

Nicht Ka - Traitors

Pulsating in hues of amber and copper, the lambent crystal irradiated with a flickering passion. Once, it had stood in a mighty field surrounded by its kind. Now, it was the last of its species on this unforgiving planet, found growing through the foundations of Esoteric's hexagonal fortress. Long exposure to a toxic climate has rendered it unstable and weak, emitting only a portion of the brilliance it once possessed. Bonded to a new master – one retaining a worthy mission, the lambent struggled to accomplish its purpose.

Held aloft in the dim corridors of Esoteric's paranoia and lust for secrecy, it existed as a glimmer of light in the encroaching shadows. Surrounded in a void of darkness and claustrophobic senses, a distant brazier burned eternally with an azure fire. Despite all appearances, the fire was not warm, but emanated a cold indifference to the cruel cold of the corridor. It crackled with the sound of a million splintering bones, as if an echo of some memory from the mind of a conqueror.

Outlined underneath the capricious radiance of the lambent crystal held aloft as a lantern in the gloom, the unmistakable silhouette of cranial protrusions and brain-tails visible at brief intervals. Cloaked in a form-fitting yet nomadic garb, the unmistakable Jedi of the Togruta species, A'lora Kituri moved with purpose.

She tossed it into the fire, marveling at the tiny explosion of emerald and crimson flames. Embers shot out of the inferno, showering the lavender skin of the Togruta with particles of ice. She didn't mind the uncomfortable sensation, or the searing pain that accompanied a frostbite. Given time, her scars would heal. All that mattered was the will of the Force, and the path that was set before her.

Sometimes, her culture recognized the need to sacrifice the weak for the good of the many. It was a tradition frowned upon among the Jedi that the weak should be left to fend for themselves, but to her, it was a mercy. As the lambent crystal pulsated weakly in the fire, the strength it preserved faded into nothingness. In its place, a shadowed form materialized in the flames - the face of a traitor.

Mirus Hi'ija.

A'lora's chest rose and fell in heavy laboured breaths. Over the years, her visions into the future have become more vivid in detail, and perhaps dangerous to experience. Legs folded beneath her, she sat in a meditative trance with the grace and patience of an Aing-Tii monk. A sense of weightlessness permeated her senses as the layers of consciousness began to peel back - It was then that she realized that she was suspended several feet above the ground.

"Have you had a vision, A'lora?" A voice echoed through her mind. Liam Torun approached, placing his right hand over her shoulder. Startled back into the fold of reality, her graceful form landed in an acrobatic fashion. She looked up at the old man, taking note of his rather pale and aged appearance. Dantooine-born before the massacre of the old Jedi Order, Liam Torun was well into his twilight years. Accented by deep wrinkles and crow's feet, his emerald eyes were a reflection of his age.

"I have..." She replied, taking a moment to recover from the intense premonitions of her dreams. She didn't bother to wipe the beads of sweat glistening over her deep lavender skin, gathering at the small of her back and trailing along her forehead. Her eyes narrowed to slits as she raised a hand to massage her sore temples, "...A moment."

"Or course." Liam offered, courteously taking a step back to allow for some space. Breaking the silence after a few minutes, a furrow crept into his brows, "Have you changed your mind about remaining on New Tython? We could use your assistance on Nicht Ka."

Indeed, the Togruta had distanced herself from the Summit. Over time, she had learned to follow a path of her own making - choosing to listen to the Force, and obey its will. "I will not join your battle, old friend. But, I will be accompanying you to Nicht Ka. I have foreseen some things... troubling, and must act on my own accord."

The old hermit frowned - he had known the reasons behind her isolation from the Jedi. Her reluctance to join the fight against the Brotherhood and One Sith was deterred by her concerns about losing sight of the true purpose of the Jedi. "I see." He solemnly commented, facing towards the viewport, "Your presence could save lives. With your knowledge and insight, we could gain the strategic advantage we have been waiting for."

His words rang in her ears like blasterfire, a shallow attempt to elicit some response, "Liam - is this their crusade, or ours?"

"The White Knight is down."

It was a bold move, a grand gesture against the Dark Council and the first piece to fall into place. The sabacc cards were down, and the traitor had shown his first hand. As the QH-7 Chariot command speeder went up in a ball of flame, so too did the former Grand Master disappear into a cloud of debris.

"Secure the perimeter!" Sight Nortorshin shouted into the comlink, gaining only a mild shock in return. Tossing the device away in frustration, he ignored the lingering pain in his abdomen. Clutching at his ribs, the Krath Priest scrambled away from the crushing weight of the speeder's remains. A thin trickle of blood rushed from his forehead, but he sustained no debilitating injuries.

"Kriff it!" He grimaced, the yellowish haze of a lightsaber igniting before him with a snap-hiss as he rushed to the aid of his charge. It took mere moments for him to find the battered Deputy Grand Master buried within the wreckage - obviously, the explosion was placed in such a manner as to be intended only for the only Dark Council member among them.

"Halt! Stop right there, Jedi." One of the Nephilim commanded, raising a blaster rifle in warning. Forming ranks, his subordinates followed suit; the Guardsman and former Jedi was trapped. The second hand was laid bare before them. The blame? Who better than to frame the only one relatively unharmed in the

explosion, standing above the one he was entrusted to defend with a lightsaber in hand. In truth, Sight was disgusted at the thought of being called by his former title. "I'll go, peacefully." He objected, letting the lightsaber clatter to the ground beneath him, its blade extinguishing into vapours.

Mirus Hi'ija - warrior, conqueror, protector; he had been called countless things, but "traitor" was new to him. As he watched the chaos unfold before him, he couldn't help but crack a grin. Hiding in plain sight underneath the watchful gazes of the Herald and Grandmaster, he maintained the perfect cover. The image of a warrior wasn't one that was particularly suspicious to most of his superiors, and yet he fought this battle with misdirection. His plan executed like clockwork, everything moving according to plan.

By all appearances, the methods were admittedly of his own making. Someone else - some unknown benefactor or master manipulator was either acting in his stead, or pulling the Praetor's strings.

However, one obstacle remained in his path, revealing itself in the form of a holographic image appearing on the security display. Grimacing, Mirus retrieved his items from the desk and made ready for his departure. He had five minutes before the doors would open into Nicht Ka's toxic atmosphere as he keyed in the Lambda-class Shuttle's takeoff protocols remotely. Pulling the rebreather over his head, the traitor turned to the exit...

... Only to witness the sight of a familiar face snarling back through through the open blast doors. "Very well, we'll have this your way." He scoffed, igniting the teal blade of his lightsaber. The glow was a contrast against the emerald-green of the Jedi's, who also wore a similar mouthpiece, save for the transparent material.

"Traitor." She hissed, bearing down on her opponent with a speed and grace matched by few. Mirus had almost forgotten the true capabilities she possessed while fighting for a purpose. Adopting a strong guard held aloft in his brawny hands, the Dathomiri warrior locked his blade against hers, utilizing his own overwhelming strength to gain a few moments.

The expression she wore hadn't changed. If Mirus didn't know better, he would have made the mistake of presuming the Jedi to be acting out of hatred. In truth, she was very much in control of her emotions; years of training inside a tribal and barbaric society had made her unforgiving on the surface. "Why have you betrayed us?" She asked, fixing her gaze against his.

Mirus dismissed the question with a strike from the pommel. The impact absorbed into the woman's abdomen, sending her reeling by instinct. "Betrayed? Are you so blind, that you cannot see what is outside of your visions? I have done what the Jedi could not. The old hermit made promises of liberation, and conquest against the Sith, but all I have seen is fear."

Landing in a somersault, A'lora regained the momentum of her movements in a single moment. "I no longer follow the Disciples in their methods. This is wrong." She rebuked, returning with a flurry of quick,

directional attacks aimed to unbalance the Human. Armor cracked and scored under the retaliation, blackening from the mild grazes he chose to ignore.

Their situation once again reversed, Mirus was forced on the defensive. His blade raised for one moment to deflect an incoming blow, and lifted to the side for the next. Grunting through the rebreather, he would have spat at the woman, "Liam fears the Dark Council - reeks of its stench. Was it not said that fear is a pathway to the dark side of the Force? I do not fear them, therefore I must act." His lightsaber came down hard, swinging in wide arcs as an extension of his arm to break through the weak barrier of wrist movements his opponent used so desperately in her offense.

Once again, he had underestimated the woman's resourcefulness as the space between them became clouded with darkness. In the timespan of a few heartbeats, Mirus was confused - his opponent had disappeared before his eyes, receding into the darkness. Suddenly, he was immobilized at the "snap" of a tendril reaching through the void to grasp at his ankle. The Titan toppled, crashing to the ground in a swift pull of the coils. A lightsaber blazed before him, its glow casting a green light over his face.

Ripping his rebreather off to the side, flecks of blood gathered at the opening of his mouth. He spat to the side, defiant in his defeat. "The Jedi Order is corrupt. Strike me down, and all hopes of liberating yourselves is extinguished." He chided, staring back at his impending end.

"I know." She said, solemnly. "That is why you're going to help me fix it."