

# PRICE OF JUSTICE

By Blade Ta'var



*(Illustration of the 'Light of Darkness')*

***Mygeeto***  
***34 ABY***  
***Day***

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Blade leaned back against the underground cavern and sighed, face half hidden in darkness. Her breath swirled in front of her as she shivered.

*Damn its cold!*

A pair of men were seated at crates nearby talking bantha fodder about what they would do if they found the *Light of Darkness*. She had never heard of it before, but found it an alluring object. Rumors had already abounded as to its abilities, though no one had yet to truly find it. She placed her hands on the roughly hewn stone, reaching out to the Living Force around her. She had felt an ominous aura nearby for some time, but was still having trouble pinpointing it. *If there weren't so many dark presences...*

Darkblade had made a short visit to the caverns earlier, bringing along a lot of new crew. She had watched them quietly from her usual corner, making mental notes. Most were the usual variety, but the Shar Dakhan Quaestor had brought along someone of note: an Arcanist Knight. He didn't speak but she could feel him probe the caves the moment he arrived. She wondered what the Savant knew about the relic that warranted such attention. She doubted he would come down to the surface for mere rumors.

"Hey, pretty! I hear it's a necklace. I'm surprised you haven't joined the crews looking for it," said the Sadowan Hunter as he broke her reverie.

"Maybe I'll just let you guys find it for me. Or you could gift it to me. It would look adorable on me," the Zeltron smirked as she let her pheromones waft toward their makeshift chairs.

"Would love to, lass, but orders are orders. All findings go directly to the boss," stated the Sadowan.

"Sure, sure. I understand. But remember, we are still a team. Maybe I could help you out," offered the Palatinaean.

"Hmm..." hummed the older man as he exchanged a glance with his shy companion.

“Darkblade might not like her poking around,” warned the shy companion. His eyes purposefully avoided the Zeltron.

“What harm could it do? I haven’t even looked through these tunnels yet. What could I find on my own?” asked Blade.

“Eh, sure. Not like you’ll be able to do anything with it. We sent one of our trackers to search for it a few hours ago. He went down the east tunnel. Though, you are already too late. He has probably found it by now,” assured the Hunter.

“Yeah, probably. But doesn’t hurt to try. Gives me a nice walk either way. I’ll bring some drinks on the way back. See you later!” said the Warrior in farewell, hearing the distant cheers of her fellow watch officers. Blade stood up, rubbed her arms in an effort to warm herself up, and made her way down the east tunnel.

Her headlamp bobbed in and out of the dimly lit cavern, occasionally catching the fluorescence of multicolored sediments. The crunch of rocks and her breath were her only companion as she walked deeper into the planet. With each step, the Palatinaean probed the Force around her, attempting to pinpoint the source of the dark energy. Was it this fabled item or a person? It felt like both. Either way, she planned to destroy it.

Her solitary adventure was cut short by the unexpected. Someone was swiftly approaching her position and her interest was piqued by their aura. It was a curious mix of paranoia, the rush of exhilaration, and a strong, dark energy. *Could they have the relic or was this just them?*

Blade stood her ground and braced herself, tracking their relative position using the Force. A Sadowan Knight rounded the corner and rushed her blockade. As he pushed past her, using the gap between herself and the wall, she grabbed for his arm with both hands. One of the them latched onto a length of cloth tied around his arm, but the young man wasn’t sticking around. He viciously tugged his arm back, tearing her handhold in two and leaving the Warrior with little more than a torn bit of cloth and a bad mood.

“Come back here!” Blade yelled as she followed after the retreating Sadowan in hot pursuit.

Left. Right. Right. Left. Unfortunately, the Zeltron had not been exploring these tunnels like the rest of her party so she simply focused on his presence. Skidding to a halt, she touched the torn sleeve, mental images popping around her consciousness. She followed

them explicitly for some time, but eventually the Sadowan Arcanist was already on his way up.

“Bastard is going to beat me. Move faster!” she urged herself.

The Warrior ran as fast as she could in the dark tunnels, using the clues from the Force to guide her way as images flashed across her consciousness for brief moments and then passed. It was as if the relic was leaving a trail for her to follow. She followed it blindly, but unfortunately it led to a surface hatch recently sealed shut. Fresh lightsaber burn marks covered its circumference. Blade grimaced in frustration as she took out her own lightsaber and proceeded to cut out an exit. This would take time she didn't have and on the surface her prey could easily hide among the populace. Gritting her teeth, she hastily cut through the thick metal, catching it with the Force and safely throwing it to the side as it fell.

The Zeltron deactivated her lightsaber and popped her head above surface, breathing fresh air for the first time in many days. Taking a deep breath, she pulled herself out of the access tunnel and crouched in concentration. Closing her eyes she clutched the Sadowan's cloth and let her awareness drift to her prey. Snapshots of a mental holovid depicting a fleeing man filled her mind. She patiently waited until a sign came into focus, but the man seemed to be skilled enough to know her tricks. The only clue she could gather was a beautiful intricately carved water fountain.

*Maybe the locals know what that is...*

Blade stood up and approached the nearest villager.

“Excuse me, where can I find the beautifully carved water fountain?” Blade queried an elderly woman.

“Sorry hun, I've only lived here. Ask Ruzel. She travels a lot. One block over and to the right,” provided the local.

“Thank you,” responded the Warrior automatically. She rushed off down the streets, finally skidding in front of a tourist shop led by a Twi'lek.

“Oh, hello there and good day. You seem to be in a hurry. How can I help you?” asked the woman curiously.

“You’re Ruzel, right?”

“Yes, how can I help you dear?” asked the shopkeeper.

“I need to find the most beautiful water fountain in the region. It’s carved. Do you know where it is? Can you show me how to get there?” asked the Zeltron.

“Hmm...” The Twi’lek paused for a second as she scratched her head in concentration. The Palatinaean waited anxiously but did her best to stay still as the images of her prey’s adventures started to take a darker turn. *Was that a dead body? I need to hurry!*

“Please, I’m in a rush,” Blade urged.

“Hold on a second. I have a map around here somewhere,” advised Ruzel as she dug in a pile of datapads. “Here, take this. It will lead you to the *Victory Fountain*. You can grab a ride a few blocks over on a transport ship. That will be 20 credits, please,” demanded the shopkeeper.

“Sure thing. Here, have 25 credits. Appreciate the help,” yelled the Zeltron as she took off, her footsteps beating a straight path to the nearest ship. She didn’t even bother to look back. Maybe the Twi’lek thought she was just another tourist.

It wasn’t long until she was safely seated aboard a transport, but peace was not easy to come by. Her prey seemed to be taunting her, purposefully showing the most gruesome of deaths and the heart wrenching cries for help that would never come. She wanted so much to turn it off, but she needed to stop this delinquent and it required her tracking abilities. As the Sadowan Knight revelled in his conquest, she sat still and breathed deeply, reminding herself that control was what she needed most now. She allowed herself to clench her fist, but that was it.

Time seemed to go on forever. The only news of worth was that the alliance between the Clans had been dissolved, which was fine with her. There would be no repercussions when she killed the Sadowan Knight. How many breaths had she counted? Far too many based on the gruesome clues left for her. The ship finally stopped, but she had barely made it to the door before cries of dismay could be heard punctuating the cabin. The Palatinaean brushed roughly past several of the guests and sprinted out to get a better look.

The scene outside was pure carnage. Dead bodies littered the main thoroughfare for at least a hundred meters. Among the dead she saw men, women, and children killed indiscriminately. Their peaceful faces were at odds with their morbid appearance, burnt flesh visible from a distance. Her hands shook as she slowly walked among the dead, kneeling down by a few to check their wounds for clues. *Obvious lightsaber marks and signs of the use of lightning. But why?! Could the artifact turn him into an animal?*

Blade continued her gruesome walk, crying loved ones from the shuttle punctuating the eery silence. A heavy weight fell onto her conscience. If she had only caught him quicker, then none of this would have happened. This was partly her fault. The Zeltron balled her hands up, letting the righteous anger wash over her for the time being. It didn't help that the violent memories lingered in the Force, forcing the Warrior Arcanist to relive a bit of each of the victims' pain. Several made her wince due to the barbarism of the attacks themselves. Yet, she forced herself to experience each one, turning the center of town into her own version of a firing squad. She would remember each and every one when she delivered justice.

"Help! Anyone! She is still alive! Do we have a doctor?!" shouted an elderly man kneeling over a prone child with a long lightsaber burn across her torso. The Palatinaean snapped her head in the direction of the voice and followed in pursuit. She found a wheezing child, barely alive and fading fast. She knelt down next to the dying toddler. The young girl probably wasn't much older than her own.

"My only granddaughter. How could he? We all cooperated. He didn't have to kill her! Noooooo!" sobbed the older man in grief as he hunched over the child's failing body.

"How did this happen? Who did this? Where did they go?" demanded Blade, anger seething into her voice. The elderly man seemed slightly taken back, but relief filled his face as her serious tone finally registered with him.

"I honestly don't know. I wish I did or I'd find them myself. They deserve to die! If you're looking for the killer, promise me you'll take them out. Promise me!" pleaded the older man as he wiped back tears.

"Love...y..." trailed away the young girl as death took her final breath. The grandfather sat still in shock and then broke down completely, rocking his granddaughter's body to sleep even in death. The Palatinaean looked at the dead around her and then at the small girl whose life was cut short by the violent world around her. She reached out a hand towards the dead girl, but pulled it back at the last second. She was a Sith too,

just like the child's butcher. All she was good for was revenge. A solitary tear poured down her cheek as she let her arm fall to her side.

"I'll find her killer. I'll find whoever did all this and they will pay the price. I promise you that," she solemnly swore as she wiped away her tear. The Warrior stood up and clenched a fist, looking up at the horizon. *I'll find you and when I do you'll regret it. You'll regret it.*

## ***Mygeeto***

### ***Evening***

Blade had been following her prey for some time now, but all her efforts led her to a collection of dingy farms abandoned for the cold season. The trees feebly blocked the cold winds that sent a chill down her bones despite her thick jacket. White flecks of snow beat against her hood, obscuring her vision slightly. A relentless storm had whipped itself into a frenzy since her search had begun. It made the landscape seem cold, barren, and unforgiving. The cruel winds whipped the sparse branches to and fro with no mercy. She was cold and slightly hungry, but all that had been replaced by a cold wrath fueled by the memories of the dead.

She closed her eyes and looked through the Force into the surrounding fields around her. Fleeting images crossed her mind and all of them led to a barn to the west. She opened her eyes and saw a plethora of them packed close together in that direction. She *tsked* in annoyance and put her hand in her pocket, gripping it around the bit of cloth she stole from the Sadowan Knight. A mental holoovid filled her mind: a man huddled in the loft of a cavernous barn surrounded by hay. She eyed the largest barn far off in the distance and called for her appropriated transport.

Countless breaths clouded the air in front of her as she waited. She kept her hand seized on the cloth, while her eyes vigilantly glared in the direction of the building that held her prey. Finally, the Palatinaean heard the whine of an engine nearby and turned to see her transport park several meters away. She ran into the warmth of the ship and made her way into the cockpit. A harried pilot cringed as she approached him.

"Take me over to the large barn to the west and keep it quiet. Once we get there, find a safe place to park, keep it running, and wait for me," ordered the Zeltron. She watched him closely as his face turned white with the fear of known punishments.

“Y-you’re c-crazy.” He stammered. The Palatinaean smirked as she brushed her hand across his cheek and rested it there. The pilot froze and then visibly relaxed a few degrees.

“Let’s not be difficult. You have so much to live for still. Think of your family,” reminded Blade as she looked into his eyes. Relaxed pleasure and tense anxiety clashed within him as his breathing quickened. A few heartbeats later, he sighed in resignation.

“Let’s get this over with. I want to go home,” pleaded the man. The Zeltron smiled and kissed him on the forehead.

“I couldn’t agree more. Now, get going,” ordered Blade. The pilot nodded in assent.

The Palatinaean retreated back to the empty co-pilot chair, letting him go about his business. She felt a pull as the ship rushed forward, causing her view of the target to weave left and right as the transport dodged local debris. The ship circled the barn once and finally set down by a clump of trees not far from a parked speeder bike. The Zeltron bounded out and immediately submerged herself in the Force as she reached out to the auras she had sensed in the tunnels earlier.

*Paranoia. Fear. Darkness. Desperation. Panic.*

He and the amulet were still here, but strangely she felt another presence.

*Excitement. Fear. Concern.*

The Warrior Arcanist arched her brow quizzically. *Accomplice?* Pushing aside the thought for now, she rushed to the lone speeder bike and quickly activated her lightsaber as she slashed downwards. Her saber cleaved it in two as a haggard man ran out to meet her, surprise fading away to a murderous scowl.

“Why the kark did you do that?!” yelled the Sadowan Knight.

“I’ve been chasing you for a while now. Do you really think I am going to let you get away? Hand over the amulet,” ordered the Zeltron.

“I don’t think so, Palatinaean scum. This is MY prize. I am going to kill you and steal your ship. My Clan will use this amulet to destroy all of you,” growled the Knight menacingly.



“I wasn’t planning on letting you live anyways. All the people you killed will have their revenge soon.” Blade said in an icy tone of finality as she moved her lightsaber to a high guard.

“I’d like to see you try. The relic is helping me now. Take this!” roared the Sadowan as he let loose vicious electricity from his fingertips. The Warrior raised a hand in defense, using the Force to gather the electric energy into a ball in her palm. Concentrating further, she dissipated its energy into small chunks, letting the wind take the small harmless energy fragments. They twinkled blue-white and then flickered one last time as they blew away. The Sadowan Arcanist growled, blue-white electric currents crackling menacingly around the Knight’s fingers. He released one after another. Each time, she defended herself: dodge, absorb, dissipate. Each time, she held her ground.

The Sadowan Knight took a short breath. She pounced. Whipping her fist through the air, she bundled the Force into a powerful cross-punch aimed solely at his head. *Oof*. The Knight staggered backwards. Blade grabbed the remains of the speeder bike with the Force and hurled them at him. He desperately jumped into the air.

*Bang. Thud.*

One of the halves hit the barn’s wall, but the other had clipped the Sadowan squarely in the lower legs. He started to flip forward. She sprang forward, letting the Force guide her to her falling prey. As she started to fall, she attacked in a string of blurred, rapid-fire slashes and stabs. The Sadowan Arcanist activated his lightsaber in desperation, blocking and parrying as many as he could. Fortunately, he was out of position and too slow.

*Aargh!*

The Zeltron landed with bent knees and swiveled to her fallen prey. The Knight laid crumpled on his side. His lower legs were cut clean off and he had a few burn marks over his torso. His groans and cries of pain echoed over the barren landscape. She knelt down and confiscated his lightsaber, clipping it to her belt for safety.

“Now, give me the amulet!” The Warrior demanded.

“Frag Off!” The Sadowan Knight half-yelled as he mustered his remaining energy before letting his body go limp.

“Then I’ll just have to take it off your cold dead body. For all those you killed, I declare you guilty. Die,” judged the Palatinaean mercilessly. As she raised her lightsaber to give a killing blow, a woman ran out of the building and thrust herself between him and the lightsaber. Blade halted her swing and stared curiously at the fallen Sadowan’s defender.

“Noooo. Please! Don’t kill him! You can have it. Here!” pleaded the woman as she thrust her hand inside one of the his pockets and pulled out a gold and black diamond shaped artifact attached to a golden necklace. The Zeltron used the Force to carry it to her outstretched hand. It was warm to the touch. On closer inspection thin red lines were etched on the front starting from the edges and angling inward towards the golden center. *Finally.*

The woman was already tending to the fallen Knight’s wounds, a medic’s kit at her side. A thought struck the Palatinaean as she saw the woman use bandages. The Zeltron pulled out the torn cloth and dropped it on top of the fallen Sadowan Knight. The woman gasped in surprise.

“I guess I should thank you. You helped me track him down. Did you know that this man destroyed a village? Everyone is dead by his hand,” lamented the Warrior bitterly. Gruesome images of the deceased filled her mind. The slain toddler’s last words in particular replayed over and over again. They demanded justice.

“Move out of the way. This man must die,” commanded Blade.

“But...you got your amulet. He is already beaten. He isn’t all bad. You don’t have to kill him,” urged the woman as tears streamed down her face.

“Move. Now,” ordered Blade icily. Her cold tone hid the quarrel deep within herself. The light versus the dark. *Compassion. Mercy. Anger. Revenge.* They fought within her, each a path to different kind of justice. Now, an innocent woman stood in her way.

“No. I won’t let you kill him. I won’t!” she proclaimed as she laid on top of him.

“Why are you defending him? He is a killer who plans to kill more people. Why can’t you see sense?!” yelled the Palatinaean in frustration.

“He isn’t a killer to me. Don’t kill us,” begged the woman. The Sith Warrior tried to pull her off the man but she wouldn’t budge.

The Zeltron stared at the pair on the ground in wonder. The fallen Sadowan Knight had killed so many and would continue to do so by his own omission. Yet he had one defender willing to save his life and prolong it. It made no sense.

*Kill an innocent to save many or save an innocent and allow more people to die. Was she even innocent if she tried to defend a guilty man?*

Then, the amulet they called *Light of Darkness* spoke to her for the first time: *Silly Girl. Justice comes at a price.* There was really only one choice.

Blade glowered, and swung her lightsaber towards both of them. One foot away. Five inches away. She could stop it now if she wanted. One inch away. Her inner conscience tried one last time.

*Stop!*

All she could think of was the dead village, the dead toddler, and the grandfather's plea. She swung through. The shocked look on the dead woman's face burned into her skull.

*Look what you did!*

Thankfully, a voice disrupted her thoughts.

"Darkblade here. Report. Do you have the amulet? Where are you?" chimed the dead Sadowan's comlink.

Deactivating her saber, the Palatinaean grabbed the comlink, and replied "No. He doesn't. I do and it will burn in the fires of Mustafar before I allow you to have it," she promised vehemently.

"Who is this?! State your name! You are safe nowhere! We will find you!" yelled the Shar Dakhan Quaestor.

Blade ignored him and walked back towards her transport. She realized then that she had been gripping the amulet the entire time. As she loosened her grip to put the necklace around her neck she noticed something. It had changed. Red horizontal flames appeared to emanate from the golden center and a script written in bright red Sith runes

filled the side of the obsidian diamond. She couldn't read the writing but the Sith amulet spoke to her once more: *Through Power I gain Victory*.

If that is what it took to eliminate evil, she would gladly pay the price.