



FLEETING LIGHT
A Star Wars Story

By *General Zentru'la* for Adapt and Overcome

1 - Inner Darkness

“They’ve been in there a long time, Gen’ral.” *The Harbinger’s* pilot picked up a glass from the dashboard, her facial features – aqua toned Duros skin and bulbous crimson eyes – contorting in immediate discomfort at the taste before she put it back down in a different place with a satisfied sigh. “What’d’ya think they’re doin’?”

General Zentru’la subconsciously turned his gaze from Rohla towards the shuttle’s living quarters at the rear of the ship. *The Harbinger’s* walls were white within, with the exception of the black crest of the Vornskr Battalion mercenary company, a stylised wolf surrounded by a royal wreath. The same crest appeared on the General’s shining white armour. “Lilina asked not to be disturbed. She said it was critical to maintain balance and peace.”

Rohla scoffed indignantly. “We’ve had too much of that for a group of mercs.” She gave the dashboard a solid slap with her hands. “Haven’t put this bird through her paces since the war. When’s the next contract comin’?”

“That was only three months ago,” Zentru’la reminded her. “After that mess, we need to be more careful about which contracts we see to personally. The soldiers can handle the small time jobs. Besides, we’ve got a lot of new blood, it’s good for them to get some combat experience without us handling everything ourselves.” In truth, Zentru’la’s trigger finger was itching to get back in the fray, he had spent the last three months training his mercenary forces, learning their strengths and weaknesses, and managing contracts from aboard his command shuttle.

“You’re scared of being duped again?”

“When a warrior goes into battle, he keeps his guard up, not out of fear, but because to do otherwise is foolish. We let our guard down against Subak. It’s lucky we all survived.”

“Lucky you dropped that tactical caution and listened to me.”

Zentru’la ignored her jab. Rohla had compelled him to act on emotion instead of tactics to save the others, but in truth, they had already saved themselves by the time he arrived. “This downtime is necessary, Rohla. Lilina has never really had time to work with Masakado’s sickness since she joined us. We need Masakado at full health. And for that, she needs time.”

Rohla took another large swig of drink. “It’s been over an ’our. I reckon they’re up to no good in there.”

“She’s a Jedi. They don’t form emotional attachments. But Masakado can be unpredictable. I should go check on them.”

Zentru’la left Rohla to take care of the ship and walked towards the living quarters, every step of his heavy frame making a dull thump.

Lilina Mirin sat cross-legged on the floor, a navy blindfold covering her eyes in typical Miraluka style. Her electric-blue hair was the brightest thing in the room. Her beige Jedi robes flowed onto the floor as she breathed slowly and smoothly in a trance-like state, as if she hadn’t noticed Zentru’la enter. Just standing in her presence gave Zentru’la a feeling of peace and serenity.

Facing her, the Shistavenan Masakado was more machine than man, with mechanical limbs, hip and lower jaw, what bits of him had not been manufactured into a weapon were covered in short, black canine fur. His eyes were closed but his body was stiff, his brow furrowed. His head jolted briefly towards Zentru’la. His breathing was sharp and rugged, his jaws were slightly bared. His right hand lay close to a black sword at his hip.

“How do you feel?” Lilina asked in a soft, misty voice.

“Like I want to kill something,” said the wolf with a voice like sandpaper.

Zentru’la looked from Lilina, the Jedi meditating in a peaceful pose, to Masakado, the cybernetic assassin who wore a mixture of frustration

and confusion on his face. “What are you doing?”

“We are meditating,” she said softly. “Masakado must find peace within himself. It may be the only wa-.”

“We’re wasting time.” Masakado’s voice, on the boundary of synthetic and organic, was laced with venom. “I’m no Jedi. I don’t need this.” He had a point, thought Zentru’la. Seeing Masakado meditating was the not something he ever expected to see the wolf attempt to do, and his neurological degeneration still numbered his days. It was difficult to see how Lilina expected this to be a productive way to spend valuable time.

“The Force is more than just a Jedi power,” Lilina said patiently, unperturbed by Masakado’s frustration. “The Force is an energy that binds *all* living things.”

Masakado growled derisively. “I’m just a machine. There’s no mystical magic energy running through my body, just wires and electronics.”

“Your body is a machine,” said Lilina serenely, “But your heart still pumps canine blood. You may not feel it yet. It may take many sessions for you to learn to feel anything. But empty your mind. Feel the universe around you. Tune in to the hum of the ship, to your own breathing.”

Masakado’s mechanical fingers hovered menacingly over the hilt of his sword. “I feel nothing but an increasing desire to stab something. Preferably Collective.”

“I can feel your anger.” Lilina’s voice was unwaveringly smooth. “Their experiments were a crime against nature. I know that you lust for bloodshed and vengeance for what they did to you. But this isn’t the way. You must learn to find peace in your own mind.”

“That is your way. Not mine.” Masakado got to his feet. “You can’t teach this dog new tricks.” His metallic feet clunked against the floor of the ship as he stamped out of the room.

Lilina finally moved, rising from her meditative position as if her body was weightless before looking at Zentru’la. “Sounds like that could

have gone better,” Zentru’la said as the door closed behind Masakado.

“Masakado has a long way to go,” Lilina said serenely. “Meditation is a foreign concept to him. He is not reacting well to it.”

“He never seemed like the sort. Are you sure it’s going to help?”

“Please, trust in my methods, General. His sickness is like nothing I’ve ever seen before, but with the Force as my ally, we will learn how to beat it.”

“If not for you, he would probably already be dead. I trust you. Is he getting better?”

“His last seizure was during the war,” said Lilina, and Zentru’la detected a rare hint of pride in her voice. “And his headaches are becoming less frequent and less severe.”

“And you think that’s down to the meditation?”

“That is an aspect he particularly struggles with, but I fear it might be the most important final step. Vengeance is a self-destructive trait. His mind is fractured, haunted by the past and clinging onto his hatred might be preventing his mind from truly repairing itself.”

“That’ll be hard for him. Killing the Collective for vengeance is what keeps him going.”

“He thinks so too,” Lilina said but shook her head in disagreement. “But did killing Doctor Atlas satisfy his blood-lust?”

She was right. The doctor had been number one on the assassin’s hit list, the lead scientist whose experiments had led to his condition. Since killing him one year ago, very little had changed in Masakado’s personality. Still he swore vengeance against the Collective, still he hungered for blood.

“There’s more to Masakado than killing, even if he does not yet know it himself. It will be a slow process. His heart is clouded with hatred from what the Collective did to him.”

“Revenge is a spiral that never ends, causing more death, more pain. Killing doesn’t satisfy his thirst for blood, it adds *fuel* to the fire.”

“And you think this meditation, becoming a Jedi and learning to use the Force will help him to that?”

“No,” said Lilina so plainly that Zentru’la was slightly taken aback. “Masakado will never use The Force. I only wish him to feel its energy and, even if just for a fleeting moment, feel its echo. If he can allow the Light Side of the Force into his spirit, he may be able to reverse his disease.”