sith spit a mouthful of blood and saliva onto the chieftain’s mask. “You have been judged. You are marked as unworthy. Release me and you may live.”

The chieftain let out a phlegm filled laugh and sunk the spear into the Warlord’s heart. The life behind his green eyes fell away.

“NOOOOOO!” came a scream from inside the lavish apartment.

A single haft of blood colored energy appeared from the darkness. The small mousey face of the girl was illuminated by the venomous ambience of the energized synthetic crystal contained within her weapon. The skies seemed to darken. Soft white clouds roiled and swelled. A crackle of electricity snapped through the sky.

She moved with the speed of the lightning above. Her first strike cleft the chieftain from collarbone to groin. The horde descended upon her, waving their pox ridden weapons. One by one, with single strikes, she removed their heads. She fought her way to her father, leaving a wake of destruction behind her. Her bellows of anguish and rage filled the entire city. She stood over the lifeless body of the man she admired the most. The girl fell to her knees, clutching her father’s lifeless head to her body.

“Wake up, Papa. Please wake up. Please! No! Please come back!” she screamed, as if to command life back into him.

Her attempt was in vain. As the first tear rolled off her cheek, the skies opened up. The storm that had manifested unleashed the fury of a cyclone in an instant. She held him as tightly as she could, doubling over with a pain so deep she could not seem to draw in a breath. She’d fought for so long to be back with him, to have it end so quickly was a fate most cruel. She shook with rage. The building shook to its’ foundation. With her broken heart as the epicenter, an explosion consumed the garden. The fine stonework cracked, before being vaporized by a swath of crackling lightless energy. The void expanded beyond the duracrete of the tower into the city below. People ran in terror, silenced as the encroaching blackness overtook them. Inflating with parabolic acceleration, the explosion soon covered all of Elaya. The bubble continued on to consume the entirety of Seraph, expanding out to draw the moon Ragnath into the voracious singularity. In but a moment, the whirling fusion of hydrogen and helium in the core of Caperion was consumed. In a blink, the consuming energy collapsed into a pinpoint. There was naught left but void.

“So ends today’s lesson.” He said.

Her eyes snapped open. A cold sweat ran down her spine, dancing between the field of goosebumps. A sudden eruption of emotion had been silenced in an instant and the effects were beyond jarring. She swallowed hard and the realization of what had occurred sat in her throat for a moment.

“I…Wha? I think I’m gonna be sick” she stammered.

“Jasmine, life is equal parts triumph and tragedy. Both the high of victory and the low of defeat can be harnessed to elevate our power. Meditate on what you saw. Find the power you felt. Trace that power to the emotion. Learn to harness that emotion and at your fingertips you will have the power to create…or destroy…as you see fit. The power is already in you, but you must learn to use it.” Thran said, standing up from the seated lotus position he had taken.

“It’s too much…I’m dizzy. I can’t…” the girl said, searching for breath.

“Breathe, such emotion is so powerful it will tax your body. If you had practiced your katas like you were supposed to, we wouldn’t have had to teach you about what happens when you aren’t prepared. You do know what happens when you aren’t prepared, don’t you, my love?” the Sith said, passing her a plastene bottle of iced water.

“Yes, Papa. Tragedy.” She said, squirting the bottle over her face and into her mouth.

“There’s a good girl. So, what will we do next time?” he asked.

“Practice my katas.” She said, finally catching her breath.

“Good. Tomorrow we will do inverting defenses. Be prepared. Now go on, get yourself cleaned up. Emily has us attending some dinner tonight. There will be some cute boys there, so you…” he said.

“won’t want to stink. Yes, papa.” She said.

Jasmine stood, still wobbly on her feet from what she experienced. She held back tears as she headed into the penthouse, scooping up a towel along the way. Thran watched her as she disappeared into the shadowed interior of the uptown residence. His nose tilted up, like a hound catching the scent of a bird on an autumn breeze. He too had a scent in his nose.

“Let me guess, Shadow sent you to check in on me again?” he said, lifting his own terrycloth rag to wipe the sweat from his chest.

“That was a bit cruel even for you, Thran. You’ve scarred that girl enough. Just teach her to duel.” Came a soft sultry voice from the balcony behind him.

“She has so much potential. She didn’t just kill them, she…Well…I am just teaching her how to access what is already there.” He said, sticking a thumb in the waist of his loose-fitting lounge pants.

The soft click of her boots was the only sign she’d jumped down to meet him. Her clothing showed more glowing golden skin than it actually covered. She was at his side in a moment and threw her arms around him in a hug of greeting. He turned around and returned the gesture. Her icy blue eyes met his shining emerald eyes and they remained locked on each other for a moment. The tension was thick and they both held on just a bit longer than would have been customary of an exchange between friends. She broke first, her eyes darting away from his enrapturing gaze. The Battlemaster flicked a strand of silver hair from her face and smiled, showing a pair of pointed teeth.

“Potential or not, she loves you and you owe her an apology. You’re her father, you shouldn’t be toying with her mind like that. Anyway, Yes. Shadow sent me to make sure you aren’t dilly dallying on the Fleet restructure.” The [Firrerreo](http://starwars.wikia.com/wiki/Firrerreo) woman said.

His had flicked out, summoning a datapad from across the garden. He placed the datapad in her slender hands. His soft lips leaned over her ear and whispered. “No dilly or dally. Just heightening the excitement with some anticipation. You don’t mind a little anticipation, do you Rayne?”

She laughed. “You’re such a tease... I’ll take this back to Shadow. Let’s do lunch sometime! Ciao for now.”

In the same silent fashion in which she had arrived, the woman departed. She vanished over the ornate crenellations atop the rooftop shed, leaving him alone with his thoughts. He sighed. His thoughts turned to his child; she was a spitting image of him. Her eyes were the same unique shade of green, her disregard for homework, her sassy attitude. Yet, she possessed something he did not. In his intrusion into her mind, her solution to the tragedy she felt was so much more than hatred and revenge. She removed an entire system from existence. It was not just the matter and anti-matter she had intended to destroy, but the entire fabric of space-time. For a moment, he found himself slightly frightened of what she was capable of. He only found a modicum of solace of knowing that the trigger for that emotional eruption was the thought of losing him. He shook his head. She would need much more discipline or lest she be reduced to little more than a walking bomb.

He took one last glance in the direction Rayne had departed, perhaps silently hoping she’d still be there. She was not. With towel draped over his shoulder, he sallied into the apartment to clean himself up for the important engagement his wife required the family to attend.

Warlord Thran Occasus-Palpatine (Sith) / [House Caliburnus](https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/units/caliburnus-878d2ed5-e2e7-42cc-9a9f-089ab075a004) of [Clan Scholae Palatinae](https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/units/scholae-palatinae) [SA: VII] [GMRG: IV] [SYN: II] [INQ: IX]

SBx2 / GCx3 / SCx5 / ACx4 / DCx7 / GNx6 / SNx5 / BNx5 / Cr:3D-2R-7A-14S-21E-8T-9Q / CFx220 / CIx137 / CGx15 / SI / LSx10 / SoLx4 / S:5Al-3D-1Do-4Dk-7Rm-8P-17U-5B-18Dec-17Aff-3Cr-14En

{SA: MVF - MVH - MVHL - MVL - MVLD - MVLO - MVPH - DPCM - DPCP - DPE - SVHL}

[Legacy of Palpatine](https://wiki.darkjedibrotherhood.com/view/Legacy_of_Palpatine)