

So It Begins
Battle Master Shimura Keibatsu

6 ABY
Iridonia

The sun was just beginning to set over the horizon, the golden beams dancing between the slits of the rustic hut. Daijo laid prone across a shaggy blok fur. His head resting on his crossed arms, embracing the pain his wife, Sya, was causing. As was the custom for his tribe before coronation, each chieftain had to endure forty eight hours of ritualistic tattooing at the hands of the women in his life. In this case, it was his wife Sya and his mother Melena. They had taken turns over the last two days to create an elaborate mural depicting Iridonia clenched in a krayt dragon's jaws.

"We're almost done, husband." Sya said as she continued to tap the ink covered needle into his back, finishing the last detailed touch.

Melena smiled as Sya wiped away the blood from his back. "It was an excellent choice, Son. Your father would've been incredibly proud of the man you've become." She said, trying not to tear up at the thought of Meishu Keibatsu, her late husband. "The dragon was your father's family crest, and I have no doubt you'll embody that."

Daijo reached down to his neck and began to rub the black stone necklace that bore his father's crest. His thoughts drifted from the present, wondering what his father had truly been like as he had been killed in the war before he was born. Or so Daijo was told. The Chieftan-to-be snapped back to the present when he felt his wife's hands rub a cold balm on his back to prevent infection from the open wounds. He hid the wince on his face as his weary muscles rippled to push him up to a standing position.

"Go now, husband. Xhedias and I will be waiting for you after the coronation." She said smiling, rubbing her pregnant belly that looked as if she were going to give birth at any moment.

He smiled back, placed his right hand under her chin with a loving caress before his eyes slid down to her large belly. He placed his left hand on her stomach just in time to feel a tiny punch from the unborn child. His smile grew bigger at his acknowledged presence. "You're still so sure it's a boy?"

"How could I not? I swear it's as if he were mirroring your combat maneuvers." She said before pecking a kiss on his lips. "Go now. You're keeping everyone waiting."

Daijo nodded to his wife, then to his mother before spinning around and pushing the linen aside that draped to cover the doorway entrance to the hut. Torches had been lit, creating a path to the center of the tribal communal area. People lined up just outside the path to watch him, and followed him outside of the torched area as he made his way to the center where the largest hut sat. Two armed warriors stood outside the grand hut and pushed the linens aside to make way for him, Sya and Melena. Daijo, still shirtless and blood oozing down his back strode with confidence into the grand hut before kneeling respectfully in front of the Chieftain that stood upon a throned platform.

“Rise Daijo.” The Chieftain said loud enough for everyone in the back of the grand hut to hear that had filed in. “Sit upon the throne of your mother’s people. Sit upon the throne that I relinquish to you, as by the rite and honor in which you have gained it.”

The young Zabrak pushed off his knee to stand again and steeled himself at the thought of the future ahead of him. He was to be Chieftain. He was to be the leader of his people. And not because of blood, but because of his deeds he’s accomplished and the character of his spirit. His eyes raised from the steps as he was sure where they laid and gazed upon the etched wooden throne. An anxious eagerness jolted through his body as he clenched his fists before turning and sitting down upon the throne.

The Chieftain, still standing beside Daijo reached to someone behind him as they handed him a crown of thorns. He placed it on Daijo’s head and exclaimed, “You wear the crown of thorns from which the Mother has given us! For She knows that we trespass, not against her, but for her and our people!” He reached behind him again and produced a bowl of red liquid. He clenched his hand into a fist and put his knuckles into it before creating two fist sized imprints on Daijo’s chest. “She has given you two hearts! Because She knows...” he abruptly halted, fuming at the disturbance at the hut’s entrance.

As if on cue, a splash hit the ground. Sya and Melena looked down and then at each other. The baby was coming. “Raiders! Raiders! They’re burning the village!” A commotion began to roar as everyone in the hut began to panic. Daijo leapt from the platform with grace as the two warriors behind the throne followed his lead. He stopped at his wife and kissed her on the forehead.

“I’ll be with you and our son soon.” He tore the necklace from his neck and placed it into her wifes clammy hand. “I’ll be back for this.” He kissed her again, nodded to his mother and spun around. “Waaaaariors! To me!” He shouted as one of them tossed him a zhaboka. He pushed through the crowd as his warriors converged on him, disappearing into the night.

The tears welling up in Sya’s eyes couldn’t be held back any longer. She immediately began crying as she lost sight of him pushing past everyone. Her mother in law began to shush her with tenderness. A scream escaped Sya’s lips as the contractions in her belly tore through her. Melena put her hand on her daughter in law's stomach and lifted her dress. “We don’t have

much time dear. He'll be here any minute." She looked around and found the nearest young woman that had her attention. "You! Go get towels. Get water. Get something for her pain. And the doctor, now!" The young girl, wide eyed at the responsibility, nodded as she ran off to fetch the provisions.

Another scream loosed from Sya's lips. "Thatta girl. Come on. Keep pushing. He's almost here." Sya's eyes were wild with pain as she breathed in through her nose and out through her rigidly clenched teeth. She closed her eyes again and held her breath for one last push that finished with the shrill, guttural cries of a child. "You were right, it's a boy." Melena said as she handed the snow white, shrieking boy to his mother. Sya smiled at him with a look she had never given anyone before, not even Daijo. "Xhedias." She said with all the love a mother could muster. The smile started to fade, her eyes began to close and her grip on the baby grew slack. Melena knew something was wrong and scooped the child up before it could be dropped.

"Where is the doctor!?" She screamed. Melena looked down again. Sya was hemorrhaging. The sounds of the battle in the distance caught her ears. "For Daijo!" She thought she heard. Her thoughts seemed to move at a kilometer a second but everyone else seemed afflicted by paralysis. Time had slowed down to a fraction of what it had once been, or so Melena thought. Time ripped back into acceleration when a man came to Sya's side, sliding in on his knees. He did his checks on the patient to gain the overall understanding of the situation before looking grimly at Melena.

"I'm sorry. She's lost too much blood. There's nothing I can do for her." He said with melancholy in his voice.

Melena looked back at her daughter in law, still clenching Daijo's necklace in her hand. With Xhedias still clenched in her arms, tears streamed down the new grandmother's face as she embraced her dying, unconscious daughter in law. With her eyes closed, her sense of hearing became oddly sharper. She heard it correctly this time. "Avenge Daijo!" Her weeping had turned into full on sobbing. After a long moment she felt a stir in her arms as she was jolted back to reality from the deaths of her children. Xhedias kicked harder in her grasp. She sat upright, sniffled the sobbing away and looked down at the flailing, pale white child. "I guess it's just you and me now little guy."