**“Mortal Combat”**

By Braecen Kaeth (4520)

*Great Jedi War XII: Event Long Combat Writing*

*Collective Strike*

**Victory-class Star Destroyer *Sidious***

**The Nancora Prime Blockade**

Elincia Rei stood at the forward viewport with her back to the assembled warriors. Her eyes probed the Collective Fleet’s blockade for any disparity that may have been missed or disregarded. When none presented itself before her, she sighed deeply. The Consul of Scholae Palatinae turned slowly to face the collection of individuals standing at the ready.

The Consuls of the Dark Brotherhood – seven in total – had agreed to name seven champion from each of their clans. These forty nine individuals would each be accompanied by a unit of twelve soldiers. Their task would be to break past the blockade and make landfall on Nancora Prime. Once there, they would provide reconnaissance of their landing zones and begin systematically eliminating ‘high value’ targets from each of the Collective’s three prongs: the Liberation Front, the Technocratic Guild, and Capital Enterprises.

She eyed her summoned champions from one of seven designated classes: Saber, Archer, Lancer, Berserker, Rider, Assassin, and Caster. Each had a patch crudely sewn onto their sleeves to designate their talents as classified by title. Braecen Kaeth wore the patch of a Saber – the classification regarded as ‘most outstanding’ with excellent ratings in numerous categories. Flanked to his right, Natth a’Niel Palpatine wore the patch of the archer – a warrior known for strong opposition to those whom command them, but lethal with ranged assaults. To Braecen’s left, Kell Dante Palpatine wore the patch of the Lancer – a class known for their superiority, second only to Sabers, and their reliability. The remaining individuals stood in an array fanned out behind them: Rasilvenaira the Assassin, Xan Phraz-Etar the Berserker, Xantros the Caster, and Ric “Tater” Hunter the Rider.

The soldiers assigned to their command would wear patches that mirrored their leaders: a sword, a bow, a lance, a dagger, an axe, a wand, and a chariot. Each of these symbols would be emblazoned across the Imperial crest of Clan Scholae Palatinae. This would allow for recognition of one’s clan and requisite skill set on the surface despite how thick the fighting raged.

“Go forth,” Elincia quietly commanded, “and bring down these bastards.” Her champions nodded in unison and turned to do the bidding of their Empress, the Consul of Scholae Palatinae.

**Outer District**

**Faron City**

The VT-49 Decimator had sustained considerable damage during the blockade run. Combined clan naval forces had initiated a skirmish to provide cover for the ships to pass, but the defense had been staunch. Braecen was unsure how many, if any, of his compatriots had evaded Collective forces to make it to the surface. His own vessel had been critically damaged during descent and his pilot had crashed landed the ship in one of the concentric street paths of the Outer District of Faron City. The crash had cost him his flight crew and several of his accompanying soldiers.

One of the troopers crossed two electrical wires near the rear ramp. ***Snap-pop!*** The hydraulic ramp responded to the electrical current with a whir and blast of decompressing air. Warm air with an acrid smell wafted into the chamber and replaced the stale recycled air from space.

Braecen was the first to descend. His thin white fingers grasped the bronze and ebony hilts at his waist. As he withdrew the weapons, he thumbed the activation buttons on each. ***Snap-snap-hiss.*** Two pillars of white flame erupted from the emitters of his identical lightsabers. He looped the blades through a lazy loop as he surveyed his surroundings. Six soldiers fell into formation around him as a seventh, presumably their commanding officer, approached the Proconsul of Scholae Palatinae.

“My lord,” the soldier addressed the Dark Adept by his formal title, “we have made landfall nearly ten kilometers from our target’s last known location.” The trooper utilized a projected map to show the definitive results of their landing versus where they were supposed to be.

“Your name, soldier?” the Proconsul inquired in a solemn tone. “And did all of our champions breakthrough the line?”

“Spencer,” he smirked, “Shawn Spencer.” He continued to grin as he reviewed his datapad for relevant details to the Proconsul’s question. “It appears we landed near our Archer, Master Natth.”

“Lead the way, Spencer.”

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The Dark Jedi Master stepped over the fallen bodies of soldiers and champions from Tarentum. A formation of Technocrat Soldiers stood at the ready with Captain Crimson at the center of their formation. She issued orders and tightened the formation with various critiques. Even *after* decimating the trio of Force Users from Tarentum, and their accompanying soldiers, she wanted to secure additional victories against the Brotherhood’s heroes.

“Steady,” she chided her restless soldiers. “Don’t fire until you see the whites in their eyes!”

Natth a’Niel motioned his soldiers to rush the enemy formation. They churned their legs, raised their voices in chorus, and fired aimlessly into their opponents midst. As they charged to their imminent death, the Master of the Dark Sider pulled more and more of the mystical energy into his body until every ounce teemed with malevolent intent. He raised his right hand, splayed his fingers wide, and summoned a tempest of azure-white lightning down on his foes.

Hot, jagged lightning ripped through the formation. A single bolt connected and exploded outward in several smaller forks of power. As the amethyst bolts washed across each of the soldiers, they died in spectacular fashion – their bodies twitching as the burnt husks were discarded to the ground.

***Boom!*** A bomb of blue-green mist exploded from the middle of the formation. Crimson watched as the healing properties of the bacta did little to assuage the pain of her soldiers as they died all around her. The bolts licked her black and red armor, but the built-in dampeners prevented any serious harm to her. She felt not only ire towards the Dark Master, but guilt, too. If better resources could be procured, then none of her charges would have to die in a meaningless fight against the Brotherhood’s Sith.

Crimson raised her blaster rifle to her shoulder and squared the sights on Natth. In his hands materialized a saberstaff with a crimson blade burning on each side. As she compressed the trigger again and again, the emerald bolts were batted harmlessly away from his form. He accelerated with unnatural speed and closed the distance between them.

The Captain retreated from the aggressive attack, but she knew that she could not dodge the continuous left-right combinations. She reached for a grenade at her waist. As her hand closed around the metallic orb a blast of Force-spawned lightning caught her in the chest. The blow did little damage, but the force behind it propelled her backwards end over end. As her tumble slowed, the Dark Jedi Master appeared over her.

Natth a’Niel paused to savor the moment only for a second. He plunged the red blade down through her armor into her heart. Captain Crimson’s eyes glazed over as the life escaped her form.

“Greetings, Archer.” Braecen nodded in the Son of Palpatine’s direction as his soldiers fanned out to establish a perimeter. “Very good work, Natth. I’ll report your success against Crimson.”

“The Queen of Staves,” Natth corrected. Each of the high value targets had been assigned a face card from sabacc. Captain Crimson – elite trainer of the Liberation Front’s troops – had been designated one of four Queens.

“Of course, Master a’Niel.” Braecen had the decency to sound mollified. “Let us continue our journey towards the Evil One of Coins – Kerwin Drake.”

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Several skirmishes had occurred as the Master and Adept traversed from the final resting spot of Captain Crimson to the lair of Kerwin Drake. The pair had lost the remainder of their soldiers providing escort, but had come across evidence that several additional targets had been removed from the list by champions of the Brotherhood. Unfortunately, they had also surveyed several battles that confirmed the death of Force Users, Loyalists, and Mercenaries from Clan Naga Sadow and Clan Odan-Urr.

Braecen stood over the crushed form of another woman. She appeared to have been bludgeoned to death, but her face remained recognizable. “This one is Kelly Mendes of Plagueis,” the Proconsul reported solemnly.

Natth was less moved by the plight of the fallen champions, “I have Kul’tak of Plagueis over here, I believe.”

“I think I have some of him over here, too.” Braecen felt queasy as he made his statement.

Both men snapped their heads around. They sensed the presence of a large, hulking figure as it emerged from the shadows. More akin to beast than Devorian, the gigantic silhouette of Kerwin Drake became framed in the darkness. As he moved into the light, the Technocrat Field Commander’s features were revealed. A thick torso of mountainous muscle stood atop a pair of ancient oak tree trunks. One arm matched his seafoam green skin tone, but the other stood out in sharp contrast – a menacing black cybernetic replacement. IT radiated the same sense of danger as his amber eyes, sharp teeth, and pointed horns atop his head. A thick beard fell from his lower face towards his chest completing his malevolent appearance. He brandished a polearm in one hand as he beckoned both combatants forward with the other.

“You both should be dead,” came the gravelly baritone voice of the Devorian. “I will correct this mistake myself.”

Natth furrowed his brow in concentration. Beside him, Braecen smirked in a smug manner that only a Corellian could muster. Each gripped their hilts in hand as their twin blades hummed dangerously.

Kerwin launched himself at the Dark Jedi Master. The speed with which he moved unsettled the Adept, Braecen Kaeth, as he watched his compatriot overwhelmed by the larger warrior. As he regrouped from his momentary surprise, he launched himself into a whirlwind of aggressive strikes with both of his blades. Each of the white blades crashed against Kerwin’s polearm as he halted the Adept’s progress. From the corner of his eye, Braecen watched as Natth retreated several steps.

Onward, Drake drove his polearm through a rapid combination of sweeps and jabs. The range his size afforded him pushed the Sith Adept backward until he was pinned against the wall of the alleyway. Unable to retreat, Braecen darted towards the intersection. His maneuver predicted, Kerwin launched his body on a collision course for the Sith’s. His shoulder impacted the Proconsul’s form and sent the smaller foe spiraling out of control.

Braecen felt the larger man collide with his entire body. As he lost his footing, he veered into a nearby wall, bounced off of it, and continued his spiral to the ground. He landed heavily and felt the air explode from his lungs. As he clawed for his breath, he fought the sense of panic as it rose in the back of his mind. A touch of the Force calmed his mind and worked to restore basic function the right side of his body. Braecen inhaled deeply as his body overrode his mind. Exhausted, he rolled over onto his knees and staggered to an upright position.

As he tuned his blue eyes towards the combat, he saw Kerwin Drake pinned under a tsunami of Force-spawned lightning. The amethyst bolts leapt from Natth’s outstretched hand into the awaiting polearm of their common foe. Lightning coalesced around the powered ends of the weapon before it diffused into nothingness. Natth snarled as he launched in the lightning’s wake and batted against his opponent’s weapon.

Braecen shook the drowsiness from his own mind and leapt into the middle of the foray. Blades of white and crimson hacked at the defenses of the Devorian, but Kerwin moved laterally and kept both combatants from engaged at the perimeter of his defenses. He released one hand from his staff and twirled the blade fluidly as he reached for his belt. He unhooked a small metal cylinder and activated the device before he discarded it into the ground between the Dark Jedi and himself.

***Pop!*** The device went off and thick, drab white-grey smoke began to fill the space between the walls of the alley and the combatants. Despite being aided by the Force, both Elders lost their visual on the hulking form of Kerwin Drake. They relied on the impression he left in the Force, but it was not a directional sense.

Natth channeled the Force into his legs and jumped above the street level. He surveyed the obscured battlefield for a clue. He almost missed the tip of the towering Devorian’s horn as it skimmed just below the surface. The Dark Jedi Master reached out to Braecen with the Force in an invitation. He felt the Proconsul’s reluctance to accept help, but he begrudgingly gave it to the older Elder.

Braecen danced back as a sphere hopped across the duracrete surface before him. An explosion ruptured the surface of the street and threw shrapnel in every direction. The Adept winced as metal bit into his flesh and his left leg collapsed underneath him.

Ominously, Kerwin emerged from the haze and stood over his wounded opponent. Braecen launched blue-white lightning against his foe. The Eminent laughed heartily as he batted away the futile attack. He swung his blade downward in a powerful arc, the full of his weight behind it. The Adept tried to block it, but the continuous combination of left-and-right knocked his arms wide. Kerwin pounced on the opening his weaker foe – arms spread wide – presented him. A powerful uppercut from the polearm connected with the Proconsul’s chest and tossed him end over end across the street.

Blood spread from various open wounds as Kerwin grabbed his opponent’s skull. The Corellian’s head fit wholly into the Technocrat Field Commander’s hand. Drake’s eyes widened in anticipation of the kill as his hand closed on the smaller human’s head like a vise. Braecen thrashed to no avail in Kerwin’s grip. The Eminent chuckled as his opponent’s fingers clawed at his own, massive wrist for purchase. Effortlessly, he raised the Proconsul up from the ground with his ironclad grip.

A Dark Side lance hurtled through the air and slammed square into the back of Drake. His grip on the Adept loosened and the Corellian fell to the ground in a pile of dark robes. Kerwin rounded to find the Master Sith before him. Natth a’Niel hammered against his larger opponent with powerful telekinetic strikes. Despite being braced against the attacks, Kerwin slid backward under their force.

The Devorian’s teeth grinded in frustration. He planted his back foot and heaved against his opponent’s strikes. As the power behind the blows waned, Kerwin advanced one step at a time. His amber eyes narrowed on the Dark Jedi Master.

***Snap-hiss!*** Kerwin whirled around towards the sound of an igniting blade. As his massive hulk rushed to catch up to his turned head, the white blade of Braecen Kaeth bit into the man’s chest. Kerwin roared in defiance as he grabbed the smaller, wounded man and threw him into the nearby alley wall. A sickening ***crack*** came as the Adept smashed into the wall headfirst. His body went limp and his signature in the Force began to disappear.

Drake continued his motion and pivoted in a complete circle to face Master a’Niel. The Dark Jedi Master fell from the sky – the tip of his crimson blade leading. The blade sunk deeply into the massive skull of the Technocrat Eminent. Natth planted his feet against the Devorian’s hulk and pushed away. As he completed his aerial maneuver, he twisted himself to land on his feet.

The large form of Kerwin Drake fell forward to his knees. He then pitched forward and landed on his face. No longer able to raise his blade in resistance to the Brotherhood in this conflict.

Natth rushed to the fallen body of his Proconsul. The pale white skin was cold to his touch. As he rolled the body over, he noted that the Corellian had lost the sheen in his eyes. The vibrant blue was gone, replaced with an emotionless grey. The Dark Jedi Master shook his head in regret.

“Goodbye, old friend” he whispered. “May the Force be with you.”