

Out on patrol

It hadn't been long since the Brotherhood's war against the Children of Mortis in the Ethereal Realm. After much struggle and many losses, Arcona and the other clans of the Brotherhood returned home victorious. While they were away, however, the Dajorra System was mostly left weakened and unguarded. Many in the system began to grow concerned that criminal organizations might've snuck in during their absence. Because of this, House Galeres decided to perform patrols across the Arconan Dominion. After the war, Meero, a young Kushiban, had graduated from the Training Corps and was appointed an official pilot for House Galeres which was a dream come true for him as he'd always wanted to become a pilot since he was very young. Along with the rest of Galeres, Meero had received orders to aid in patrolling the system and report any criminal activity.

Unnamed islands on Selen

The Dajorra System

41 ABY

Meero had decided to begin his patrol on Selen since he was already on the planet. Aboard his ship, the Starlight, he flew to several of the planet's unnamed or unoccupied islands and surveyed them. He made sure to patrol larger islands on his speeder bike rather than his ship, just so he wouldn't be spotted if there was indeed criminal activity. But all seemed well in Selen. There wasn't anything to report.

On the last island he patrolled, Meero had parked his bike on a hill top and scanned the area with binoculars. It was peaceful. All he saw were fields, forests, the ocean and the only sounds he heard were birds and the wind blowing. "Well, I think it's safe to say nothing illegal is happening on Selen." He said to his little LO-LA droid while lowering his binoculars. "I mean... nothing outside the usual activity at least."

"So, do we report back? We didn't really find anything." The little blue-striped droid beeped.

Meero put away his binoculars, adjusted his glasses and hopped on his bike. "Yeah just to let them know the planet is clear. Can't say I'm surprised though. With the Citadel here, anyone who would attempt to start something is either ballsy or stupid. Ok, let's head back."

"Alrighty then!" Lola beeped flying into one of Meero's pockets. The Kushiban then started his bike and rode off in the direction of his ship.

Once they were back aboard the Starlight, Meero used his Holoterminal to contact HQ. He was happy to report that Selen was all clear and that he wouldn't mind continuing his patrol on a different planet. They thanked him for his report and took him up on his offer, requesting that he visit Arconae Primus next.

Arconae Primus

The Dajorra System

Once the Starlight arrived on Arconae Primus, Meero first checked in with known settlements and mining facilities. While most had nothing to report, some mentioned hearing unusual sounds coming from the jungle. This definitely caught the little lagomorph's attention so he decided to investigate. He tried surveying the jungle from the air but the amount of thick vegetation made it difficult. So he landed the Starlight in the first opening he could find.

As the ship's cargo doors began to open, Meero readied himself and his speeder bike to head out. However, his little droid companion was feeling uneasy. "Are you sure you wanna go out on your own? I have a bad feeling about this..." She beeped in a worried tone.

"Yes, Lola. These jungles and swamps are dangerous and I'd feel more at ease if you stayed here." He replied as he hopped on his bike. "I'll be back by sundown. Keep me posted if the scanners spot anything, ok?"

The little droid nodded. "Ok. *Please* be careful, you hear me?"

"I will!" Said Meero as the cargo doors finished opening and he rode off into the jungle.

The Kushiban sped through the dense jungle on his bike, feeling the humid air blowing through his fur. Because the canopy was so thick, it covered the jungle floor with shadow and murk. Meero had to navigate using his senses and piloting skills so he wouldn't crash into anything. Hours passed and he couldn't spot anything other than the local wildlife. As darkness began to descend, Meero stopped his bike near the edge of a cliff and looked around the area.

"Hmmm, nothing out here either and it's starting to get dark. I better head back to the ship or Lola will never let me hear the end of it." He said while wiping off the various dead bugs he amassed while speeding through the jungle. "I'll try a different direction tomorrow-" Suddenly, as he was about to start his bike again, his ears perked up. He heard something.

It didn't sound like an animal. They were voices. Coming from somewhere at the bottom of the cliff, but he couldn't see them due to the dense vegetation. Meero hid his bike and looked around for a way to go down the cliff safely. He noticed several vines that slithered down the cliff face like snakes. He grabbed one and pulled it with all his strength, making sure it was secure. Luckily, it appeared to be sturdy enough to hold him. He made his way down the cliff slowly and very quietly, until he was close enough to the bottom that he could let go of the vine and use the trees to climb the rest of the way down. By the time he reached the ground, it was already nighttime so he used the darkness to his advantage. As he got closer, the voices got louder and he saw what looked like a campfire. The young lagomorph made sure to stay hidden by keeping to the bushes and changing his fur color to match the vegetation around him.

"How long musst we wait?" He heard one of them say in a raspy voice. "Drosst should be back by now."

Meero finally managed to get a better look at them. It was a group of Trandoshans. There were three of them and, by the look of their gear, they were hunters. "Trandoshans? Here? What could they possibly be after?" He whispered to himself.

"Oh shut up, Nax! Drosst sssaid to wait here and here we will wait." Another one said while shoving him.

"Ugh... fine! But he's been gone all day! How long doesss it take to find a Krite Dragon?"

The Kushiban's eyes widened when he heard that. "They're looking for a Krite Dragon? I don't think they're just hunters... they must be poachers." He said to himself. "I need to report this-" Meero immediately sensed something behind him but, as he turned around to see what it was, he felt a hard hit on the head and everything went dark.

Meero woke up several hours later in a daze. "Wha... what happened?" He said while slowly getting up. His vision was blurry but, after feeling his face, he realized it was because he wasn't wearing his glasses. However, he could tell it was daytime because everything was bright.

"Looking for thessse?" He heard a raspy voice say as they placed his glasses in his hand.

When he put on his glasses and his vision adjusted, Meero saw that he was in a cage. Surrounding him were four Trandoshans. All of them laughing and squealing.

"What luck!" One of them said while chuckling. "Here I wasss thinking I wasss coming back empty handed sssince I couldn't find a Krite Dragon. But what *do* I find? A Kushiban ssticking his nose where it doesn't belong."

Meero glared at him. "What are you doing here?"

The Trandoshan didn't like the way Meero was looking at him, so he kicked the cage which caused Meero to trip. "Careful how you ssspeak to me, whelp!" He said while growling. "We're here looking for a Krite Dragon. Its head will look nicely on our wall and its hide will fetch a high price."

As Meero got back up, another Trandoshan looked at him closely while smelling him. "What do you think, Drosst? Do we use him ass bait?"

"Hmmm... No. A Kushiban would also be valuable. We're keeping him alive. For now. Hehehe. Now let's go! We've got prey to find!"

Three of the Trandoshans then left while the one called Nax stayed behind to keep an eye on the little lagomorph. Meero gently felt around his waist but realized he didn't have his weapons or gear on him. Great... He looked around their camp and managed to spot his things on a table nearby. He could try to use his telekinesis to get his things and escape. However, Nax watching him was a problem. Meero sighed, sat down and waited for an opportune moment.

Hours passed and, luckily for the little Kushiban, the Trandoshan keeping an eye on him was getting bored. "Eeh, you're not going anywhere." Nax said to Meero. "Might ass well find sssomething nearby to kill." Nax then walked away from the camp, disappearing into the jungle. A perfect opportunity!

Meero stood up and extended his hand while focusing. His gear began to float above the table and then slowly started moving towards the cage. He'd have to be quick, but he knew once he had his gear he could escape. Meero stayed focused as his things floated closer and closer towards the cage until, finally, he had them. "Ok good!" He sighed in relief.

Suddenly, Meero's ears perked up and his eyes widened as he heard a voice yell. "HEY! How did you do that?!" Nax had returned and began charging towards Meero's cage with his blaster at the ready. "I don't care what Drosst says. You're mine!" Nax then took aim at Meero.

Without even thinking, Meero reacted with a powerful Force push. Nax was pushed back with such force that he flew in the direction of a tree and one of the branches pierced through his body. With his dying breath, Nax began to squeal loudly calling for the others, his voice echoing throughout the jungle. He then went silent and limp.

"Oh no..." Said Meero realizing he only had a few moments before the others returned. He quickly took his arc welder and used it on the lock. "Come on... Come on..." He began to grow very anxious. Finally the welder broke through the lock and the cage opened. He put all his things on and bolted away from the camp the same way he came. As he began climbing the trees to be able to reach the vines hanging from the cliff, he heard a loud shriek coming from the camp. He knew the others had returned and became furious at the sight of their deceased companion.

"Look! The whelp went that way!" He heard Drosst yell. He had spotted Meero's tracks. "After him! I'm going to ssskin him alive!"

Hearing this, Meero began climbing even faster. Once he reached the treetops, he used the Force to jump twice as high and quickly grabbed one of the vines. Although his footing slipped a bit, he held the vine tightly and began to make his way up. Suddenly, blaster fire hit the cliff wall right next to him. "Woah! What?" He said looking down and saw that the Trandoshans had also reached the treetops and opened fire on him.

"Get back here, fur ball!" Yelled Drosst while shooting at him. "I'm going to turn you into a rug!"

Meero had to jump upwards, sideways and from vine to vine avoiding the blaster fire as best he could. Once he was near the top, he attempted one last jump to finally reach the edge of the cliff, but was suddenly stopped when one of the blaster shots hit his shoulder. The little Kushiban then fell back down to the bottom of the cliff. As he

plummeted, he tried desperately to use the trees to slow down the fall. While it worked and he survived, he was very beat up when he reached the ground. Meero tried to get up but was in so much pain that he could only crawl. He could hear the Trandoshans coming back down from the trees and approach him. Meero took his blaster, turned around and aimed it at Drosst, who proceeded to kick it away. The Trandoshan then stomped on Meero and held him down with his foot while growling.

“Nice try, whelp. But not good enough. Now you die by my clawsss.”

Exhausted and beat up, Meero struggled to break free as Drosst slowly reached for him imagining the many ways he could tare the lagomorph apart. Just as Drosst was about to sink his claws into Meero, he suddenly stopped when a gust of wind blew around them. The Trandoshans stood there shocked when they saw a group of X-Wings hovering above them. They then attempted to flee but one of the X-Wings cut them off as it landed. The pilot emerged from his ship and aimed his blaster at the three Trandoshans.

“Stop! You’re under arrest!” He yelled at them. “Don’t try anything funny or we will open fire!”

The three poachers were surrounded and could do nothing but drop their weapons. Meero was extremely relieved when he noticed they were from House Galeres. “But... how?” The surprised Kushiban said to himself as he slowly got up. He then noticed something small hovering next to the pilot. It was Lola.

The pilot looked at Meero, then turned to Lola. “That him?” He asked her.

“Yes! That’s him! MEERO!” The little blue-striped droid beeped loudly.

“Oh. That’s how.” He chuckled.

The little droid rushed over and nuzzled him. “OH MY GOODNESS! ARE YOU ALRIGHT? I WAS WORRIED SICK!”

Meero smiled, happy to see his best friend again. “Ouch! Careful, Lola. I’m ok but I’m pretty beat up. How did you do this?”

“Well you said you’d be back by sundown! When you weren’t, I knew something bad must’ve happened so I contacted HQ!” She beeped.

Meero chuckled and coughed. “Thanks, Lola. I really owe you one.” Never underestimate the power of a droid. Especially one that worries about you like a second mother.

The Trandoshans were taken away in shackles. They growled and hissed at the pilots the entire time. Meero and Lola were escorted back to the Starlight where the little Kushiban spent some time recovering in the ship’s medical bay. Once he was feeling better, he reported his encounter to HQ who recommended he take some time to properly recover.

Meero sat at the ship’s bridge and set a course for the Arcona Citadel. “I need a drink.”