

Chapter 10

Sendu Farns had finally done enough to let the overwhelming fatigue enforce its will upon his mind and he had just fallen back to a restless sleep. Suddenly he was thrown from his cot by a violent explosion. The adrenaline instantly began coursing through his entire body, instantly bringing his mind to full attention. Initially he was confused by the noise and light from the explosion but slowly the fog cleared from his mind. He realized that the explosion could only have come from one spot, the Mobile Relay Unit.

Sendu instantly knew that things had just taken a drastic turn for the worse. Immediately his first priority turned to his own survival and he really didn't care what happened to the relay station. Right now, the only thing that really mattered was staying alive. His fabric sleeping shelter had collapsed around him from the concussion of the explosion and it took precious minutes for him to find his way out of the remnants of his shelter. He then took stock of his own physical body to determine if there was any permanent damage. After a quick pat down and examination he didn't notice any serious pain beyond what he thought was just some minor bruises to his left arm and leg.

Once Sendu was clear of the ruins of his shelter, he was greeted by complete chaos all around him. The mobile relay station was burning from three separate locations, each marking the spot of a well placed rocket attack aimed at a vital location of critical components. In addition to the flames and smoke emitting from the relay station, there were plasma bolts incoming into the positions where Sendu and other Sith soldiers were located. In reply, there were only

sporadic shots flying out toward the forest at what Sendu guessed were enemy soldiers..

It took a plasma bolt passing within two centimeters of his head to cause Sendu to awaken from his initial state of awe and shock caused by what was going on around him. The one plasma bolt made it glaringly evident that self preservation was once again on top of his priority list.

Sendu was not a combat soldier, but all Sith Troopers received basic combat training during their initial training after they enlisted. This training quickly came back to his mind as clear as the day it had happened! Sendu quickly found cover behind some storage containers and began looking for some sort of weapon he could use to try and fight back. After a few seconds he finally located a blaster rifle near a corpse of a fallen private that lay nearby Sendu's place of shelter. Bending over at the waist and crouching down, he quickly sprinted to the corpse and retrieved the blaster rifle and then returned safely to his place of refuge. After succeeding at the simple task of retrieving the weapon, Sendu had a sense of pride in the fact that he had actually done something and stayed alive.

. . .

Deeper in the darkness of the forest, nestled among a group of medium sized trees, Master Jarek was speaking loudly over the SCU open communication channel. The excitement and commotion of the battle caused him to speak louder than was really necessary, but none of the Republic soldiers even noticed his elevated voice.

“All Weapons Specialists, prepare to fire your second

rockets and lets insure this thing is unrepairable. Then lets get out of here!

“White team, watch that left flank, there is a group of Sith soldiers maneuvering around that side. They do not seem to have an exact bead on your location, but they are trying to find you.”

On queue, the White team shifted their fire to the incoming Sith troopers that were trying to maneuver around the left side of the SCU formation. The precision blaster fire expertly directed from the White Team instantly caused the Sith troopers to scatter and take cover which halted their advance.

“Are we ready with those rockets?” Master Jarek again asked.

“Roger Green Team is UP”

“Blue Team is UP”

“White team is.... hold, we got a problem here... it appears that the Sith Lord is coming around the front of the MRU!”

Master Jarek’s heart sank, he was hoping to avoid what he knew was probably an inevitable confrontation with the Sith Lord. But this was not a surprise. The Force had already dictated their confrontation was going to happen.

“White team, engage the Sith Lord with your rocket and blaster fire, I’m on my way. Blue and Green, finish off the MRU with your rockets and break contact and head to the Rally Point.” was his quick series of commands.

. . .

Darth Cloran was enraged, her body was pulsing

with the power of the Force. She could feel it surging within her and she liked the feel of it! While the surge of the Dark Side felt good, the fact that she had been caught off guard again did NOT make her happy. She could already tell that the MRU was permanently out of commission and there was no hope for it now. That part of the mission was over, and it was a failure on her part. With that realization, the only thing left to do now was make the Republic pay.

As she bounded around the front of the MRU she did not slow down at all to take stock in the situation before her. This would have been the more tactical correct thing to do. She muttered to herself "Korriban can rot with tactical safety! They are going to pay!"

Darth Cloran was only seeing blood red rage at this point, but for a Sith Lord, this was a desired state to be in. The rage brought her more in tune with what the Dark Side of the force was prompting. And that same Dark Side of the Force said nothing about slowing down or being tactically sound. It only said attack, so she did.

She identified the general direction the enemy fire was originating from. She could not see the enemy soldiers themselves but she could feel their emotions, and surprisingly, those emotions did not contain fear. Darth Cloran found this remarkable for soldiers in the middle of a firefight. She only sensed excitement and disciplined emotional control.

She continued running toward the battle and the point where she assumed the enemy positions were located. She noticed a series of bright flashes and then was able to pick out the incoming rocket heading for her. She also noticed two other missiles that were streaking toward the

already worthless MRU.

While she was in mid-stride she channeled the Force through herself and into her leg muscles and then into the ground as she pushed off. She leapt up into the air allowing the incoming rocket to pass below her and explode into a nearby cargo canister.

As her leap carried her 40 meters into the air, blaster fire began to come toward her from the ground. The blaster fire was precise and several of the bolts would have been fatal had she not deflected them with her lightsaber.

She arced high through the air and controlled her actions through the influential promptings of the Force. She identified the general location the blaster fire was coming from and though she could not exactly see the enemy in the treeline. She did a quick calculation in and determined she would be close enough for what she had in mind to do.

As she began arcing back down toward the ground, Darth Cloran deflected another blaster bolt and began to build up a second wave of force energy. She used all of the hatred she could summon toward the Republic troops that she despised for making her look like a fool and let it build up. She then channeled her entire reserve of Force energy into a specific spot on the ground just as she landed.

With a blood curdling yell and an outward extension of her hands directly toward her sides, a wave of pure Dark Side Force power exploded outward from her location. Small trees bent and shattered under the wave of power as it launched out from Darth Cloran and tore through the surrounding area.

White Team, less than ten meters away from Darth Cloran's blast zone, did not know what hit them as they were

all lifted and thrown back more than 10 meters from where they were kneeling behind various items of cover. Their team leader hit the trunk of a large tree head first and was killed instantly. The White Team heavy weapons specialist suffered a similar fate as his chest was crushed against a rock and one of his shattered ribs punctured his left lung. It took a minute, but he died as well.

The Stealth Generator units inside the body armor of a SCU operator was tied into their vital health statistics Central Processing Unit and once the computer determined the operator were no longer alive, the self destruction mechanism was triggered. The self destruct mechanism would cause the entire SG unit to short circuit, destroying all of the important and classified technology contained in the SCU body armor. This happened twice in a span of only a few seconds.

Master Jarek saw the leap of the Dark Lord and the Force blast that tore through his soldiers. He could only stand there motionless as he tried to digest the immense display of power he had just witnessed. Whether it was the Force or just sheer determination of human will that spurred his movement, he did not know. Whatever it was, he determined that the Sith Lord now became his immediate concern and she had to be stopped before any more of his men were killed.

Master Jarek knew the need for stealth was no longer necessary and he figured that announcing his presence may actually distract the Sith Lord and save a few more lives. Turning off his own Stealth Generator and igniting his lightsaber at the same time, he began sprinting toward the White team's position with the glow of his blue

lightsaber announcing his presence to everyone within visual range..

Mosok had also heard the commotion on their left flank and felt the power of the Force pulse that emitted from the Dark Lord. He turned to see the Sith Lord standing near the last known position of White team. Out of the corner of his eye he caught the movement and appearance of Master Jarek and heard his lightsaber ignite. Mosok turned his head further to watch his Master sprint toward the danger. Mosok began to get up and join him but quickly caught himself and froze in position as he remembered he had been specifically instructed by his Master to remain with Green Team no matter what happened.

Two of the four members of the White team had survived the sudden attack by the Sith Lord. The two remaining members were the team autoblaster man, Isaul, as well as the designated marksman Jango. They were trying to regain their feet and their senses from the blast that had thrown them and they were both in a kneeling position working on recovering their bearings so they could get back in the fight. They were about 15 meters away from each other and they both noticed the ferocious Sith Lord begin to move toward them with her red blade up and prepared to attack.

Years of training took over and both Isaul and Jango took a quick series of shots at Darth Cloran which she easily was able to deflect with swipes of her lightsaber. As Jango continued to systematically take well placed shots at the approaching Sith, Isaul changed tactics and attempted to catch her off guard by standing and charging forward. He had his blaster raised to his soldier for precision aiming

while he continued to rain fire down upon the Sith.

It was also at that time that Jango noticed that the stealth generators on Isaul's, and his own, uniform were no longer working. There was no doubt they had been short circuited by the powerful force blast that had swept over them moments before.

The sudden change of tactics and aggressive charge by Isaul did indeed catch Darth Cloran by surprise as he had intended. She was not used to traditional soldiers having the audacity to attack a Sith Lord. She also was surprised it was done without fear and with such direct aggression. The sudden attack distracted her for a brief moment which was just enough for one of Jango's blasts to get through her defenses and strike her right shoulder. The force of the blast caused her to spin to the right and drop to one knee, but the reduced power of the suppressed plasma bolt was just not enough to penetrate the thin armor she wore. That armor, prevented the hit from doing any permanent or critical damage to her. While the hit was not enough to end Darth Cloran's fight, it did provide the opening the two remaining members of the White team needed to press the attack.

Isaul continued his charge forward and was just squeezing the trigger for the killing headshot when Darth Cloran rolled forward and under his shot with unnatural speed. With experience comes knowledge, and Isaul knew what was coming next from the Sith. In a desperate attempt to evade the attack he knew was coming, Isaul dove up and to the left just as the red blade of Darth Cloran's lightsaber swept underneath him. Isaul tucked as best he could and crashed down in a clumsy and impromptu roll that may not have looked good, but did prevent any serious injury to him.

Without missing a beat, Isaul rolled back into a crouch and shot from the hip back toward the general direction of his attacker. Darth Cloran had already recovered from her own roll and turned to face Isaul in time to again easily deflect both of Isaul's plasma bolts, as well as a shot from Jango off to her left.

Darth Cloran admittedly was impressed with the coordinated and skillful attacks of these soldiers and she even allowed herself a brief moment of admiration before having to deflect yet another blast from Jango.

Jango saw the Sith raise her hand toward him and immediately dove to the ground face first as the Force induced 'push' hit him. The counterforce trick that all Republic Special Operations soldiers were taught during training worked as planned and Jango remained where he was face down on the ground. Once the brunt of the force attack passed harmlessly overhead with little more than a rustling of his uniform, he rolled to the right to regain his feet.

Coming to a kneeling position Jango was surprised, and shocked, to see that the Sith Lord was only 10 meters away and charging directly at him at a full sprint. As he brought his larger sniper blaster up to fire at the Sith, the followup Force push hit him square in the chest, taking the breath from his lungs and propelling him 15 meters back. While it was fortunate that he missed hitting any large trees, Jango did pass through several smaller trees and hit the ground at an awkward angle. The force broke the bone in his left shoulder and caused him to lose his grip on his precious sniper rifle. The pain shot up through his neck and caused a flash of red to appear in his eyes that momentarily blinded him.

Jango knew he was in trouble and was quickly trying to regain his bearings as well as get his feet under him when Darth Cloran reached him and with a swift cut from her lightsaber, killed Jango instantly.

Isaul watched as his teammate and friend went flying through the trees and bushes and watched in horror as the Sith quickly followed up with a leap toward Jango and then the final killing blow to his teammate. He had gotten off several shots from his blaster, but the rapidly moving Sith had proved too difficult of a target and none of his shots found their mark.

Isaul did his best to control his emotions and at the same time saw an opportunity to begin yet another attack. Isaul detached one of the two high explosive grenades from his belt and held it in his left hand and while holding the grenade, armed it with his left thumb and tossed it toward the Sith and then immediately began firing at her back.

Darth Cloran turned toward Isaul in time to deflect his plasma bolts. She began to prepare to go on the offensive and finish off this soldier when she suddenly heard a metallic clank near her feet and looked down. Immediately her head was filled with warnings from the Force and immediately she complied with its warnings and leapt away just as the explosion shook the earth beneath her feet. Fragments of rock and dirt peppered her cheek and exposed arms, drawing blood from several scrapes and cuts.

The close brush with death re-enraged and energized Darth Cloran. As she crashed down from her leap she immediately stood to face her attacker 30 meters away. Isaul had his blaster raised and pointed at the head of the Sith and they both stood there staring at each other for

several seconds while the battle raged around them. They both understood the duel was coming to its climactic conclusion and they both knew the odds were stacked heavily in favor of the Sith Lord. In one on one combat, even the experienced and talented Isaul knew his odds were small that he would come out the victor. Yet Isaul refused to back down or admit that he was outmatched, such was the way of the warrior.

Darth Cloran noticed from the corner of her eye a blue light emerge from the forest. Glancing quickly over toward the light, a smile spread across her face as she saw with satisfaction, an older, yet obviously confident Jedi Knight emerge and approach the opposing Soldier standing before her. The Jedi spoke in an even voice and never taking his eye off of Darth Cloran.

“Isaul, this battle is won. Signal the withdrawal. I will handle this.”

“Sir, I’ll stay and assist...”

“No Sergeant, you have your orders. Execute them now”

With the definitive order issued, Isaul kept his blaster trained on Darth Cloran as he backed away and left the area through the trees.

Master Jarek squared his shoulders and turned his body toward the combatant, his ignited lightsaber held tip down in the traditional Jedi negotiation pose.

“Lord Cloran, this battle is over, we have accomplished all that we set out to do. We will leave you to tend to your wounded-”

Without warning and with a level of ferocity Master Jarek had never witnessed before, Darth Cloran attacked.

