



## ***STRANGE NEW WORLDS***

### ***GHOSTS OF THE PAST (PROMPT #1)***

#### ***FICTION***

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#### ***DARKHAWK'S SNAPSHOT***

#### ***Ty's SNAPSHOT***

Amidst the tendrils of darkness that blanketed the Ethereal landscape, a small scouting team stood at the threshold of the Arx portal, their hearts pounding in anticipation. Helming this group is the Sith assassin DarkHawk who has built a formidable reputation for threat removal over the years. The wraith exuded an aura of malevolence that gave pause to even the bravest souls.

Behind DarkHawk stood a long time trusted colleague Tytus O'Baieron, a battle-hardened Duros and decorated Imperial gunship pilot. A deadly gunslinger in his own right, and an even deadlier pilot. Alongside Ty, snatched from one of the Warhost Special Missions Companies, Lieutenant Elara, Corde. A skilled Echani sharpshooter with an uncanny ability to hit her mark from eye widening distances. Accompanying her was one of her own Sergeant at Arms, Kaldar Esix. A seasoned Mandalorian warrior and a veteran of the Warhost Special Mission Companies. Elara and Kalder were with CNS and the SMC's during

the recent Children of Mortis attacks. Which included the attack on Eos City several good soldiers were taken in that incursion. A wound which is still dripping raw, Together the four formed a formidable team. Each member possessing unique skills that are crucial in navigating the unknown dangers of the Ethereal Realm.

The team stepped through the portal and were immediately engulfed by a disorienting sensation. Reality seemed to warp and twist around them, and when their vision cleared, they found themselves in a ghostly mirrored version of Eos City. Buildings of shimmering light and shadow stood where once there were structures of steel and concrete. Deafening silence hung in the air, broken only by the faint echoes of distant memories.

DarkHawk's eyes narrowed as he surveyed the surroundings. This realm was an embodiment of the Force itself, a place where the grievances of the past took shape. The spirits of Force projections began to materialize as ethereal figures drifting through the streets. This first wave of souls were those who had suffered and perished in the Collective's brutal assault on Arx.

The mission was clear: they needed to find a way to harness the power of this realm to their advantage, but the spirits held the key. Interacting with them was fraught with peril. They ranged from mere shadows to nearly corporeal forms, driven by anger, sorrow, and a thirst for vengeance. The most dangerous among them were those who recognized the newcomers from their past lives.

DarkHawk's presence did not go unnoticed. A group of spirits, their forms twisted by suffering, began to converge on the Sith assassin. Echoes of those he had crossed paths with in his quest for power, victims of his ruthless pursuit of his own ambition. As the spirits closed in, he went to draw his weapon, stopping short of arming himself. A strange new feeling bathed over him. He felt an unprecedented amount of power from the Force. He could feel its power swelling from the planet's core rising through his body. Quickly he immersed himself in that power, drawing upon newly enhanced Force powers. His fingers crackled with dark energy as he conjured a whirlwind of lightning to strike down the specters with tendrils of malevolent power. The ethereal forms dissipated into the air with echoed screams, their anguished wails fading into nothingness.

Tytus moved with grace, precision, his agile movements allowing him to dance through the ethereal figures. His senses and agility enhanced beyond his comprehension, a deadly

combination that made him an even more formidable opponent. With a swift flurry of blasts from his BlasTech DL-44 pistols, he dispatched the spirits that attempted to encircle him. Ty adjusted his cavalry hat out of anticipation as he scanned the area, ever watchful for any sign of danger.

Kaldar's Mandalorian instincts kicked in as he dodged and dove, avoiding the attacking spirits. He found himself scaling through and over obstacles and traversing debris with abnormal simplicity. After leaping a nearly thirty meter gap to engage the enemy, Kaldar looked back at the gap in disbelief. Returning his focus on his targets his steps were now heavy and deliberate as he charged through a group of vengeful spirits. Kaldar's blaster barrels smoked from dissipating heat and beskar-clad armor offering protection against their insubstantial attacks. With each precise shot, he banished another spirit, his determination unwavering even in the face of this spectral onslaught.

Elara held her position at a higher vantage point, she felt a rush of power throughout her body. The hair on her arms stood erect; that rush of power was intoxicating. Her focus and precision felt unequivocal, stronger than ever. Her energy bow hummed as she released arrow after arrow in rapid succession. Each plasma arrow found its mark with uncanny accuracy. Their high pitched shrieks were deafening while their low guttural moans rumbled against her body. She shot down the spirits that ventured too close to her or her allies as her mind began to gravitate to memories of her own losses and betrayal. Reminding her of the stakes they all faced in this haunting realm.

The fighting pits of her homeworld of Eshan blasted haunting images through her psyche. Forced to fight for food and survival. The spirits morphed into those who Elara bested in combat. She remained focused on her plight and channeled that rage dispatching each spirit with a colossal amount of fury.

As the team pressed deeper into the Ethereal Realm, the encounters with the spirits grew more intense. Faces from the past, twisted by pain and anger, materialized before them, confronting them with the consequences of their actions. It was a battle not just against these spectral foes, but against the weight of guilt and regret that threatened to consume them.

DarkHawk's resolve was put to the test as he squared off against a Iktotchi spirit that bore the face of one Baltrog Quillen, Baltrog brutally made his way up the chain of

underworld bosses. DarkHawk had crossed paths and blades with Baltrog during his ascent to power. The ghost's accusing gaze bore into him, a reflection of his own inner turmoil. The ghost attacked, with a barrage of dark energy. The energy picked up the assassin sending him careening against the remnants of a brick building. DarkHawk came to an explosive halt against a pile of construction debris.

Writhing in pain, DarkHawk pushed debris off of himself. His leg throbbed, sending waves of resonating pain throughout his body. A piece of rebar protruded from his thigh, he began to struggle momentarily to control his breathing. "Anger and pain are natural and part of growth," his voice boomed in his head. Quickly grabbing the piece of rebar and pulling it from his leg. It was not a human noise DarkHawk let out, it was the noise of a maimed animal, venting its terror and shock into the thick vapors of the uncaring thin air. A noise that served no purpose but to express pain in all its flavors.

Getting to his feet, DarkHawk regained his bearing and staggered back to the battle. Closing his eyes, he drank from the Force. With a bellow of rage, he channeled his augmented Force powers, summoning a torrent of lightning that tore through the spirit's form. The Force lightning dissipating the psychokinetic energy of the spirit, draining them of that energy. As it dissipated, DarkHawk's breath was ragged, his grip on the present world momentarily slipping as he confronted the echoes of his past.

Tytus grappled with his own past as he confronted a spirit that mirrored a close brother in arms, ordered to leave a man behind. His blasters trembled slightly in his hands as conflicting emotions battled within the Duros. The spirit lunged. The attack knocked Ty to the ground causing his body to violently skid across the rubble. After coming to a halt, one side of Ty's body, now mangled with dirt, debris and blood, his body throbbed. A steady flow of green blood dripped from his appendages.. "You left me!" it shrieked, over and over while circling its prey. The spirit launched blasts of dark energy exploding all around. Ty was forced to quickly move behind cover to avoid the debris and shrapnel of the spirit's onslaught.

Staggering to his feet, Ty spit the blood from his mouth, gritting his teeth and taking a steady aim while leading his target. Quickly unleashing a salvo of blaster fire that ripped through the spirit sending it convulsing to the ground. The spirit wailed in pain as Ty continued to unload round after round into it. As the spirit finally dissipated into

nothingness, Ty could feel his inner turmoil become momentarily eclipsed by the urgency of the battle.

Kaldar's Mandalorian honor clashed with the ghosts of ancient Mandalore and all of its insurrections. Kaldar thought of his family, his brothers and his wife. All massacred by Imperial forces. Waves of Imperial warfighters converged on him. Kaldar sunk into his stance and began gunning down spirits that represented his darker moments, he vowed to forge a new path, one of redemption. "I WILL NOT SUCCUMB TO THIS EVIL!!!!" he growled.

Elara's arrows sang through the air as she faced the spirits of fallen comrades who had perished during their mission in Eos City. Each arrow she fired seemed to carry a piece of her determination to honor her fallen comrades' sacrifice. She was relentless in her quest. Taking advantage of every second she had to take aim and fire.

Through the haze of battle, the team began to understand that their survival depended not just on their combat skills, but on their ability to confront the unresolved issues of their past. The Ethereal Realm was a crucible of introspection, forcing them to confront the choices they had made and the pain those choices had caused.

As the team pressed onward, the landscape shifted, and they found themselves standing in an ominous shadow. Looking up was a representation of the Collective's assault on Arx; a monument to the pain and suffering that had befallen the city. At its center stood a figure, a projection of the dark entity that had orchestrated the assault. The Father.

With a fierce determination burning in their eyes, the team converged on the monument. Without hesitation the team began its onslaught. DarkHawk's lightning crackled and danced, Tytus's blasters shredded, Kaldar's heavy blaster shots echoed like thunder, and Elara's arrows pierced the very fabric of the Force. Together they unleashed their attack in a symphony of destruction.

As the darkness receded, the ethereal city began to fade. Ghostly inhabitants howled in agony as they were absorbed into nothingness. Before them a gateway back to the material world. As they stepped through, they carried with them the knowledge of their victory and the weight of the lessons they had learned in the Ethereal Realm.

DarkHawk, Tytus, Kaldar, and Elara emerged from the gateway, their bloodied faces marked by the trials they had just faced. They had triumphed over the external and internal forces of the past, The Ethereal Realm tested their resolve, but it had also shown them the power of redemption. The strength in confronting one's own indiscretions and the necessity of forging a new path of conviction without the anchors of the past..

Leaving behind the echoes of their experiences in the haunted city. The Ethereal Realm had revealed to them the true essence of the Force, a reflection of life's complexities and where darkness and light converged to shape the destiny of all who walked its path.

*The End*