

Korroth

2682 words

Jedi Peacekeeper

House Satele Shan

Clan Odan-Urr

#8488

## Odan-Urr vs Plagueis Between Light and Dark

### Sides of a Coin

Prompt II: *Whether out of foolishness or a desire to return to the trade of pirateering, the remnants of Hondo Ohnaka's Weequay gang have decided to extend negotiations for their exclusive services. With their resources, any Clan would find them a great ally—at a cost. As the designated negotiator in dealings with the neutral faction, **Korroth** has been instructed to outdo a negotiator sent by **Clan Plagueis** without violence.*

“Come again,” the somewhat transparent, bluish image of the bald-headed Pau’an flickered on the tactical table of the Clan’s forward base. “Almost thought you said ‘recruit them.’ Please repeat.” The spindly figure, though hanging on to an overhead handgrip, was being buffeted side to side by the movement of the Armored Interface Craft-4 as it cut through Florum’s atmosphere. His dark eyes were focused downward, towards whatever hologram apparatus they had set up in the hold of the dropship.

“Look, Peacekeeper,” Vorust Traund leaned into the tactical table, frowning. His entirely white eyes were the exact opposite of the Pau’an’s. “My time is too valuable. I will say this only once. You will be dropped off three clicks from the target zone. Besh squadron is your escort, they will take you to the Ohnaka base, where you will meet the pirate commander - uh... captain and relay the letter of marque and reprisal. You will then-”

“A privateer contract?” The Pau’an interrupted. “Have you discussed this with the Council, Commander?”

“You will *then!*” Traund raised his voice. “Await to relay more specific assignments to the pirate assets, as concerns the ongoing planetary operations.”

“And this... Ohnaka Gang; they have already agreed to the terms of the letter?”

“No no no, that is the whole object of the operation!” The Arkanian made a cutting motion with his hand. “Your task is to offer our proposal *over* that of the Plagueis envoy. Our offer will grant a long-term contract with the Clan, in exchange for immediate military assistance in the current conflict. Is the objective clear?”

“I understand that we need to make sure these outlaws stay out of our way here on Florum,” the Peacekeeper’s voice crackled occasionally over the poor hololink. “But to associate the Clan with a band of kidnappers, spice-dealers and bandits... the two breeds are incompatible, I just don’t see how it can be made to work. Are you sure this is the wisest course of action, Commander?”

“The wi-” The Arkanian steepled a hand over his right eyebrow. “Do you realize how many threads coalesce at this station? How many wild cannoks I have to herd in the same direction?” Some noise was intruding on the hololink at the dropship’s end. “The last thing I need is one of these cannoks to turn around and snap at my ankles!” The Pau’an turned, and another person, a KUDF soldier, invaded the image, but their hurried conversation came out garbled at the other end. “Are you listening to me? Peacekeeper Korroth!” The hologram gave out a deafening crackle, then the image scrambled and went out.

“Lieutenant,” Traund beckoned over an aide. “Get a recovery team together. Find the last transmission location and send them to see what happened. If they encounter the Weequay pirates, they are not to engage, this is not a rescue mission.

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Korroth awoke to the pungent smell of smoke. Above him he saw a strip of smoggy sky between the lips of a canyon. The canyon bed was littered with the warped smouldering remains of the AIC-4 dropship. A figure was moving around the main body of the wreckage; it had limbs like tree trunks and an oddly shaped helmet. It was sifting through the smoke and durasteel, lifting beams and sheets of metal. At that point a faint voice cried out from within a shadowy crevice. The hulking figure turned to the noise and discharged a reverberating salvo of projectile fire into the gap.

The Pau’an staggered to his feet, his green blade hissing to life. Immediately the whirl and clack of primed and raised slugthrowers resounded in the canyon. Korroth turned and saw he was surrounded by a dozen razor-fanged Trandoshans, all pointing a variety of scatter guns, chain guns and projectile rifles at him. After a moment’s consideration, he raised his hands and let the deactivated hilt of his lightsaber dangle from his thumb and forefinger. He felt wobbly on his feet; the daze and concussions of the crash still smothered his senses.

One of the Trandoshans stepped out of the circle of mercenaries, his Slavemaster stun carbine leveled steadily at the Pau’an. If disfiguring scars were any indicator of status among the lizards, then this specimen was sure to be high in their hierarchy. A trio of these scars marked a groove on his muzzle and a gap in an otherwise fearsome row of teeth. Though this Trandoshan was a handspan taller than Korroth and at least twice his weight, he still advanced with a cautious step, his slit-pupil eyes fixed on the Pau’an and the dangling saber hilt. These lizards knew how to deal with Jedi, they must have fought Force adepts before - or perhaps fought with them.

“You-” Korroth had to cough to clear his lungs of the acrid smoke. “You’re Saraask’ar, aren’t you?” The gap-toothed Trandoshan did not respond, he only stepped in and snatched the saber hilt from the Jedi’s upraised hand. As the lizard stepped back out of arm’s reach, Korroth heard renewed noise from the dropship wreckage. The other Trandoshan, the figure that Korroth had first spotted, was dragging a humanoid by the arms, out from under an unhinged bulkhead. The humanoid was groaning in pain; he was another survivor of the Jedi Peacekeeper’s KUDF escort. The Trandoshan dropped him and raised his slugthrower carbine.

“Now, stop!” Cried Korroth. “Take him your prisoner, he won’t-” The Trandoshan squeezed a trat-tat-tat of rapid fire into the helpless soldier. The Jedi hung his head.

“You arm like Jedi, you speak like Jedi.” The gap-toothed Trandoshan hissed. “We require only you. The squashed soldiers - only tally.” He tossed a small datapad at the feet of his captive. The Peacekeeper suppressed a fleeting urge to stomp his heel through the device. Instead he bent down and picked it up. There was no reasoning with the Scorekeeper.

“What is it you want from me?” If they had wanted him dead, he likely wouldn’t be alive right now. “You cannot hope to gain in the negotiations. The Ohnaka Gang requested envoys from *both* Clans, or no deal.” He began inspecting the contents of the datapad.

“Ohnaka, yes.” Gap-tooth replied. “You know what they are, what they do. Hunt, kidnap, smuggle, pillage. You know who we are - Saraask’ar! You know what we do - hunt, enslave, traffic, pillage. You see, not good for business. Not good for tally.”

“Are you saying,” Korroth looked up briefly from the datapad. “That Clan Plagueis does not actually want the services of these pirates?” The documents he was reading painted a disturbing picture, but he needed context to properly interpret them.

“No. Dread Lord wants Ohnaka.” Gap-tooth paced around his captive Jedi, though careful to maintain his radius of distance. “Dread Lord always wants more guns, more soldiers. But hark! What happen when, one day, Dread Lord says ‘Hunt for me, Ohnaka!’ And ‘Hunt for me, Saraask’ar!’ But there is only one prey?”

“I see. You do not want to be in a situation where your master has to choose between his two... hunters.” Replied Korroth. Gap-tooth uttered a low warble, a noise of reluctant assent. That was certainly not how the lizard would have put it. “And so,” the Jedi continued, lifting the datapad. “You wouldn’t mind if the Ohnaka Gang was persuaded to join Odan-Urr, rather than Plagueis. If the pirates learn what I have learned from this datapad, they are not likely to look upon the Dread Lord as a potential employer. But tell me, how did you manage to get this data?”

“Data?” Gap-tooth emitted a series of sibilant huffs. Korroth realized the lizard was probably laughing. “I know no data. Maybe you have some Jedi spy we will hunt. Sure, if Ohnaka goes with Jedi, more Jagannath points for us. But we know no data, Saraask’ar only hunts for Dread Lord.”

“Fine. But can you assure me that this information is-” Suddenly the Trandoshan strode to his captive, raising his carbine. The momentum of his motion brought the weapon’s butt hard against the Pau’an’s temple, knocking him from his feet. The last thing he saw before the world spun into oblivion again, was a sharply-uniformed figure cresting the lip of the canyon.

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Korroth felt along the side of his bald grey head. The blood had dried and crusted, but the lesion was still sore. The worst were the itchy eyes and the headache caused by the smoke of the crash, even though now they had been travelling towards the pirate base for quite some time. The Pau'an sat at the back of the personnel skiff as it speeded over the parched plains of Florrum. Again, he was surrounded by armed Trandoshsans, three of them, and Gap-tooth among them. At the front of the skiff, his shoulders to the Pau'an, sat a dark-haired man, dressed in the black uniform of the Iron Legion and displaying the insignia of the Inquisitorius on the left arm. A terse introduction had revealed him to be Commander Crandl Lorne, the Plagueis envoy. Next to him, driving the vehicle, was a heavily armored soldier; given his huge size, the trooper was probably clad in some kind of cyborg armor suit.

The skiff soon descended into a canyon, thankfully out of the sun, and approached the pirate base. The gully widened into a large enclosure, which was filled with junk and vessels of dubious space-worthiness. Dominating the cluttered yard was a half-ruined edifice. Though it may once have been an impressive construct, the patch-up job on its roof now made it resemble more a giant caf-crazed bird's nest than anything else. A band of Weequays, who had obviously been waiting for their arrival in the yard, dragged open the gates and waved in the skiff.

"Pleasant journey, squire?" One of the pirates greeted the Inquisitorius Commander as he descended the transport. "You're the first to arrive. 'Fraid we'll have to wait for the other representative before we begin."

"On the contrary," replied the strong voice of the Inquisitor. "We have brought him along with us. He had met with an unfortunate accident on his way here; we thought it only proper to offer assistance." Korroth, whose shoulder until then had been weighed down by a hefty Trandoshsan hand, was shoved off the skiff and almost stumbled flat on the ground. Some of the Weequays sniggered, apparently pleased by this thinly veiled show of dominance.

"Commander Lorne was most kind." Korroth straightened himself. "I am only sorry I cannot for the moment match the courtesy which he visits on his diplomatic counterparts."

"Well, you are in the charge of the Ohnaka now. An' you'll be able to experience Captain Solja's Galaxy -renowned hospitality." The Weequay raised his hand towards the base. "Once we have put your equipment in custody, of course."

The Inquisitor relinquished his weapons without hesitation, and beckoned the trooper and the three Trandoshans to do the same. Korroth noticed that Gap-tooth also handed over the Jedi's saber hilt. The whole group then made their way into the banquet hall of the pirate base. The cavernous room was filled with the beats of a lilting, rhythmic dance music, the raucous clamor of well oiled pirates, the bouquet of various brews of rotgut and several scattered fisticuffs.

At the center of a long table, her feet on the counter, reclined what must have been Captain Solja. She was a small and wiry Weequay, but her dark eyes, latched immediately onto the newcomers, belied a certain intransigent acuity. On her shoulders was draped a long, weathered tunic, a faded pink in color, though it might once have been red. She clapped her hands twice and stood from her seat, ushering sudden silence in the hall.

"Welcome, welcome!" her slightly roughened voice rang out. "Weequay sages say 'Business before pleasure.' But you are the guests of pirates, and we say 'Pleasure before, through and after business!'" With a great cheer from the masses, the music resumed and platters of food, frothing tankards and lissome dancers were brought into the hall. The two envoys settled at a table opposite the Captain, while the other members of the Plagueian party elected to remain standing at the back of the room.

Despite the show of extravagant feasting, the Captain steered the conversation resolutely towards the matter at hand. The Jedi Peacekeeper spoke first, presenting the Clan's letter of marque and reprisal. As it was based on a mutual relationship of profitability, the proposed contract spoke to the pirates' basic sensibilities. The Ohnaka Gang would agree to perform hostile actions solely on the enemies of Clan Odan-Urr, and in exchange the Clan would award bounties for captured Brotherhood personnel and provide an exclusive market for plundered goods, as well as preferential use of the KUDF space militia's resources.

Commander Lorne's proposition focused much more on the character of the two Clans. By allying with the Light-siders, the pirates would become the potential enemies of the entire Dark Jedi Brotherhood. Instead, service in the Ascendant Legion and Fleet would grant them a front seat in the bellicose advancement of the Dark Side Clan, with opportunities to grow in power and riches beyond imagining.

The pirates seemed divided in their inclinations. The majority were greatly tempted by the promises of Commander Lorne, but a few, the Captain included, were suspicious of the freedoms they might have to give up in joining the Plagueian armed forces. The two differing moods only grew in intensity when the Inquisitor brought forward the Legion trooper as an example of the Clan's military might. He explained the capabilities of the Ravager and demonstrated what strength the Weequays could achieve in their army.

However, this gave Korroth the opening to play his trump card. The Peacekeeper drew on what he had learned from the Trandoshans' datapad to expound in great detail the program of indoctrination of the Ravagers. The genetic and chemical "enhancements" subjected on the slaves, the memory wipes and the life of complete servitude of these soldiers swayed a few Weequays, but many were still in awe of the potential power offered by Clan Plagueis.

"It seems, gentlemen," Captain Solja rose. "That our current debate has come to a moot. You have produced all your arguments, now it is up to the Ohnaka to sort it out amongst ourselves." The pirate boss showed the envoys out to the courtyard. As soon as the group was outside, however, Commander Lorne raised a hand to stop the Captain. It was immediately apparent that a handful of dark-clad snipers ringed the ridges around them.

"I do this for the benefit of the Ohnaka Gang," the Inquisitor declared. "You have seen your Captain fall to the lies of the Jedi. You cannot allow her mistakes to bar you forever from what the Ascendant Clan has promised you. I therefore depose Captain Solja and..."

The Captain, unfazed throughout, cleared her throat and raised her chin to the ridge. The five Wraiths were now themselves each encircled by armed Weequays. But the fanatical snipers gave no thought to surrender. They turned on the pirates and were gunned down.

The Weequays observing in the yard were stunned by this display, and the Captain did not miss this chance.

"We are pirates. We fight only for profit and for grog. I see none of that in the bloodlust and zealotry of your Ascendant armies." With that, she took the lightsaber hilt from the pile of weapons in the pirates' custody and placed it in the hands of the Jedi Peacekeeper.