



Tears of a River

*General Zentru'la*

## **Charhounds and Wampas**

The sleepy village of Brackenside had never seen so much action. The battle of the Charhounds and Wampas had engulfed the whole city, blaster fire lighting up the black night sky. While all weapons were non-lethal, civilians were under strict orders to stay inside. War, even as a game, was chaotic and unpredictable. Accidents happened.

Lilina and General Zentru'la had led the charge. The General's huge frame and solid armour made him a magnet for enemy blaster fire, while those that saw Lilina's slender frame, protected only by Jedi robes and a Miraluka blind-fold to be a more attractive target quickly saw their own fire returned by the master of the defensive arts. Clad in heavy white armour with red trim, the Mudhorn Company rained fire from behind them with repeater cannons.

A long, narrow road led to an ornate, ivory building of intricate stonework and elegant spires. The houses on either side were no more than a couple of floors high, but formed a continuous barrier.

"This road leads straight to the town hall." The percussive force of each of the General's syllables rang over the blaster fire in the distance. "If we control the town hall, we control the village. The houses will prevent a flanking attack, but we're vulnerable from behind. Lilina, keep watch and prevent a rear attack."

"Of course, General," said Lilina serenely.

"Mudhorns, with me"

"Let's go Mudhorns!" shouted Mudhorn One, the biggest of them, and they marched on the town hall while Lilina stood watch. It was a better role for her anyway. There was no need to compete for personal glory in war.

## **Sithspawn**

A figure in black robes and blue trim that matched his twin blue lightsabers approached. He pulled back his hood to reveal a face of crimson, jagged scars and

jagged horns. Sithspawn Taldrya. The Justicar Killer. His reputation preceded him, a vicious Sith that would stop at nothing to achieve his goals. Lilina snapped her white lightsaber staff into action. "I won't let you past."

"I wasn't asking for permission, Jedi."

His attacks were relentless. Fuelled by the Dark Side of the Force, his twin lightsabers battered against Lilina's defences. She constantly stepped backwards to soften the blows and buy herself more time to react. He fought, as most Sith did, with violence, aggression, speed and power. Could Sith even be trusted to put weapons on stun? Lilina fought as if fighting for her life, dodging and parrying attacks with her double-bladed weapon, using the twin blades to cover her body entirely.

There was a moment of pause in his attacks. Not even the Sith could fight at full burn forever. Lilina backed off, and Sithspawn stalked forward.

A door crashed open between them. "My baby! My baby Lily is missing!" A rotund human woman in a nightshirt ran between the combatants.

"Stand aside," Sithspawn waved his hand, sending the woman stumbling into the wall and freeing up an angle to attack Lilina.

"Wait!" Lilina threw forward her off-hand, and Sithspawn stumbled backwards a few steps. "This isn't part of the game!"

"She went to-"

"There is no time for compassion." Lilina barely avoided the vicious swing from Sithspawn's blade and blocked the other with her own. She parried a flurry of attacks, hearing broken words from the mother between clashes of saber on saber. Lily, north, forest, Gammorrean. It was all she needed to know. She jumped on top of a roof in a clean leap as Sithspawn swung at the air.

"Get back here and fight!" Anger carried Sithspawn's words but she was gone.

A child was in trouble and there was no decision to be made. The Jedi Code superseded any order from The General. Especially in a war 'game'. Besides, if she could lure Sithspawn away from the town hall she could prevent a devastating rear attack from the Sith.

She had the high ground. As Sithspawn jumped towards her, sabers twirling, she swiped her hand through the air, creating an invisible wall that the Sith slammed into. As he fell to the floor, caught unaware by the barrier, Lilina escaped to the north.

## **The Red Ribbon**

She had lost track of Sithspawn, but that gave her time to think... time to feel. The Gamorrean encampment had been covered in the brief. Fond of axes. Unfond of outsiders.

Lilina reached out with The Force, allowing it to pull her in the right direction. She ran towards the northern forest, towards the Gamorrean fort, where the girl was last seen. The rows of houses of Brackenside gave way to detached estates, which gave way to trees.

She slowed down as the forest became thicker, as streams began to interrupt her path. She would have loved to play in a place like this as a child, away from sentient life, accompanied only by nature.

The unmistakable buzz of a lightsaber broke the peace. Sithspawn was still on her trail. Angered perhaps by her trick with the barrier, clearly his attention was on her now, and not his flanking attack. Had he abandoned the game too? Was he genuinely trying to kill her? Lilina wasn't ready to find out.

She switched her lightsaber to full intensity and chopped through some nearby trees without breaking her stride. Thick trunks crashed to the ground behind her. Sithspawn blasted them out of the way, but it bought her some time as she approached a small river. A fragile ribbon of red weaved its way through the currents. She followed it upstream.

The delicate young girl must have been no more than six. Lily lay face down in the water. A crude axe protruded from her back. Blood still flowed from the wound. She had only just been killed. But Lilina was too late.

If she hadn't been distracted, if she had been a little faster... Lily might still be

alive. Anger was not the Jedi way. She knew the code.

There is no emotion. There is peace.

Sithspawn approached once more.

The girl was at peace. Lilina was not.

Lightning crackled at her fingertips...