


Star Wars Exodus x First Blood [P|R] x +

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**SADY'S UNCONSCIOUS DEBRES**  
INCARNATE

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The sound of combat echoed through the forest, and Drake let loose a shrill whistle, crouching down and stopping. Those rangers immediately near him did the same, and he had faith that any he could not see did the same. Quickly, one of the scouts approached, leaning close to whisper, "Nevalians, sir. I believe they are fighting a paladin. Whoever it is, though, has magic."

That was interesting. The Imperial captain thought for a moment before standing and making a quick hand motion followed by a whistle, this one of a lower tone. Turning his attention back to the scout, he replied to the information in a similar volume as it had been given, "Scouts take up a position to the rear of the paladin. The rest to the sides or in front. Signal and reply for engagement." The other Imperial nodded and moved off into the forest, as silently as he had come. The Imperials moved towards the area at a pace close to a sprint, letting the noise of magic and steel mask their approach until they were almost on top of the combat. The forest was too dense to see clearly, although the tingle of magic and blood in the air was unmistakable. Whoever it was had either tried to attack the barbarians in the clearing, or been ambushed by them by moving into it himself. Drake was not entirely sure which was worse.

The Imperial crouched down low in the underbrush, making the final few feet until the battle came into view at a snail's pace. Drake's green eyes moved quickly around, surveying what he could amid flashes of magic. Definitely a paladin, but not one, it seemed, with a good enough grasp of exactly where he was. Although, truthfully, the Church's heavy hand rarely was cognizant of the world around them, with only enough of a foot in it to dictate their high morality and unyielding views. This one seemed little different, but it was strange to find a paladin so far in the Marches, especially without an escort. The man also struck Drake of being somewhat uncomfortable in his movements, as if each step carried with it the slightest hint of uncertainty. As was natural for one of that order, the man was skilled enough to keep that from being a weakness, but he lacked the assuredness of someone who had faced combat regularly or, at least, someone who was not entirely used to the game of life and death that came whenever a sword was drawn.

The Imperial's eyes moved up slightly, watching as a few hints of dark crimson melted into the dark colors of the forest, indicating those who needed to circle around had done so. Drake returned his eyes to the paladin, watching the man continue his struggle against the barbarians. Their presence also provided more questions than answers. Raids were not uncommon, of course, but they were dangerously close to both Alliance occupied lands and the Empire's front. Naturally, any raid would succeed if it was swift enough, but they were only a few days' ride from the nearest Alliance lord's garrison, and a day or two on top of that to the legions. Combined with the relative lack of prosperity in the nearby villages, lack of trade routes due to the war, and the season, it struck Drake as being very odd, and very out of sorts. Perhaps there was something going on in Nevalia that were forcing them to take greater risks. Some civil war between clans was most likely, but that thought did not do much to assuage Drake's concerns. Such actions in the barbarians

SIDEBAR