1

His com beeped in his pocket. This would be a simple task to answer it but the pocket where the com was, was on the other side of the room. His head was pounding. And it kept ringing.

Egregious had a rough night. It had started with the usual. Some Pazaak, some drinks, and women. One was still half naked next to him. He tried to think of her name, but gave up as he relaxed and used the force to push the intoxicants out of his body.

He then sat up and threw his legs over the side of the bunk and stood gingerly. He outstretched his hand and called the blasted com to his fist “ This better be important” he spoke briskly.

It was a duty officer from the castle. Samael was summoning him to his office. He gave the officer his eta, and then stepped into the sani-steam.

Once clean he felt better. He slipped on his robe and ducked out of his quarters and strode down the hall. His fingers clipped in a message to his com unit to his apprentice to ready the ship and to be sure to load Cv-Rx.

He entered the office and Was greeted by Samael. “ Egregious Since you and your apprentice are the newest to Jen Kaari I am sending you to Taras, a local village on the other side of the archapello…. Stange reports are coming in and I want you to figure it out.”

Egregious sat in the chair opposite of the Battlemaster, he sighed “ Well how strange, I mean I have seen some strange things before.” He put his hands behind his head and looked to the ceiling.

The Samael wasn’t amused “ Focus… This could be seriously bad, or could be a new asset… Besides running around collecting females is hardly what being a Tarteni is about” he drew in a breath and continued “ reports are coming in… webs on crops… missing people.. but then our low orbit monitoring satellite captured these early this morning. “

He pushed a button and a holo sprang up from the desk showing a spider looking thing grabbing a speeder mid air and dragging it into a cave. Egregious just whistled “ My my is that not strange, arachnids are not native to this planet are they?”

“No… well not since we took over… Most of the local fauna was purged to make way for progress” Samael continued “ So I want you to go there and figure it out and report back asap”

Egregious shrugged “ Sure easy enough I suppose”

Samuel looked at him “ I want samples, and If you can get me them alive this time?”

He chuckled “ no promises”

2

He then strode down the hall to the hanger. As he opened the door the smells of the aquatic hanger filled his senses. His ship sat in its birth and the ramp was down so he strode up. “ Magik how long to take off we got a job to do. “

“ We are ready my master. “ he replied from his co-pilot's chair. and Egregious stood behind him “ Good take us out you have seen me do it enough its time you gave it a shot”

The launch from the underwater castle was tricky at times. The craft had to navigate channels and could come in contact with some of the aquatic life forms that inhabited the area. But the protector did well to steer the ship as he was taught and broke the surface. “ Ummm.. Master where are we going anyway?”

Egregious sat in his chair and taped a few keys “ Taras, and its not for the local color “. Egregious briefed his Apprentice and gave him a rundown of what he knew. It wasn’t much but he figured cave gear and sonic tracking devices would be included in their kit. Egregious made sure his lightsaber was charged and ready and had Magik pack extra blaster packs for himself.

“This will be good for you we can see what is down there and test some of your skills in the process” Egregious smiled.

“ How do I feel this is going to be more than just killing bugs” he was packing the last of the kit as Rex walked into the flight deck “ Boss will you be needing my services?”

Egregious turned his head “ Of course Rex who else is going to be able to decipher what we find.. Besides you like caves don’t you “ The droid and Egregious had a long history together and it seemed like the droid was more a friend than an asset.

He laid in the course to Taras and let the protector bring in the craft. It was a short enough flight, mostly taking the craft up to a high orbit and then dipping back down over the horizon. As they flew in they could see the destruction and the obvious cause.

Rex was on the scanners and tilted his head “ Boss readings from our sensors show that most of the activity is originating from that mountain range… 5 clicks to the north of Taras “.

Egregious then pointed to a spot of land near the area that was blinking on the hud. “ Put us down there and we will walk up.”

3

The three walked down the ramp and Egregious click his auto call and the ship took flight and was in auto hover and protect mode. A simple enough modification and since there were unknowns here he didn't want his escape hindered if needed.

The walk up the mountain started innocently enough. Then there were the webs. Thick streams of webbing was draped over the trees. Magik brushed one mistakenly with his calf as he soldered on and then there were smaller arachnids springing down on them from the trees. Egregious simply picked them out of the air with the force and slammed them to the trees and they popped in little green explosions.

Rex was then scanning the remnants “ Boss strange readings … seems like a mutation of some sort, these were just younglings but there seems to be a high concentration of metals in their fluids”

“Metals?” Magik asked

“Yes surprisingly metals, and salts... seems like the younglings are eating the rocks, I can only tell you what this device is telling me but it reminds me of the spiders of Kessel”

Egregious cringed “ Rex Kessel … really?” The droid just blinked and cocked his head to the side “ yes boss it seems they are similar but different. “

“ Great” he said and pushed forward. The webs were thick and over mostly everything. Then they came to a cave mouth. It was obvious this was the place. The webs were so thick here they coated everything.

It was like it was a mass of sticky goo all over the cave mouth. Egregious stretched out in the force to see if he could detect the danger. Surprisingly he could not feel the spiders in the force. What he could feel was the void where he supposed two were.

Two way larger than the ones they found outside. Magik was crouched just to his left in a firing stance. The droid to his right pointing his fingers like blasters. Egregious held his saber unlit readied in his fist. He plucked a rock with the force and hurled it into the cave mouth.

The rock landed with a thud. Then scattered beyond view. The result was quick. There was movement, a scatter of a scream and a thud in itself, but nothing came out into the light. The droid spoke “ Seems like they do not like the light”.

Egregious then decided to give them more light than they could handle and pulled out a solar flare from his kit. He snapped it to life on his thigh and threw it in the cave. The result was not what he was expecting as the hole cave seemed to light on fire.

“ It seems these webs are highly flammable” he her the droid say as he took cover behind a log. Magik was couched beside him.

"Agreed..." He muttered. This could complicate things. He then waited till the fire died out as the two things inside just stood in the flames. " And it seems they are unaffected as well "

He ignited his light saber and let it's red light fill the void. And threw it towards the spider. It spun and hummed to its target. And with a snap it sputtered out as it came in contact with the creatures leg.

Shocked Egregious called the hilt back to his palm. " Cover fire" was all he said as he dismantled his saber.

Nothing was broken. Magik laid down a thick layer of fire as Rex did the same. He then reassembled his saber and tried to ignite it. It Sputtered to life and crackled.

This was disturbing. Just then one of the creatures eyes erupted in fire. And it reared up and tried to lunge out of the cave. Magik shot it's underbelly and it exploded with violent force.

"Seems Like they have a soft spot boss " Rex was speaking in his mechanical voice. And then reverted to his more somber dialect.

The trio cautiously entered the cave and pressed forward. Cautiously watching where they stepped and making sure to keep clear of the many hanging egg sacs. There were a few times where Rex got tangled in a Web and many many little spiders flowed from these sacs. Rex had used his own body as a weapon, he simply charged his exoskeleton and fried the little buggers off of himself.

As they ventured deeper into the cave they noticed that there was an dim light ahead of them. The cave was widening and the walls were smooth.

"Seems like this cave was once filled with water, maybe these things were just from deep underground, and when the water went away it let them out" Magik was taking reading and muttering as Egregious and Rex provided cover.

Then they heard the skittering of legs on rocks. And the sheer size of the thing made them seem small. Out of instinct Egregious lite his blade and lashed out towards the beast.

His blade made contact and then shut down. It left a scorch mark but that was about all it could do. He rolled to his left and took cover behind a boulder. Rex and Magik were taking shots but the spider was laying down thick streams of webbing keeping the pair occupied.

Egregious thought that this was going sideways fast. Then he saw it. A stalagmite just above the creatures head. It looked like it was made from a different stone than the rest of the cave. He lit his blade and threw it up in a wide arch to slice the rock free.

The result was brutal and direct. The stone crushed the spider well like a bug. However this one didn't explode. It just tried to get up and sagged back to the cave floor.

Rex was first to speak " Well that got him Boss” the droid sauntered closer to give its leg a whack with its metal foot. Egregious took out a small welding torch and cut a piece off for a latter idea. It would make a great hilt for his saber.

Behind the beast was its liar. After entering there was no reservations about what was going on. There were egg sacs, and a strange goo on the floor. He rubbed his head and shrugged “ Collect everything you can we need to take this back to the castle.”