III BOARKOCE FALL ABY 34 ISSUE 2



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FOREWORD

WELCOME!

The long-rumored second issue of the Dark Voice has emerged from the shadows and found itself into your hands! There have many changes since the last edition of the Dark Voice change in leadership, implementation of the Path System, new processes and procedures. Such is life! I encourage any one who not yet seen the latest edition of the Path System Handbook or viewed the updated Dark Side Compendium to take the time and review them. Everything you need to make the most out of your time in the Secret Order should be found in those pages.

As for the Dark Voice, let us look forward to a more regular cadence for this publication. This newsletter is now back under management of the Herald once more. As it was in the past, so shall it be again! The Office of the Herald intends for this to be a seasonal/quarterly publication. What is found within its pages, however, is entirely up to you. As part of our updated process for submitting creative works through the Shadow Academy, all creative works are automatically considered for publication within an issue of the Dark Voice. Not all will be selected, of course, but expect to see many a member's creation detailing their quests for power within these pages.

For this issue, we have a selection of some of the best creative works submitted over the past few months, as well as entries from the recent Raise the Flag: Secret Orders competition, a selection of art pieces previewing some of the medal redesigns in the works here at the Herald's office, and more!

Moving forward, the Dark Voice will continue to solicit requests for art, fiction, articles, and anything else that can reasonably fill the pages of this newsletter. Requests will generally go out a month before publication date. Any member whose work is featured in the Dark Voice will be awarded a Letter of Achievement - a rare award these days in the Emperor's Hammer, outside the halls of Eos.

As it has always been, however, so shall it remain. The Dark Voice is your voice. The voice of the members of the Secret Order. How it is used, and what it says, remains forever your domain.

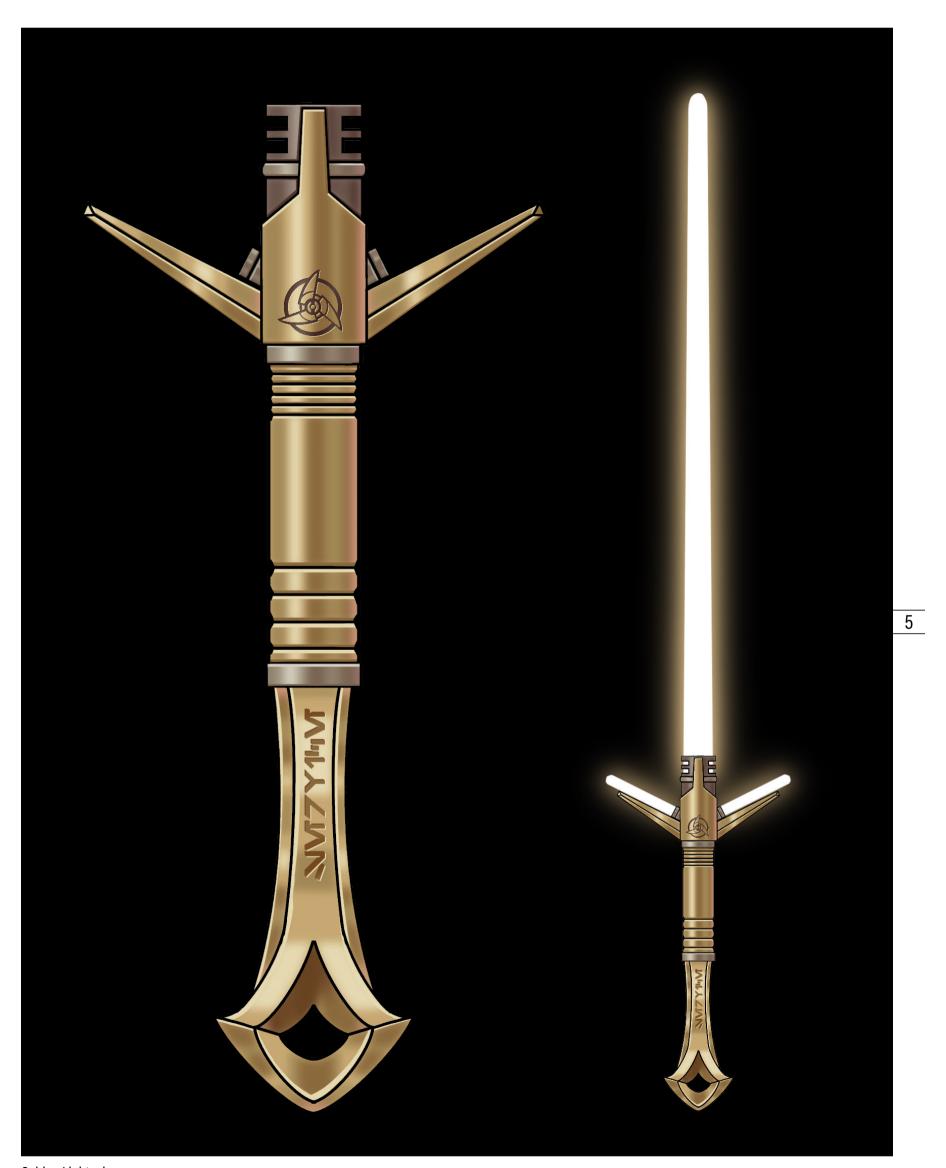
We are listening!

In Darkness,

HRLD/INQ Locke Setzer/DC-4/Dark Council

DS/ED/RSx2/GCx2/SC-SoI/SE/DC/MoT-8rh-15gh-16bh/MoI/MoS/MoC-poc-goc-soc-8boc/SN/Cr-D-Rx5-Ax14-Sx9-Ex3-T-Qx34/CF-G/LS-G/SI/CoS/CoLx5/CoB/LoAx9/OV-25E

{IU:CW/1/2, DBCORE, LSC, LST, TLC}



Golden Lightsaber Art Credit: Acoloyte Visas Vamain / House Valkorion

THE MORGAN CHRONICLES: ALTERED FATES

BY: ALEXANDRE MORGAN

PROLOGUE: NEW ORIGINS

24 ABY

It all felt rather familiar, like I had done it before in some other world, some other universe. The way the rubble lay piled on the ground, still steaming; the way I couldn't make the hyperspace trip from Chandrila back here go any faster; the way the sinking feeling of desperation and inevitability ate away at my insides - it all felt familiar.

But the familiarity didn't change the reality of what was in front of me. No, it only served to reinforce what was happening. The entirety of the Morgan Estate lay on the ground, and I stood behind it all, helpless to change a thing.

My entire family had been in there, and I was across the galaxy on an errand.

My newborn daughter.

Rage began to pile up, a tightening fist around my stomach and heart. Burning, indiscriminate, fiery rage, ready to be unleashed and weaponized. But there was no enemy around, no target. Only me, and the horrifying evidence of my own failure.

The evening sun was slipping beneath the treeline, and the night was creeping forward. The last gasps of light pierced through the treetops and caught something metallic in the mess. The reflection caught my eyes, and I began to clamber over the ruins to reach it.

I got closer and pulled a few stones away to reveal the entire object. It was the Pod. I brushed away the grime covering it, revealing the chrome finish. The keypad to unlock the hatch was fizzling, electrical sparks occasionally spurting out helplessly.

I couldn't explain it then, but it felt very simple in that moment. I knew that I had to get the Pod open. Looking around for a rock, I grabbed a thin one to try and wedge the door open. The seam between the chassis and the hatch was too perfectly manufactured, and in growing desperation I smashed the rock on the keypad like I had seen in the holofilms. It miraculously worked and I barely got out of the way as the hatch flew open.

In the pristinely clean and undisturbed interior lay a small black cube no larger than a foot wide on each side. It had no visible handle, no hinges, no seams. It looked from the exterior as if it were solid metal and unopenable, but some sense inside of me simply *knew* that it concealed something important. And on top of the box lay a small datachip.

I grabbed the box and chip from the seat and made my way back to my ship. Walking through the rubble, and then eventually past with my back to it, the rage grew, the determination for revenge reverberating through my hollow-feeling insides like a blinding yet guiding light.

I set the box down on the ship deck with a louder thud than I intended. Sitting next to the holoprojector, I plugged the datachip into the port.

Aram's face appeared, hovering and staring off in some direction that I was not near. He spoke urgently, eyes darting around.

"Mr. Morgan, they've found us. The Rebels. And we're not gonna get out in time, they're going to blow us to smithereens. They're closing in. There's nothing we can do. It's too late for all of us." He paused.

"But not for you.

Morgan, you've shown great talent, talent enough for me to trust you with this."

His face disappeared, replaced by a map of the galaxy, slowly zooming in on a line, starting at Naboo and ending somewhere uncharted, somewhere out in the Unknown Regions.

"Follow this chart, and you'll find a group in desperate need of your... skills." He smiled. "Not that they don't have enough people already, but they can always use more."

He paused again. His life was a ticking chrono, but he still had time enough for dramatic pauses.

"They're called the Emperor's Hammer." He looked away, pointed

and said something indistinguishable to someone off-screen, and looked back. "Join the Dark Brotherhood. I know you don't know why, but I have a feeling." Another pause. "A feeling that your talents might lay hidden, and that these people can help you."

He stood up straight and saluted, his whole uniformed upper torso now visible in the holo.

"Avenge us, Alexandre Morgan."

Then he reached down, and the recording ended.

CHAPTER ONE: THE BROTHERHOOD

32 ABY

The black box lay on the hull of the freighter's cargo bay, next to where I sat. I had long ago given up any attempt to conceal it or carry it. Instead I now treated any questions with indiscriminate and thinly-veiled hostility, which had slowly proven to be an effective method of preventing future questions.

The ship's engines slowed down, and I could feel the atmospheric resistance begin to push the ship as it descended. My shoulders jostled against the boxes I was squeezed between as the freighter rocked slightly back and forth, but the box lay still against the ground, a testament to its weight.

I had forgotten the name of this ship already. It was just the latest in a long line that I had wheedled, bargained, and begged for rides on after my ship had been shot down.

The captain, whose name I had also already forgotten, poked his head through the opening to the rest of the ship. "We've landed," he said. "This is your stop."

I stood up slowly. His eyes darted to the blaster that hung from my left hip, but he didn't hold the gaze. With a gruff nod, he turned and headed back out. I stooped to pick up the box with both hands. Holding it in front of me, I walked out of the hull and down the lowered access ramp into the bright tropic sun of Aurora Prime's equatorial rainforests.

It had taken eight years to follow this path, to get here. Eight years of hopping from planet to planet, and then from ship to ship, trying to piece together my passage towards the end of the map that Aram had given all those years ago. It was hardly ever easy, or linear, or free.

I lost my ship too early. I would have made it years ago if I hadn't gotten caught by a sector defense cruiser on some planet I can't even remember the name of anymore. It was only a couple jumps after leaving Naboo, so I truly hadn't made it far.

From then on, it was putting together odd jobs, hitching rides with kind or intimidateable pilots, or stowing away on some cargo freighter or another. Each trip I tried to edge closer and closer in the direction of my destination, but it wasn't always possible. After I passed the Corellian Trade Spine, there were no more major routes that people passed through on. Nobody was travelling too far, and if they decided to dump me on some backwater agro world with a flattened field for a spaceport, then I was out of luck.

But I persevered, and I made it. The well-developed spaceport on Aurora Prime was a blessing after strings of near-abandoned backwater layover planets. An undisguised mix of military and industrial activity kept the place noisy even without ships taking off and landing. I hadn't seen this many people in one place in many months, and it made me irrationally happy.

Still holding the box and walking a little bit weighed down by its mass, I made my way down the ramp and towards the well-marked import station on the far side of the airfield. The hot and steamy air combined

with the backwash of ship engines to quickly bead sweat on my skin, but it was far from the most uncomfortable I had been.

After waiting in a short line of pilots logging their ships and manifestos, I found myself at the front with nothing to say and unsure what to ask.

"Your name, ship's name, and import," the Togruta manning the desk said without looking up from his datapad.

I hesitated. "Um, I'm looking for the... the Dark Brotherhood?" I asked quietly. I had learned ver the past couple months of asking that question that more often than not people either had no idea hat I was saying or had an inherently violent answer to that question, so I had become careful.

The Togruta still didn't look up from his pad. "Sure. Your name, ship's name, and import."

I frowned. He seemed completely unaffected by something that I would have thought surely aised flags in protocol. Nothing named the *Dark Brotherhood* was this easy to access or this familiar in ommon vernacular. "My name is Alexandre Morgan. I don't have a ship or an import, I'm just trying to get to the Dark Brotherhood."

The Togruta, still without breaking his eyes from his pad, pointed out across the spaceport. "This is the import queue," he said, still without any large inflection or interest. "The Eos shuttle service is over there. Have a good day here in New Imperial City. Next!"

I hurried out of the line to avoid getting crushed by the Crolute that was shuffling up behind me. I looked in the direction that the Togruta had pointed me, but I didn't see any similar terminal. Internally shrugging, I started walking that direction anyway. *New Imperial City*? Where was I?

The humanoid droid sitting behind the counter spun its head in a few nauseating revolutions as I arrived, seemingly shaking itself and getting warmed up for a conversation that didn't happen all too often.

"I'm looking for the Dark Brotherhood," I said. I didn't want to waste too much time, fearing that I'd overload the antique droid's obviously not-often-tested logic circuits.

"The B-Br-Br-Brotherhood, eh?" it replied in a mechanically distorted stutter. A spark flew out of its neck as it bent over the counter, its face nearing mine. I took an involuntary step back.

The droid let loose a chatter that I could only assume was a corrupted laughter mechanism. "You won't last long on E-E-Eos if you take a s-step b-back when something gets in your face, little human."

I glared. "I was afraid you'd shortcircuit and fall on me," I retorted. "Can you get me there?"

The droid leaned back to stand up straight, giving me the sense that if it could, it would look offended. "I'm the only one here who can, little human."

"What will it cost me?" I asked. Not much had been done out of the pureness of hearts on my journey here.

"Free," the droid said brusquely. Its lighted eyes flickered in another sign of amusement. "Free because it's f-f-free entertainment for me, little human."

I nodded. "Can we leave now?"

The droid made the chuckle stutter static noise again. "Sure, little human." I was pretty sure that phrase had

gotten stuck in its programming and that every sentence would end with that. "I'll gather the rest of the passengers, and then we'll board my ship, little human."

There were no other passengers, and there was certainly not room for many other people in the droid's closet of a ship. There was barely room to put the box down at my feet. Another joke from the cybernetic comedian, I supposed.

To his credit, he piloted the glorified engine smoothly. Exiting the Auroran atmosphere was relatively smooth. I could see the moon of Eos growing steadily larger in the front viewport, the first glimpse I had of it as I had been stuck in the viewless cargo hold of the freighter I entered the system in. It was desolate and empty from this point of view, and the brief thought flashed across my mind that the droid was going to dump me on the atmosphere-lacking moon and cackle as he flew away and I froze and choked to death.

The droid reached out to touch a button on the console in front of him, and flipped a lever up. "Auroran shuttle to Eos, requesting a landing pad. Broadcasting clearance codes to the established frequency."

The other end was silent, for a few seconds, but the droid seemed unperturbed. I wondered how many people he had taken up in this manner, as he seemed seasoned with the procedure. This interchange was much more in line with what I was expecting from a Brotherhood.

The comms speaker fizzled before a voice came through. It was a deep and rattly voice, almost too much for the elementary comms system.

"Received, shuttle. Landing pad one is illuminated for your convenience. Any deviation will be met with lethal force." The voice paused, but the static remained, indicating that he was not done speaking and the mic was still

open. "We were wondering when you'd be bringing another friend, it has been a while."

"Copy that, Eos," the droid replied. His eyes flickered again as he said, "Yes, it has. A real shame."

The static cut off, and the conversation was done. I was not thrilled with the dynamic, and I felt like with each second I grew nearer to Eos, I was in greater danger than I had been before. But there was no turning back now, I supposed. Too much invested, too much lost to be intimidated by a failing droid and a deep voice.

The shuttle slipped into orbit of the moon and then dipped the nose down, diving into Eos's gravity well. It hurtled towards what appeared to be an area just as empty as the rest of the moon, but as we approached, the subtle shimmer of shields betrayed where the destination was to be. And as we neared further, I could make out the dome of a building.

The ship touched down on the landing pad smoothly. The droid thumbed a button and the small ramp behind us descended as hydraulics hissed.

The droid looked at me. "Good luck, little human," he nodded. "I'll see you later when I come to take your body back to New Imperial City."

I rolled my eyes and stood up, grabbing the box and stepping out the ship into the contained atmosphere and bright sun. As my eyes adjusted and I stopped squinting, I saw a hooded figure standing at the base of the landing pad's access stairs. Unsure how to proceed, I stepped closer. The ship, the engines never having turned off, took off behind me and rocketed out back towards Aurora Prime.

As I neared, the figure suddenly unfolded its arms from its dark robes. It held out one old and gnarled hand in an outward 'stop' motion, and I quickly stopped walking. I was still five or six meters away.

DARK VOICE

It pointed at the box I was holding in front of me with the same hand. I was unsure if it wanted me to walk over and hand it over or what, so I raised it in front of myself in something of an offering or a clarifying question.

And then I felt the heavy weight of the box slowly lift off my hands. I stood frozen to the ground as it floated in front of me in midair and then slowly made its way over to the hooded figure, whose hand had now flipped upside down to mimic carrying the box himself from afar.

I had heard stories of the Force, seen images of Jedi and ancient Sith in my books and my studies. But I had never seen it with my own eyes. Nothing could describe the pure power I felt emanating from the figure even just with his simple telekinesis action.

The box reached the figure and stopped, hovering and rotating slowly. The figure then turned and walked down the path that led away from the pads and towards the dome. I briefly weighed if I should stay or follow, afraid that a wrong decision would have me handled with as little effort as the figure had handled the box. But I quickly unfroze my feet and followed him down, keeping some cautious distance.

The silent walk was uneventful. The scenery was mostly small craters. No vegetation grew on the lunar surface, no decorations dotted the horizon: only the low dome interrupted the otherwise bland landscape.

The box continued to hover and rotate over the figure's shoulder as he led the way, and I kept pace two or three meters behind him. Perhaps the distance was from deference, or from fear, but either way it was not as if meters of separation could save anyone that drew this man's ire from destruction.

The dome grew as we approached, deceptively small from far away but its recessed nature exposed the true size as we descended slightly into its influence. I could see an entrance at ground level, which we began to approach.

The doors were massive, but even they seemed to defer to this figure and open upon his presence. We stepped through them, and I was met with a large chamber, another indicator that more went on in this facility then just the dome would imply.

Eight massive durasteel columns rose from the floor to support the ceiling. The floor was covered in a luxurious red carpeting that pointed towards another set of double doors on the far side of the room. Benches, flora unfamiliar to me, and other decorations lined the sides, interrupted by a few turbolift bays on each side that indicated the facility went lower.

The figure walked across the room towards the other doors, and I followed. These doors had unfamiliar insignia and logos carved into them, and they did not open for the figure of their own volition. He held out both his hands once more and as they creaked open in obedience, the figure finally spoke.

He had a deep voice imbued with resonance and weight. He was undoubtedly the one who spoke over the comms system in the shuttle, but his voice carried so much more power in person.

"Welcome," he said as he pushed the doors fully open, "to the Dark Hall on Eos."

CHAPTER TWO: THE BOX

The doors parted to reveal a massive hall that reminded me of the cathedrals back on Naboo. Columns drew an observer's gaze upward to the domed ceiling. I could make out a fresco of some sort on the dome, certainly depicting some history or mythology or some mix thereof.

Banners of unfamiliar symbols

hung from the ceiling and pointed downward towards the middle of the room. There atop a rounded dias sat a few chairs. Dark yet ornate, they jutted taller than the rest of the seating in the room. Rows of benches angled and rotated to the middle no doubt served as seating for the members of whatever Brotherhood I was here to find. Or, rather, had found.

The figure walked through the center aisle towards the chairs, and I followed. As we neared, I noticed that not all of the chairs were empty. Sitting atop the most ornate of them all was a dark-robed figure. The robe's hood was raised to obscure the occupant's face.

The figure who accompanied me stopped many meters away and spoke, this time a little quieter than before. Yet his hushed voice carried oddly through the room.

"Darth Surgo. A novitiate."

The sitting figure raised his head as if being awoken, and then removed the hood from his face. His face was hard to describe - wise but not old, traveled but not trod-upon, pale but not white. His voice, carried quietly, performed in the room in the same way.

"A novitiate," he acknowledged. "A novitiate, and a box. How peculiar." The box still remained hovering near me

In retrospect, it was stupid to pipe up. It should have been clear to me that these were individuals I should not be speaking in front of, or even on my feet in front of. But for whatever reason or inane motivation, I spoke. "Darth Surgo, sir, what is this box? I've been trying to open it for years."

Surgo rose from his chair. He seemed to me, standing below the dias, to be abnormally tall, even when he did not appear that way seated. My educated self wanted to write that off to a visual trick on perspective, but it was no less unsettling.

Surgo smiled as he walked slightly

I hesitated. That question did not seem rhetorical, but Surgo grew closer and closer and began to approach the side of the dias. "Tools, sir?" That wasn't a question either but my hesitating voice made it sound like one. I repeated, trying to gather whatever strength of spirit that Surgo wasn't intimidating out of me. "Tools, sir."

"Mechanical tools, novitiate?"

I nodded, having no more vocal strength to muster up even a meek yes as he drew nearer and nearer.

Surgo now stood in front and above us on the lip of the dias. He seemed to be a giant, far out of humanoid scale.

"Fool." His voice boomed, reverberating throughout the room, but he had barely raised his inflection. It echoed for several seconds.

He narrowed his eyes. "That can not be opened with any tool but *yourself*," he whispered. "You are not an animal who grabs a tool and bangs it upon a marvel in order to understand it, are you?"

I shook my head, my voice still betraying me.

"Then don't," he emphasized. "You will have to open it, but to do so you must will it to open. You must command it to open. You must make it open." He sighed.

"You have much to learn," he said, and turned to face away. "Praetor, take this novitiate to the quarters. I shall not see him again until he opens the box."

The figure bowed and turned. I mimicked the actions and followed closely this time, eager to leave the hall and possibly regain my verbal strength. Cold air washed over us as we walked out through the doors and back into the hall towards the

turbolifts.

The quarters were not opulent but far from spartan. We walked to the sleeping quarters and passed by the recreational quarters, but I could hardly focus on what I was seeing. My body was recovering from the chills of the cathedral hall, and I was having to put conscious effort into my every step. I felt weak, felt drained.

The Praetor (whatever that meant) left me alone in what he called my quarters. As he walked away, I could have sworn I heard a muffled "for now." He had let the hovering box down on the table in the room.

I was then left alone, with no direction, no appointments, and no communication. And so I did what I had been practicing for the past several years - sat quietly.

But with no decorations and no interesting items in the room, all I could look at was the box. My thoughts dwelled on it and the shared history that it and I had, and how it was practically a miracle that it and I had kept together through the transience. It felt, as I sat there and ruminated, like an effort of sheer will.

Sheer will. Not dissimilar to what Surgo had said would open the box.

I frowned. A single word blurted itself out of my mouth, laughable in retrospect. "Open," I said to the empty room.

The box did not comply.

I frowned a little deeper and pointed at the box with a single outstretched finger as if I could command it like Surgo said. "Open."

It stood still.

I sat back in my chair, putting some distance between me and it. Chin cupped in my hands in a pondering pose, I thought about how to proceed.

Surgo's voice crept into the back of my head, sending chills down my back even at just the memory of the interaction. "*Do not think*," I could practically hear him say. "*Feel*."

Closing my eyes, I complied. I felt for how to proceed, turning off my cognizant brain and extending with my senses. It felt like I could almost see the box in front of me even with my eyes closed.

I felt my hands reaching out inexplicably, without cognizant command from my brain. They stuck out slowly and then lowered towards the box.

As soon as my palms touched the surface of the box, the visions washed over me, my closed eyes suddenly opened - but not to my current reality.

My life started over, right before my own eyes. I peered over myself as a child, babbling in my mother's arms.

And then I was older, running through the woods with some friend that I had all but forgotten.

And then I was older still, sitting in a simulation pod, no doubt blasing X-Wings through Coruscant's megalopolis or racing through Malastarian caves.

Then I was gone, halfway across the galaxy. But I stood there watching as the rebel starfighters raced over the Morgan estate and as nobody ran out as it erupted into flames and a fireball.

I stood over my own shoulder as I wept on the ship, flying away from the murder scene of my family.

I stood behind the pilot's chair as the rage grew, as the anger consumed, as the flames of revenge were tended and stoked and fanned into a bonfire inside my soul. I looked up from over my shoulder and out of the cockpit viewport to see a sun of hate and fury grow nearer, and nearer. I looked down at myself in the pilot's chair,

DARK VOICE

but I continued to slam the engines forward, unrelenting and unceasing. Nearer and nearer towards the heat I piloted, until the sun consumed all I could see. It filled my vision with a blinding yet guiding light, and then grew brighter still until everything around me vanished.

I woke up with a desperate gasp for air, as if I had been underwater. I blinked away the stars from my vision, and pressed my head off of the cold metal table it was laid upon.

I felt strong. I immediately knew something had changed without even taking stock of the room around me, but I felt renewed, invigorated. I stretched, feeling like I had been sleeping for days. A sting pieced my neck and my hand went reflexively towards it. It came back off my neck warm with fresh blood.

And then I saw it on the table.

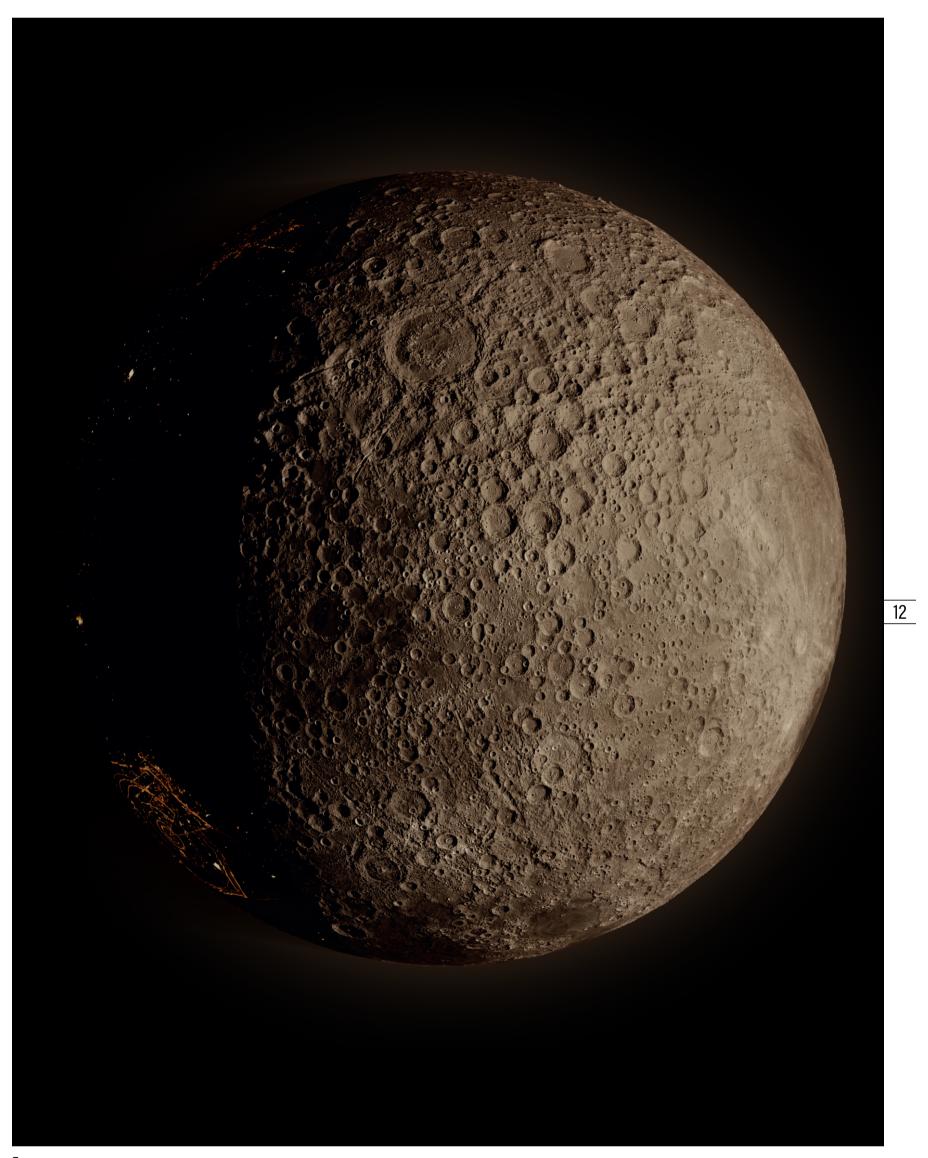
The box was opened.

Or more aptly, the box was shattered. Sharp fragments littered the table, chunked in different sizes and shapes like broken obsidian scattered by an explosion

The contents of the box lay politely in the middle, circled by the debris but seemingly unharmed. And I instantly recognized what it was. A few small metal disks, strong chrome rods, ribbed black metal casing, and some other bits and pieces lay there.

A small red crystal lay in between it all. I could feel its energy, the light it pulsed ebbing and flowing like an insidious heartbeat of hatred.

The pieces to a lightsaber lay in front of me, and in my soul I knew it was for me to assemble.



Eos Art Credit: Jagged Fell III

CONCERNING: THE UNKNOWN ENVOY

BY: KILUYAK Y AYAFA TON TON LO'WASSA

TO: REGENT HONSOU

FROM: THE RATLING

CONCERNING: THE UNKNOWN

ENVOY

First, it is with great humbleness that I write your Excellency. We have not had much time to talk since the Carbonite issue... and then the one with my first attempt to rebuild my light spear that resulted in the small meltdown. I do still apologize for the screams and lava. I will get it right this time. Aside from that, I shall get to my report, which I must admit is late.

Though, before I start, I do wish to file an official Complaint. One does not just pull myself off of a case I am working on planet side, especially not those that require deep cover and months of work. This 'distraction', though necessary, has cost the Secret Order a rather valuable bar of Beskar and a cracked, though still useable Bondar and Dangee crystal. Possibly suitable for a lightsaber, or possibly suitable as pretty rocks. We would have known after the deal, but the Chiss individual I was working with is no longer forgiving about the time break and has decided to pull my contract.

However, I am ever loyal to Eos and the Secret Order, and I will recoup the cost later.

As such, this letter reaches your desk in much haste, with all the information I have.

My contacts led me all the way out to Nishmar System. G-15 if you need a reference. I followed a lead from a rather trustworthy Gordelian I have been slowly turning informant over the last two months. Their slow speech is infuriating, however their slow speech allows them to often be overlooked in other civilized areas and the information they carry is most enlightening. It is how I have gathered information on possible Mining Sites here in the Unknown Regions! A good business venture.

Traveling to the home world gave me a lot of time to study the local stocks as well as contracts we may be able to take advantage of, if we wish to make some money of course. Many businesses are in need their partners and enemies to vanish as well as coins of all sorts changing prices by the day. Minerals and potential crystal deposits being discovered; you have found a resource rich environment!

That is the only good that came out of this mission. He introduced me to some friends on his planet, a dreadfully slow and multi-day affair. Skeer, I confirmed, lived alone but hoarded knowledge and was one of the few space travelers of his kind. The only news I have to report is that he was contacted by a shadowy figure who wished for information on the Emperor Hammer Strike Fleet. He never wrote or said a name. Only that they met, and if he got information he

was to pass it along at a dead drop. In, of all places, Parnassos.

At that point, a tactical decision had to be made. My loyalty is to the Secret Order and Emperor's Hammer. So my contact and I went for a walk. A tragedy occurred. Skeer and I fell on some ice. His death was noble. Emperors Hammer is safe. His grave is marked with a small headstone in the fleur-de-leis of the Army of Light under Farfalla, you have no need to worry about it being connected back to us.

Sir, to be absolutely polite? If I was not loyal I would tell you to take your lightsaber and toss it in the nearest reactor. You sent me to a nuclear wasteland! I am a Jawa adoptee, not a mutated sewer dweller! This is inhumane to someone like myself!

...My apologies for the outburst... The dead drop has been baited with information saying the Strike Fleet is in the Maw. I do so hope Lady Abeloth enjoys her lunch. May she reign for a thousand years more.

You may consider my sentimentality a weakness but I consider it strength. I was raised by the Jedi during the Wars. I remember what it takes to survive the worst of the times. I remember loyalty as well. In this case, loyalty was needed above any further information. Yes, one contact is burned. Yes, I took initiative and sent a low-level grunt into the stars. But in doing so I believe I kept the Secret Order, and the Emperor's Hammer safe.

DARK VOICE

For now, your Excellency, I shall stay here and await word on if my mission continues or if I am recalled and allowed to retire back to my shop and see what I can salvage from that Chiss contract. I may not be able to get the Beskar ingot anymore, but I would so love to be able to send a Bondar and Dangee crystal to you the next time we meet. After all, I still need to make back the borrowed funds for this shop front do I not?

Yours in Loyalty,

Kiluyak y Ayafa Ton Ton Lo'wassa

Requisitions:

1x Fur Grooming Kit – Gordelian do not groom like we do and my fur is matted so terribly

1x Esoteric or Literature Text – I was bored for months! This was torture of the highest caliber!

1x Replacement Robes – Done in Proper Jedi Colors (My others were ruined on Gordelian)

SECRET ORDERS

BY: JKAST

Sector Admiral Kamjin "Maverick" Lap'lamiz, a name that echoed with a brief, brutal dominance over the Secret Order, had given an edict to the new Grand Master, Honsou. The task was an insidious whisper with weight well beyond its initial impact, simple in its directive but incredibly complex in its execution: track an elusive envoy of the Sith Eternal. This figure, known in disparate corners of the galaxy as the "shadow," the "consultant," or just a "mysterious man," had plagued various instruments of the Emperor's Hammer with demands lately. To find them was an exercise in futility, a search for a ghost. The more practical approach, the one Honsou had entrusted to Armsman JKast, was to find a proxy who could arrange a meeting.

JKast, a decades long Sith student and a member of the Secret Order, had just returned from a period of independent study and exploration. The thrill of a new task, of a methodical hunt, had a familiar appeal to his mind. The mission was a study in shadows, a dance of misdirection. He had to avoid detection and not risk exposing the Secret Order to the First Order, whose presence on Jundaxa was a blighted scar on an otherwise pristine world. His presence here was a ghost of its own. He clutched at the folds of his ebon black cloak as he descended from his Delta-class shuttle. His spindly frame seemed barely present under the folds of fabric, and his pale white skin was a dramatic contrast with the black of the heavy robe. His light blue eyes, hidden under the hood, looked like spheres of clouded ice at a glimpse.

The planet Jundaxa was a living, breathing paradox. Its surface was a continuous, verdant expanse, a tapestry of green so dense it seemed to devour the light. The trees, ancient and colossal, formed a canopy so thick that the ground below lived in perpetual twilight. JKast had been to many planets, but this one was unique in its suffocating beauty. A gentle, misty rain, the byproduct of the leaves' "sweat," coated everything in a fine sheen of moisture. It smelled of life and decay, of rich earth and the bitter, sharp tang of exotic fungi. JKast's shuttle, a silent black dart against the wall of green, had dropped him near the main First Order installation on the coast. He watched it lift away, its slender wings folding upward before it vanished into the grey sky. Alone, he began his walk toward the base. He had studied the orbital reconnaissance data, a technical document filled with intricate vector-thrust equations and hyperdrive matrix diagrams, but the reality of Jundaxa was far more complex than a series of line drawings. The jungle was a puzzle, a labyrinth of biological systems he now had to navigate.

The bioluminescent plants, the data had said, provided almost the same amount of light as a star. That was a lie. In the deeper sections of the jungle, they cast a soft, ethereal glow, an array of multi-color hues that illuminated the twisting roots and sprawling fungi. It was beautiful, but it was not the sun. A series of parasitic insects and fungi worked to

weed out weak plants, so the jungle floor was littered with the husks of decaying flora. JKast found the subtle chaos of the jungle to be a source of amusement, its delicate balance of life and death a reflection of the Force itself.

He moved silently, his footsteps absorbed by the spongy, organic carpet of the jungle floor. The First Order base was a fortress, a massive, blocky structure of durasteel and reinforced transparisteel, but it was not what he was interested in. His mission was to find a proxy, a local contact who had been in communication with this envoy. The data had indicated a trade outpost on the outskirts of the base. It was a place of ill repute, a "hive of scum and villainy," as it were, where mercenaries, smugglers, and local politicians conducted their business.

JKast approached the outpost with the same cold, methodical detachment he would apply to a technical schematic. He saw the logical flow of the place, the patterns of movement, the weak points. He was not here to use the Force; that would be a last resort. He was here to observe and to listen.

The trade outpost was a bustling, noisy place, a stark contrast to the quiet of the jungle. It smelled of stale caf, unwashed bodies, and the sharp odor of cheap spice. The air was thick with the gravelly hum of voices, a cacophony of a dozen different species haggling over prices, bragging about past exploits, and complaining about the First Order's heavy-handed

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presence. JKast pulled his hood down further, his face a shadow in the low-lit bar. He found a corner booth and sat, ordering a mug of lukewarm water.

He sat for hours, a silent sentinel in the midst of the chaos. He listened, his mind an empty vessel ready to be filled with information. He heard snippets of conversations: a mercenary complaining about a recent job, a smuggler trying to offload some illegal cargo, a local politician trying to secure a bribe. Nothing. He felt a familiar intellectual curiosity take hold. He was looking for something specific, a deviation from the norm, a subtle chaos that came from two incompatible systems being forced together.

Finally, he heard it. A thin, lanky Human technician was talking to a heavily armed Rodian mercenary nearby. The Human was fidgeting nervously, his datapad clutched in his hand.

"He called again," the Human whispered, his voice barely audible over the din of the bar. "The 'consultant.' He wants more information on the power generators. He said the information we gave him was... incomplete."

The Rodian grunted. "Tell him to wait. The First Order is on a hair-trigger. We can't risk it."

"He doesn't wait," the Human replied, his voice in a tremble. "He said if we don't provide the information, our 'partnership' is over. He said... he knows where we live."

The Rodian's eyes widened. JKast felt a spark ignite in his mind. This Rodian's fear, his sudden shift in demeanor, was the key. He had found his proxy.

JKast left his booth, his footsteps silent as he walked toward the two men. The Rodian saw him first, his hand instinctively moving toward his blaster. JKast did not stop and did not slow his pace. He simply reached out with the Force and, without thinking

further, gently but firmly pushed the Rodian's hand away from the weapon. The alien's eyes widened even further, but he did not speak. He had felt the power, the immense, terrifying power that had been wielded against him with such casual ease.

"I can help you with your problem," JKast's voice was a loud whisper, clear and sharp. "The First Order's technology is an extension of their engineering philosophy. To make it our own, we have to change our approach. You need to understand the logic of the machine, not just its function."

The Human technician stared at him, his mouth agape. "What... what do you know about their technology?"

JKast ignored the question. "He wants information on the power generators. He wants to know about the regulation matrix and the surge suppression failsafe. I just worked on this problem. I know it is likely worrying the First Order, too."

The Human's eyes darted from JKast to the Rodian and back again. The Rodian, for his part, was staring at JKast with a newfound respect, a flicker of terror still present in his eyes.

"Who are you?" the Human stammered.

JKast didn't answer. He simply reached into a pouch on his belt and pulled out a small, metallic object. It was a data chip, an ordinary-looking piece of technology that nevertheless held valuable information given the context. He held it out to the Human.

"Take this. It contains all the information you need. A full analysis of their power systems, their comms, their targeting systems. I have found the key to unlock its potential. This will be enough to satisfy him. For now."

The Human's hand trembled as he took the chip. "What do you want?"

"I want a meeting with your 'consultant'," JKast replied. "A face-to-face meeting. A meeting of equals."

The Rodian scoffed, but JKast's eyes narrowed, his gaze piercing through the Rodian's bravado. The Rodian swallowed hard and looked away.

"That's... impossible," the Human said, stammering. "He doesn't meet with anyone. He's a ghost."

JKast shook his head. "Everyone can be found. He will meet with me. He will want to know how I came to possess this information. He will want to know who I am. Tell him that I am a student of both the machine and the Force. And that I have a proposition for him. A way to get what he wants without having to resort to proxies."

He turned and walked away, disappearing into the shadows of the bustling cantina just as quickly as he had appeared. He left the two men staring at the data chip, their faces in various stages of confusion and fear.

JKast returned to his shuttle, the jungle's soft hum now a familiar backdrop. He sat in the low-lit quiet of the study room onboard, a sense of satisfaction settling over him. He had found his proxy. He had set a trap. Now, he would wait. He closed his eyes, sinking into a deep meditation. He didn't seek calm or peace; he sought the opposite. He reached deep within himself, pulling forth the frustrations of his long and arduous training, the indignities of his status as a mere student. He used his fury as a conduit, a signal to the universe.

He knew the envoy would come. He had given him a test. He had given him a mystery. And a ghost, no matter how elusive, can always be lured into the light. And JKast intended to make sure that the Grand Master got his introduction to the Sith Eternal.



Diamond Sword Art Credit: Acoloyte Visas Vamain / House Valkorion

JAKKU JEDI TRIAL BY: HECTOR VON RICMORE

Jakku. What a miserable planet.
Starship debris littered the seemingly endless sand, reminding the Clawdite of images of Raxus Prime from historical holobooks. At least that planet could contribute its industrial might. Jakku was nothing more than a gathering place for scavengers, like a bit of roadkill along a major road.

Despite its rather unappealing nature, the planet held something of interest to Hector Von Ricmore. It had recently come to light that one of its cities housed members of the Church of the Force. The group was an organization largely composed of non Force Users whom held their own beliefs on the Force. Many followed the teachings of the Jedi Order.

Had the Empire not fallen, it was likely that Hector Von Ricmore would be serving as an Inquisitor and tasked with destroying such a group. But with Palpatine's demise and the fracturing of the Empire into a myriad of sub groups, the official stance on such groups varied widely.

In Hector's humble opinion, the existence of the group was useful. They could be used as a potential resource if one was not overtly hostile and steeped in the Dark Side, and they could be monitored to find potential Jedi threats who sought to take action against the Emperor's Hammer.

Regardless of the views that the Hammer may hold for such a group, Hector found his way to them. He had borrowed a Secret Order freighter with permission, loading the vessel with his Arrow Landspeeder and a variety of provisions. Such supplies would be useful for survival on a desert world and in negotiating with its inhabitants.

He landed the freighter at Niima Outpost, a structure built by the avarice consumed Hutt's in search of profit. Upon exiting the vessel he was accosted by a trio with armored circle shaped hats; members of the Kyuzo species.

The lead figure spoke in a clear, concise manner. "Welcome to Niima Outpost. I am Zuvio, the Constable here. New arrivals check in with Unkar Plutt. Follow me."

Hector looked the trio over. Kyuzo were known for their abilities as warriors and their blaster resistant helmets. The bladed polearm that Zuvio carried was also quite convincing. He wasn't here to make trouble and was willing to acquiesce.

If Hector was to describe Unkar Plutt with one word he would say large. Unkar had large mass. He traded in large quantities of salvage. And he sought a large profit.

The Crolute sat in his concession stand as he appraised the newcomer. Fancy looking armor and several visible weapons. Traveling in a large ship. He could make a profit off this one.

"So. What brings you to my humble part of the galaxy?" Unkar rumbled.

"I've heard rumors that a group I have been seeking has been living on Jakku. Do you have any knowledge of The Church of the Force and if they are present on Jakku?"

Unkar let out a deep belly laugh. "The Church of the Force, those old fools? You one of them Jedis?"

"Not quite no. Merely a collector, a lover of history. The Church knows the location of an artifact I seek." Hector misdirected.

"An Artifact? Must be valuable. I am Unkar Plutt, all salvage trade goes through me. I know where you can find those dusty academics. But first is the matter of my fee." Unkar stated.

"I understand that Jakku is quite far from most of the galaxy and am willing to pay accordingly. I'll pay a standard rate plus an additional 20,000 credits for my lodging here."

"I do like credits. That will cover your docking, yes. But the information? You need to pay more."

"I can part with an equivalent to 250 of your food rations from my cargo."

"Make it 1000."

"With how much I've already payed? Insanity. 500 portions or I find another outpost."

"You have a deal my silver tongued friend. A deal."

Hector provided the codes to several of his cargo crates, with the condition that the Constable oversaw the transaction personally. Unkar Plutt agreed. The Constable would keep the peace in the outpost, but he could take advantage of the newcomer when he had left the lawman's reach.

DARK VOICE

"The Church members are in Tuanul. Travel northwest past the many wrecks and Old Meru's encampment. You'll find your village there."

Payment was exchanged and Hector returned to his ship to collect his landspeeder for the trip. Once the reptilian and the Constable had left, Unkar discreetly pressed a button on the underside of his stand. He had an agreement with a variety of scavenger groups, they would attack targets he designated and give him a cut of the profits. If they succeed he would make a profit. If it failed, it cost him nothing. Unkar Plutt was the King of Salvage for a reason; he always knew how to make a profit with minimal investment.

Hector left Niima Outpost at high speed, his Arrow Landspeeder easily cruising along the sand. Aside from the many wrecks dotting the landscape and endless stretch of sand, there was little to occupy his eyes. He continued his trip at a steady pace, entirely oblivious of the trio of speeder bikes trailing him from a short distance away.

His pursuers were a group of armed scavengers, two humans and a weequay. All had done work for Unkar Plutt before and were willing to kill to make a profit. They were proficient in their craft, taking advantage of the dust kicked up by the larger landspeeder to reduce the profile of their own crafts. All three knew they had to be patient, the opportunity to strike would come with time. All sentients had to sleep eventually after all. And it was best to wait for their prey to recover the artifact before engaging. Let the green skinned one do all the hard work so they could profit.

Tuanul Village was a small settlement. A variety of sandstone buildings served as the foundation for the village. It supported a few dozen members of The Church of the Force. These people followed the teachings of the Jedi but were not Force users themselves. They had embraced a more simple life. But that did not mean they were incapable of defending their village.

The Arrow Landspeeder is a ground vehicle with visible armament. The top of the vehicle is home to a turret with a concussion grenade launcher and laser cannon turret. So the response from the villagers was quite understandable.

Members of the Church rushed throughout the town, grabbing blaster rifles and settling into defensive positions. They fixed their weapons on the approaching vehicle.

The landspeeder came to a stop on the outskirts of the village. Hector exited the vehicle and looked upon the weapons pointed at him. He raised his hands in the universal sign of surrender and walked towards the settlement.

A human female with neck length black hair was the first to question his action.

"What business do you have with Tuanul village?"

"I am Hector Von Ricmore. And I have come to learn the ways of the Force." With his pronuncement the shapechanger sank into the Force. His training lightsaber levitated off his belt and ignited, projecting a yellow blade. The weapon rotated, giving the Church members time to observe the weapon.

The blade deactivated and floated down to Hector's waist, where he clipped it on his belt once again.

"This is merely a training blade. I have come to request the assistance of the Children of the Force in finding a Kyber crystal so that I may construct a The human woman looked intently upon the visitor. Perhaps she had some way of judging his worthiness or saw something beyond what he could comprehend. Either way, it wasn't for Hector to say.

After several moments the woman spoke. "These are dark times, even after the fall of the Emperor. We will not provide you our names, it is safer that way. We will test if you are worthy. There is a trial that the Jedi of the past would undergo. A trial that you must pass to gain our trust."

"Very well. Lead me to this trial."

The woman led him to a small hut. Within the building was something unusual. Instead of a sandstone floor, the ground was covered with an elaborately etched stone. The symbol of the Jedi lie in the center of the floor. Old braziers had been placed on the outskirts of the circle.

"For this trial you must meditate in the center of the circle. We will ignite the braziers so that the Force can light your way."

"Just meditate? Is that it? How will I know if I have passed the trial?"

The woman's face shifted ominously.

"You will know. Trust me. You will know."

The fires of the brazier were lit and Hector sat in the center of the circle. He gazed into the flames and drifted away, allowing the Force to guide him.

He awoke in a featureless expanse. A vast void of space lit by twinkling stars. The environment around him shifted from hazy smoke into firm reality. He was inside a ship of some kind. He could hear the distant hum of engines. He was surrounded by durasteel walls and a variety of crates that filled a vast cargo deck.

Atop one of the crates sat an individual. An individual that looked

Where Hector wore a protective set of medium powered armor, the doppelgänger wore an elaborate trench coat. His reptilian skin was dotted with a variety of visible cybernetic enhancements, and no doubt not so visible augmentations as well.

A double bladed lightsaber was clipped at his left hip and an A-280 transforming blaster pistol was hoisted on his right hip..

A look of confusion settled on Hector's face.

"And just what are you supposed to be?" He asked the strange apparition.

"I'm glad you asked." The being replied with mirth. "I'm you. Or rather the you that would have existed had you been born a few decades ago. I serve the Empire as an Inquisitor. And today I serve to test you. Prepare yourself."

With that word of warning he ignited one blade of his saber staff, launching himself forward towards Hector. The armored reptile ignited his training saber in a panic, backpedaling with blade in front.

The doppelgänger brought his blade down in a series of powerful swings. Each swing was intercepted with great difficulty, the armored figure barely managing to get his arm into position. Hector felt his arm strain with each blocked attack, the being in front of him was significantly stronger.

"Not bad. Not bad at all. But lets take things a bit more seriously shall we?" The figure mused.

A second lightsaber blade emitted from his staff.

Kriffing Hells.

There was a slight rustle of his Trenchcoat as he blurred forward,

lightsaber staff streaking towards Hector's head. He blocked clumsily, deflecting the blow but disarming himself of his training saber which tumbled off to the side.

His enemy continued his assault, attempting to finish the fight there. Hector threw himself backward desperately buying time. Time to do something; anything.

Desperation is the mother of invention.

Hector allowed the Force to flow through him as he had been taught. He reached out with the energy field and pulled his right hand towards his body. The lightsaber staff flew through the air and into his outstretched hand.

The weapon was unfamiliar. He couldn't risk hurting himself here. So he deactivated one of the blades, holding his captured implement as a long hilt lightsaber.

His opponent did not seem overly upset at the maneuver. No, if anything he appeared excited.

"Now we have a real challenge." The figure uttered.

He rushed forward again. He was slower, easier to follow. But a threat nonetheless.

Caught off guard by the sudden aggression given the lack of a weapon, Hector swung towards the figure.

The Trenchcoat billowed as he sidestepped the swing and drew the blaster pistol. A trio of blasts exited the barrel which forced Hector to parry as the figure rushed closer.

Hector swung out again at the figure and stared in horror as his foe reached out and brushed the side of his hilt, parrying the blade to the side. A sharp pain bubbled up in his chest as the blaster pistol discharged into his armor. He was entirely unprepared for the boot that slammed into his side, throwing him to the ground.

The armored reptile groaned, letting out a string of expletives at the punishment his body had endured.

The Trenchcoat figure merely watched in amusement, confident in his physical superiority even without his lightsaber.

Hector reached out in the Force once again. He could feel the energy of Living Force suffuse him. It built and built within his right arm until it threatened to explode. He shoved the arm towards his foe, hurling a ball of fire.

His foe nimbly leapt over the fireball with little difficulty. But the flash from the bright explosion distracted him for several seconds. Just long enough for Hector to draw a weapon from his bandolier.

With pain reverberating through his body Hector pulled the trigger.

Invisible but quite harmful sound waves flew towards his foe. The Trenchcoat figure stumbled backwards in pain. The sound barraged his ears and his brain again and again and again. He gripped the side of his head, falling to his knees in pain.

Just as suddenly as it had appeared the apparition dissipated, fading into a mist and then disappearing from view entirely.

"Well done. You have passed the first test."

Hector whipped his head around. In front of him was another double. Garbed in a strange set of armor and an elaborate cloak, an unsettling aura emanated from the being.

He could feel a crushing weight. Power. Pure unquestionable power radiated from the man in front of him.

He could try to use the Sonic Stunner again. But his eyes were drawn to the man's belt. Twin lightsabers were clipped to it, alongside another holstered blaster pistol.

His body ached. He couldn't fight another foe. Not so soon after the first

The sonic stunner slipped from exhausted, trembling fingers and clattered to the ground.

Hector eyed the man with weary eyes as he marched forward. The cloaked figure stopped and sat down in front of him.

"You're far wiser than most who take these trials." The man said.

What did he mean?

"Bravado and Honor mean nothing to the dead. You've shown yourself willing to use alternative methods, refusing to solely rely upon the lightsaber or the Force. And you've

accepted your mortal limits. Sometimes the best way to win a fight is to not fight in the first place."

"This is just the beginning. The path of a Force user is fraught with peril and suffering. Yet I believe the future will be safe in your hands. Live well Hector Von Ricmore. Live and learn."

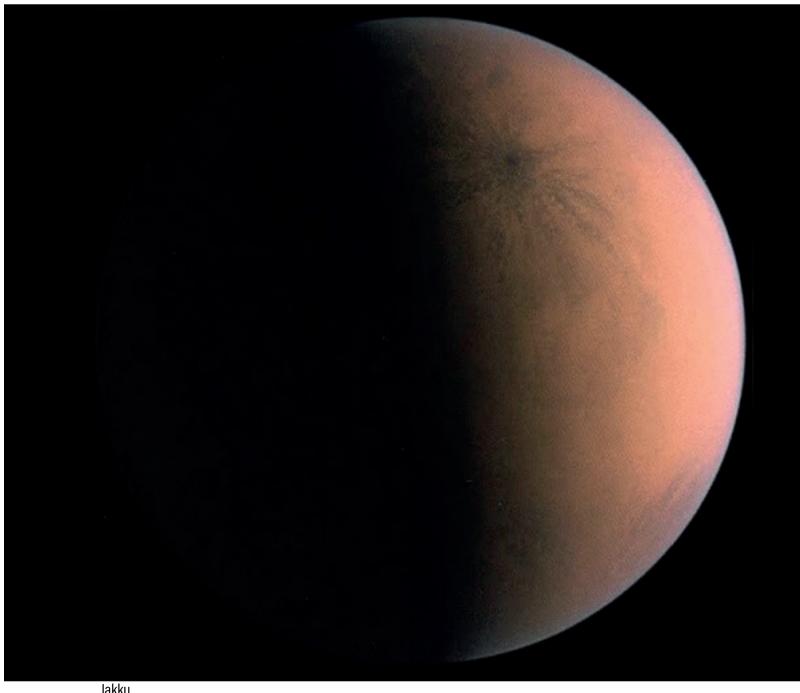
With those words of wisdom the vision fizzled out. Hector's eyes opened to see the inside of the hut; he had never left it. His injuries were healed; or perhaps it was more accurate to say he was never injured at all. In his open palm sat two crystals. A yellow kyber crystal and a white pink focusing crystal; a shard of the Kaiburr.

He placed the crystals into his bandolier pockets to keep them safe. He had accomplished his mission and acquired the last things he needed to construct a lightsaber.

Rising to his feet he felt something strange. An approaching group of sentients with ill intent surrounding them.

It seemed the next adventure was closer than he realized.

Well, he shouldn't keep them waiting.



Jakku

ASSEMBLY LOG

BY: THERJ'EN'NURUODO

It is done.

The blade I once envisioned in fragments—crystal by crystal, part by part—has now come together. Not through ceremony. Not through Jedi meditation. But through focus, will, and the weight of history.

I returned to the war-scarred vaults of Clan Krann to complete the construction. In silence, beneath banners that now answer to me, I laid out the components as though they were sacred relics. The crimson-hued crystal from Darth Arctis, taken from his tomb beneath Korriban's sands, rested at the center—dark, patient, pulsing with the intellect of a Sith long gone but never forgotten. It seemed to recognize my presence, as if it had been waiting for this moment.

The hilt, forged from Virok Krann's armor, had cooled in the forge for days—quenched in oils, acid-etched with the glyphs of victory, and engraved with the sigil of Clan Krann, now my own. I held it not as a mere weapon, but as a testament to the path I have walked.

The Ilum focusing crystals—three in perfect alignment, one inverted—sat beside it, amplifying the strength of the primary kyber. Jedi hands once

sought these, but I claimed them first.

The power assembly components, pried from the Jedi Temple on Tython in complete silence, fit together with careful precision. The diatium power cell from a forgotten vault. The field conductor was once used in a training saber. The vortex ring and insulator were salvaged from research chambers. Each part, not simply taken from the Jedi, but from their history. Their hopes.

The assembly was not without its struggles. The blade resisted at first. The Force—both Light and Dark—shifted unpredictably as I aligned the core. I did not meditate. I guided it, commanded it, shaping it with intent and determination. With each adjustment, with each recalibration of the crystal matrix, I molded the energy to my will.

And then—it ignited.

A deep crimson blade emerged, steady and resolute, as the hum filled the chamber. At first, the sound was almost imperceptible, but then it grew strong and unwavering.

This is not a Jedi's weapon, nor is it a

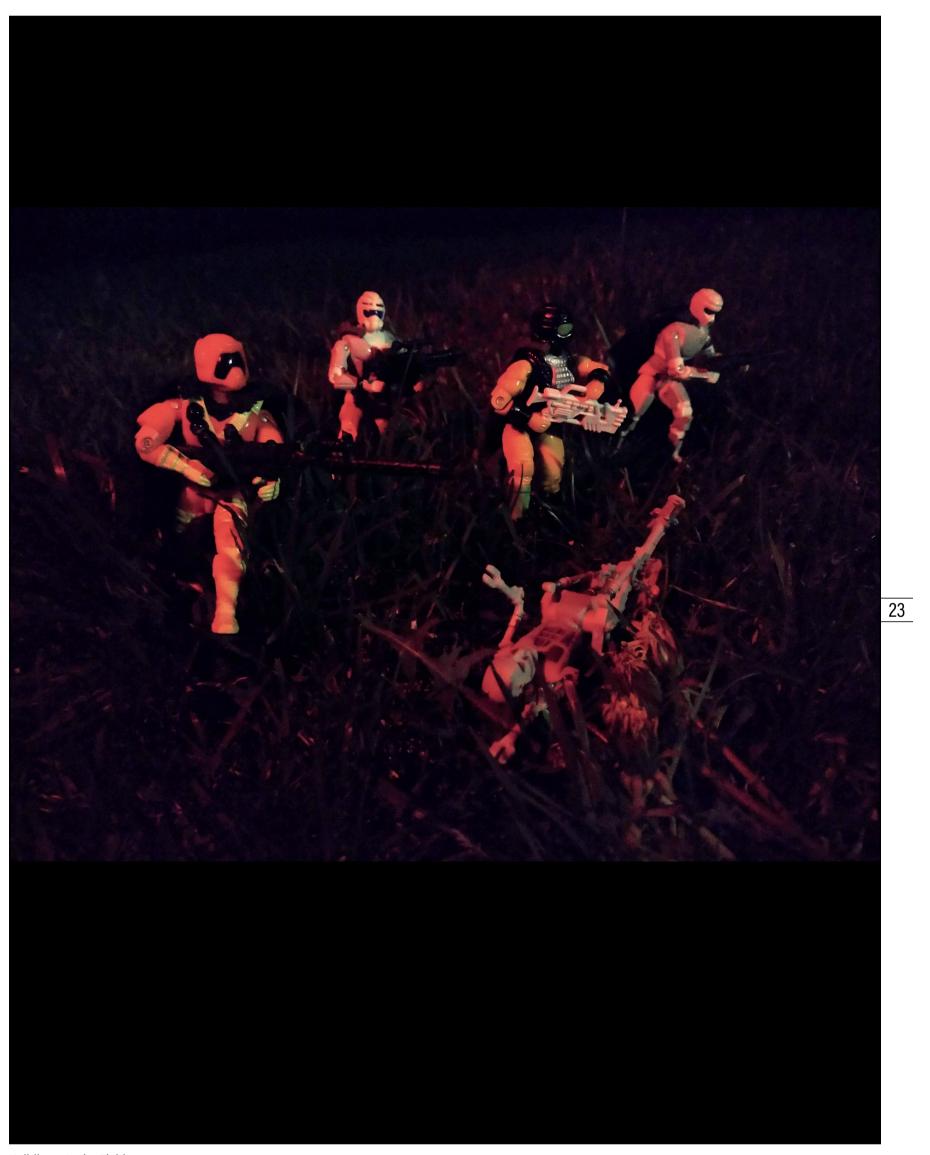
mere relic. This is a Sith's blade—born of conquest, shaped by legacy, and wielded by one who recognizes only strength and determination.

It is a reflection of my purpose.

It is the embodiment of my resolve.

It is the response to doubt—and the dawn of my path.

Let the galaxy take note. I am armed.



Helldivers In the Field Art Credit: Knight Westric Davalorn / House Palpatine

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