Character Development Workshop: Introspection

Warlord Archangel Palpatine

PIN: 7589

The dusk shadows crowded around him, the quiet glen cooling after a long, scorching day. He laid his walking stick aside, his trusty companion for his sojourn, and rested his pack from his shoulder. Fumbling at the latch on the pack, he pulled his bedroll and equipment out, ready to set up camp for the night. His knees and back screamed their pain as he knelt, gathering a few collected twigs and branches over a small wad of wax and wood shavings. He struck his fire starter, and the sparks caught, pale wafts of smoke rising almost immediately.

He could still see the sun as it descended through the heavens, its poor excuse for light obscured and blotter out by the surrounding trees. This was not a world blessed with incredible vistas or interesting flora. One would not expect tourists to arrive on space liners, cameras in hand, seeking out the beauty and amazing wonders to be seen. This was a place of solitude, where its denizens eked out a living on the corners of galactic society. A fitting stop, he thought, as he added more twigs to the tiny fire.

He deserved this place. His life had been blessed, no doubt, from birth. This life he had wasted, spent over decades of war, conquest, and battle, and yet he had little to show for it except a wealth of hideous memories. His mind was as scarred, bruised, and batter as his skin, and very few of his bones had escaped unbroken. He had healed fully each time, but the damage still lingered there, the memories still fresh in his mind even after a century. The curse of the long lived.

His hands warmed as the flames began to rise higher, illuminating his impromptu camp site with an almost merry atmosphere. It did little to lift his aged spirit. He glowered at the flames, and his mind wandered, his eyes glazing over as his memories of wars long since forgotten by the galaxy returned to the fore.

He had killed. He had killed hundreds, thousands. Those who had deserved it, many of hadn’t, but he gotten in his way. He had always had a purpose, a goal, a mission to complete. Losses were expected. Planned for. Securing an objective required sacrifices. The cost was rarely a consideration, only victory. And he had been victorious, as he stood upon a pile of civilian dead and broken homes.

Then he would return home, to his clan, his loved ones, his family of lost souls, but he could not sit still. His blood had burned, as the flame did before him, with a desire for war. He raged, tearing apart his quarters, his gymnasium, his life and his relationships. He had sundered his life for want of a battle to fight, a war to be won, a victory to be savored, if only for a moment.

He still remembered the look in her eyes as she stared at him, her fingers touching her cheek as the red welt began to rise. He could still feel the sting on his fingertips, the instantaneous frozen shock, the crushing weight of what he had done to the woman he loved. Her eyes were the worst of it, accusatory, anguished, hurt, but worst of all, disappointed.

Sometimes, we think everything is working how it is supposed to. We live our lives with a firm belief that we are in a good place, that those around us will stay there, always. Throughout our lives, we see these individuals as family, as friends, as constants that we can lean on for support. Then the rug gets pulled out from under you. The fall breaks you into tiny shards, and the only person who can pick them up is you. Sometimes, you’re the one who pulls the rug.

So, he sat before his little fire, watching as the flames danced, but not really seeing them. He watched his life in his mind’s eye, reliving his victories, reveling in the blood, and reliving each and every mistake. He deserved this life, as he had already destroyed his old one.

A soft breeze began to blow, sweet and crisp.

The fire crackled gently, tiny hisses of boiling water from the green twigs.

The sun dipped below the horizon, the only light the fire in the glen.

The quiet sobbing was muffled by the rustling of the leaves in the wind.