

"I am not taking my ship in there!" Ric yelled at the com unit. "There is no way!"

"Orders are orders. Grandmaster says to fly in to the other side and form up to attack the enemy," the voice on the other side repeated.

"Not going to happen. That energy vortex is a swirling goat frak of immense proportions. How about this, you give me an Omnicrom Assault Shuttle and then I'll do it?" Ric countered.

"Negative. Proceed as ordered," the voice replied as the connection was broken.

"Yeah, nope," Ric began to set the course to jump away when a sudden blast of energy blew his small ship into the event horizon of the portal. With a flash, he was through and on the other side. The turbulence threw the small ship around like a toy before sending it crashing into a very deep trench a few kilometers from the exit.

Ric unstrapped himself from the pilots seat and made a note to bill the Dark Council for damages as well as for some serious danger pay. He could smell something smoking in the cockpit but really didn't have a lot of time to worry about it at the moment. He grabbed his small pack filled with gear and his helmet and moved towards the hatch.

Ric sealed the armor that he wore in case of contagions. Ric had pretty much skipped the last few wars and battles and had no idea if the Children of Mortis possessed some type of biological weapons. He was separated from friendly forces, in a very unfriendly place and was not about to take any chances.

The ship was sitting at an angle on the front side edge of a very large, very deep trench. He looked it over to see if there was a chance to get it flying again and noticed that there was a large piece of rock protruding through the left engine nacelle.

"So much for that," Ric turned and looked around, hoping to see something. He activated the digital sensors on the arm of his armor and began to scan for friendly signals. From what he could see, there was a large group of them located towards the north. From what he had been told, they were going to gather and then move towards the enemy fortress. He knew that they didn't have a lot of information about this place. As he looked around, he had an odd sense that there were a lot of things the same. He had a sense of Deja Vu for a better word.

This wasn't getting him any closer to the Brotherhoods forces so he slung his gear over his back and started north.

Ric ran into his first really big obstacle about an hour into his walk. The trench he had crashed in had several smaller ones that ran at a zig zag. The first few that he had encountered had not been a problem, he just used the Force and leapt across them. He thought to himself that the jumps were a little too easy and by the time he got to the fifth one, he started to run into problems. Ric had felt his connection to the Force had begun to weaken over the years. Maybe it was the age or maybe the fact that he was a clone. The first few leaps had made him remember what it was like when he had first started, now he was having more and more difficulty.

Ric made ready to move on when he noticed a dark spot in the trench wall. He peered at it and tried to look inside. The feeling he got was also somehow familiar and unsettling at the same time. He decided to investigate.

Ric unhooked one of his lightsabers and entered the darkness of the opening. The night vision built into his helmet was not really working so he ignited his lightsaber and used it as a flashlight. As the blade ignited, he could see the glow of eyes in the darkness. Ric took up a

defensive stance and waited for an attack. He began to back out of the cave and was suddenly pushed hard. Flailing towards the ground, Ric switched off his lightsaber and rolled out of the door. Whatever had attacked him followed and he could feel impacts on his armor plates along with what sounded like laughter.

Ric got back to his feet and looked at the ghostly apparition standing before him. The menace that he faced was his old master, Nyssa Taldrya. He had lost track of Bubbles over the last several decades and part of him felt bad that he never found out if she was even still alive.

“What has become of you, my apprentice?” she laughed in a sickly undead voice. “You look like a crab, hahahahaha!”

“What are you?” Ric asked “Why did you take that face?”

“I am your doom,” she replied and ForcePushed him back towards the trench he had just come over. He fought to gain his balance and leapt up, somehow not able to leap back across. It seemed like his powers had dried up.

Ric was slammed into the wall and dropped to the ground, waiting for the next assault. When it didn't come, he looked around and the ghost had vanished. Ric could still hear the cackle of laughter as he caught his breath. It wasn't over just yet.

As he tried to stand, he felt that the Katarn Commando armor had been beat to a pulp. It had taken it for the team so that he survived but it was done. Ric shed the broken armor and left it in a pile near the entrance to the cave. At least he was lighter now.

Ric wanted to get as far from that cave as he could as quickly as he could so he used the jetpack that had been attached to his armor to fly ahead. The jump jet was good for small trips but the longer journey would not be feasible for it. He used it until the fuel was gone and then left it behind in his search for others of the Brotherhood.

As he walked along, he could feel that same sense he had felt earlier and stopped. If the attack was as harsh as the last one, he would go no farther.

Rather than the face of Bubbles, the new ghost wore the face of Robin Hawk. She shouted with glee as she flung arrows of lightning at Ric. Ric ignited his blade and deflected the flashes into the ground, the walls, or back at the apparition. Ric tried to draw on the Force as his arms were beginning to get fatigued and no matter how hard, he failed to. Finally the lightning got through and drove him to the ground, knocking the wind out of him.

When everything started to fade to black, it stopped and then was gone. He was shocked by this. Ric rolled into a sitting position and took several deep breaths. He tried to focus and use the Force again and once more he failed.

“What the hell?” he said aloud. He finally got to his feet and headed north once more.

By the time Ric reached the first members of the Brotherhood, he had been walking for almost seven hours, fighting off ghosts of the past. The very first person who came to his aid, Ric almost attacked thinking it was another apparition. After several minutes, and seeing more than just the one, he finally relaxed. The battle had not even started yet and he already felt done.