

The Chronicles Of Reiden

– Episode One –

A Submission to the Competition:
Where Words Fail, Music Speaks



Written by
Reiden Karr (10106)

There was smoke and fire everywhere. White-hot flames licked at the air.

[Music: "Hurricane" – Theory of a Deadman]

It was 22 ABY and fourteen year old Hiten Karr's world was suddenly turned upside down. He had just witnessed his parents being killed right before his eyes. He had watched in horror, body paralyzed by fear, as a trio of thugs shot and killed his parents. Hiten was safely hidden away in his room, leaving the door ajar and watching events unfold through the sliver of space available to him. He dared not open the door any farther, lest he be discovered by the men.

Mere minutes before there had been a knock on the door. His mother Amyla had gotten up from their dinner table to see who it was. Just as she got there, she was knocked back as the door was kicked in and the thugs entered. Darin, his father, had nodded to Hiten, who then slipped under the table and crawled to his bedroom at the rear of the house to hide. The leader of the group, a man the others referred to as Ka'tor, pulled out a blaster and pointed it at Darin. Hiten couldn't make out what the question was, but his father's response was that he had no idea what the man was talking about. The man scoffed and nodded to the other two men, who grabbed Amyla and brought her over. Ka'tor pressed the gun against her head and repeated his question. It was something about getting around security where his father worked. Darin gave the same answer once more. Ka'tor's face contorted in anger and he shot Amyla, her body crumpling to the floor. Darin let out a yell and begin crying while young Hiten, from his hidden vantage point, bit into his sleeve to stifle his own sobs of grief. Ka'tor asked his question once more. Through tears of anguish, his father had told the man to go to hell and that he'd never do what they wanted. Clearly this was not the answer that Ka'tor had been hoping for. He snarled with rage and shot Darin.

[Music: "See What I've Become" – Zack Hemsey]

Ka'tor turned and nodded to his two men, they all went about trashing the main living area, making several small piles. Ka'tor found where Hiten's parents had kept some fuel for an old generator and some alcohol. He doused the floor and walls with it. Once finished, they made torches and lit them using the stove, throwing them into the piles they had created before and lighting the trails of liquid. Flames quickly spread throughout the main part of the house. Hiten was starting to have trouble breathing. As quietly as he could, he grabbed his cloak and pulled it on, bringing the hood up to protect his face just in case. He made sure he had his knife with him and then proceeded to climb out of his bedroom window. He fled into the night as fast as his legs could carry him, far away from the licking flame; away from the death and pain. For the first time in his life, he was all alone in the world.

[Music: "Fell On Black Days" – Soundgarden]

His world having been shattered and his home razed to the ground, Hiten traveled around Corellia. He scraped together some credits doing various odd jobs just to eke out a living. Eventually he used some rough martial arts training he had received over the years to his advantage and became a debt collector. Of course, the people he worked for were wary of using someone so young, but they decided to take a chance. They may have only given him safe jobs, but Hiten didn't mind. Money was money, and he needed it to stay alive. Hiten had

no idea if Ka'tor and his thugs would consider him to be a loose end that needed to be taken care of. Deciding to be cautious, he assumed the name Reiden, taken from a story his mother would often tell him when he was young. After some time, Reiden was even able to make a small name for himself as a reliable choice for small-time debt collectors to turn to.

Reiden had always felt different when he was younger. He could sense when there was something wrong and had a knack for convincing others to do things that he wanted. He had always wondered if there were more people like him out in the world, so he began to gather information and stories that he thought might be related to what he had experienced. In the end, he heard whispered rumors about the Force and Jedi. He even heard of a Dark Brotherhood, full of people that might be just like him. Those were the stories on which he focused.

In the year 26 ABY, at the age of eighteen, Reiden found himself in a bar on Nal Hutta. Listening to the voices around him for more information about Force users or anything else that could prove useful, one conversation grabbed his attention. Two aliens were talking near him, and one had mentioned something about the Dark Brotherhood in hushed tones. Reiden was about to question them about it when a hooded figure made his way to the bar. The man ordered a drink and pulled back his hood, revealing the figure to be an older Human man, with eyes that startled Reiden; they were a yellow hue, tinged with red at the very edges. The eyes seemed to pierce right through him, like all of his secrets were being laid bare. The man told Reiden that what he had just overheard was real, that the Dark Brotherhood did exist, and Force users roamed the galaxy, some in secret. He introduced himself as Kadain Thorne, a Gray Jedi from the Dark Brotherhood. Kadain claimed that he had been watching Reiden for some time and believed that he showed promise. The older man offered to train Reiden in the ways of the Force, and he readily accepted.

[Music: "Pacific Rim (feat. Tom Morello)" – Ramin Djawadi & Tom Morello]

Their training began on Dantooine. Kadain taught Reiden some basic hand-to-hand combat skills and even the fundamentals of lightsaber combat, although they used sticks as a substitute as it would be infinitely safer that way. The next step in their training would be in using the Force. Kadain had Reiden meditate and stretch out his senses. Then Reiden began using the Force to move small rocks, starting with stones about the size of his fist, and then gradually increasing the size until he was able to move stones that were roughly two-thirds the size of a droideka. At least that's what Kadain had said, since Reiden had never seen one before. After about a month of training, Reiden was informed that it would be time to move on to the next part of their journey.

Their destination turned out to be the planet Nar Shaddaa, a world full of all sorts of criminals, ne'er-do-wells, and nefarious types. But that didn't bother Reiden; he had been around such people before, even worked for some of them. After leaving the spaceport, they traveled to a safehouse that Kadain owned, one of many scattered about the galaxy, it seemed. The older man informed his student that he had business matters to attend to, but it would be Reiden's assignment to find work and earn some credits. It seemed that this was to be a normal stop,

with making sure that Reiden could survive on his own, even if he was on a planet where danger could be lurking around any corner.

Upon exploration of the city they resided in, Reiden found several gambling establishments. He knew full well that with gambling came debts. He decided that he would try his hand as a debt collector once more. He only needed an in with someone that ran one of the locations, and an easy mark that would help him gain that advantage. With that goal in mind, he heading to the closest bar he could find and went inside.

[Music: "The House Rules" – Christian Kane]

He found himself in a dimly lit interior. There were a few booths along the wall opposite the bar, and several small tables between the two walls. He took a seat at the bar and ordered a drink, sipping it slowly as he took in the conversations around him, as he had done so many times before. A few seats over, he could hear someone talking excitedly to a friend about how he had a feeling that today would be his lucky day. Reiden glanced over to see a down-trodden looking Quarren male.

This is perfect, he had thought to himself. I didn't expect to find something this quickly, but I'll gladly take it.

Reiden waited until the Quarren had left before finishing he drink and stepping back outside. He trailed the Quarren as he made his way to a casino about a block and a half down the street. The alien entered into a beat-up building that looked in worse shape than the others around it. The sign above the door read: *Zukalo's Casino*. Reiden walked inside and was immediately struck with the stench of cheap booze and smoke. Another dimly lit and grimy looking interior was before him. The place was a dive by any measure of the word. The Quarren took a seat at a table and had a few good hands. With the next, he raised his bets, most likely in a bluff. It didn't go well, and the alien lost everything.

The alien, whose name Reiden had picked up was Krylls, then got up and made his way to a slightly elevated area that overlooked the casino floor. Reiden followed from a safe distance, stopping at a nearby table, feigning interest in the action there. Taking a glance up, he spotted a Duros sitting on a couch with a Lasat standing beside it, likely the bodyguard or some such role. A few Human males stood around the area as well. From the looks of them, they could be the security of the operation. Krylls had begun to beg the Duros, apparently the owner, Zukalo. The blue-skinned alien had laughed and shook his head, reminding Krylls of his outstanding debts. He told the Quarren that more loans would only hurt him with the added interest of the old ones. Krylls continued to grovel, pleading his case.

Reiden stepped up the stairs and brought the Quarren to his feet, "Come on, knock it off already. You're just embarrassing yourself now, buddy. Have a little pride." He walked Krylls down and out of the casino, before returning the Zukalo's platform.

The security blocked his way, but Zukalo waved them off, "Let him through."

"Sorry about that. I didn't mean to overstep, but I couldn't take the noise anymore. I've dealt with guys like him before, and sometimes they just don't know when to stop," Reiden explained. "The name's Reiden, by the way."

And with that, Reiden had made his way into the gratitude of Zukalo. They discussed similar problems, including the collection of debts from other patrons of his establishment. In the end, the Duros offered Reiden the job of debt collector, which he readily took. The jobs started off as minimal to prove himself, just like when he was younger, then grew to include higher debts, which also came with higher risk at times.

[Music: "Throwdown" – The Phantoms]

A few days later, on one particular instance, a Weequay man pulled a blade on him. Reiden easily evaded the lunge and spun around, slamming his arm like a bar across the man's back, winding him. He then delivered a vicious blow to his assailant's stomach, and he fell to his knees. The alien relented and gave Reiden the money that was owed. Over the following couple weeks, word of the exchange had spread throughout the city. Reiden encountered little resistance after that. Some practically threw their credits at him out of fear of what he might do, wanting to get things over as quickly as possible. He had a reputation now, and that didn't bother him at all, it made things easier.

[Music: "You Know My Name" – Chris Cornell]

Then one day Reiden arrived at the entrance to the casino to receive the usual datapad with a list of names of the people he would be collecting from that day to find a surprise. It wasn't just the Lasat, named Grex, waiting for him; Zukalo was there as well. He had no idea what this meant, but it certainly got his attention.

"Hey, Zukalo. I didn't expect to see you here," Reiden had said as he walked up to them.

"Yeah, well this won't be your usual collection today, kid" the Duros replied. "That's why Grex here is gonna go along with you."

"Oh, come on," Reiden said, letting out a sigh. "Are you telling me that you guys still don't trust me to handle myself after all this time? I think by now I've proven I can take care of things on my own."

"Listen, runt," Grex retorted. "This isn't your run-of-the-mill collection. We're going after a guy named Chaka today, and he's the real deal. Hardened criminal type, and he's made a name for himself lately as being someone you don't want to cross."

Zukalo handed over a datapad containing the specifics on Chaka, who turned out to be a blue-skinned Twi'lek. Reading it over, Reiden could tell that they weren't lying. Chaka had several arrests on file, and dozens of other incidents tied to his name. But the charges never seemed to stick. Zukalo went on to explain that the two of them had been in business together, but had parted ways, several days before Reiden had first shown up, over a difference of opinions regarding their future business ventures. Chaka had wanted to expand and try to branch out into other areas, but Zukalo didn't want to get too greedy, lest they attract the attention of some of the larger crime families in the city.

Reiden just sighed and accepted the job, resigning himself to the fact that Grex would be tagging along, whether he liked it or not. Together, the two then set out for Chaka's compound. When they arrived at their destination, they were met by a high fence surrounding a large, old building. It looked run-down, but there were clear signs of recent activity, trash littered about over the grounds. They approached the entrance to the building cautiously.

Two armed guards came out to meet them, asking who they were. Reiden stated that Zukalo had sent them and that they were there to collect the debt that Chaka owed. Reiden was led inside while Grex was kept just outside the entrance. Reiden was brought to a large room just past the entry hall, where a Twi'lek man and five human males awaited him. The Twi'lek introduced himself as Chaka and asked what Reiden wanted with him. Reiden repeated what he told the guards at the entrance. Chaka and his men laughed, and the Twi'lek shook his head, stating that he wasn't going to pay back the debt he owed.

The two guards nearest Reiden advanced on him; one drew a knife and the other a blaster. Reiden made a comment about having a fair fight, which caused Chaka to laugh once more, but he nodded, telling his men to humor the young man before them. The man with the blaster let

it drop to the floor. Reiden grinned and let the men edge closer. Once they were within range, he crouched low and extended his leg, sweeping it in an arc and knocking the men off of their feet. He leapt back and raised his hands in a taunting gesture at them. Their faces twisted in anger and they got to their feet. One was quicker and lunged at him. He tried to seize Reiden in a vice with both arms. Reiden ducked down and out of the way, then shot up and delivered a quick jab to the man's windpipe. The guard sank to his knees, then Reiden followed up with a hard punch to the man's face, feeling a crunch of cartilage before the man toppled over.

[Music: "Bodies" – Drowning Pool]

By then the other guard had gotten to his feet. Reiden advanced on him and took a swing, but was blocked. The guard slammed his fist into Reiden's side, causing him to gasp and take a step back. The guard aimed a kick at Reiden's knee, but he flipped back, avoiding the blow. He used the landing to then propel himself at his opponent head first, ramming into the guard's stomach. Reiden swiftly drew his knife and plunged it deep into the guard's neck, then yanked it free and kicked him to the ground. Warm crimson blood dripped from the polished steel blade onto the cold stone floor.

Chaka roared for his other men to take him out, and they advanced on Reiden. One man, out of Reiden's sightline drew a blaster and took aim. Something in the back of the young man's mind rang out in alarm and he ducked low, barely avoiding the blaster bolt as it seared past him. A flare of anger at being careless erupted within Reiden. He spun to face the shooter and hurled his knife at the guard, where it landed in his forearm. He rushed over and pulled it out before slicing it across the man's side. He then circled his arm up and plunged the blade into the shoulder near his neck and gave it a twist before releasing his hold on the handle and turning to face the rest of the guards.

Reiden was filled with rage, and he let it fuel him, adding more strength and speed to his movements. He launched himself at the next opponent and delivered a savage headbutt, followed closely with a fierce punch to the gut. The man crumpled to his knees and Reiden took hold of his head with both hands and twisted it violently, hearing a sickening *snap!*

Reiden sent out tendrils of power through the Force as he reached out for the knife of one of the fallen guards. The blade wiggled on the floor before being summoned to Reiden's hand. He then went to where he had left it in the other guard and ripped it free, slicing deep across the man's neck for good measure. But what he didn't see was the final guard, creeping up on him. The man raised the stock of his blaster rifle and slammed it against the back of Reiden's head, knocking him to the ground.

White-hot anger seared through Reiden's mind once more. He growled and faced the guard. He summoned every ounce of strength he could muster and held his hand out, extending an invisible hand through the Force and shoving the man back, pinning him against the wall. He hurled one knife at the man and it found a new home in the man's thigh, above the knee. Reiden stalked over and took his own knife and plunged it into the guard's stomach to the hilt. He used his newfound strength to rip the knife upwards before removing it, wiping the blade

clean on the man's clothes before sheathing it and turning to face Chaka. The Twi'lek now cowered in his chair, whimpering. He pointed to a chest on the floor and told Reiden the credits were all there, and that he should just take it and leave. Grex had just rushed in after having heard the commotion from outside and disabling the men guarding him. He now looked around, dumbfounded. Reiden told him to help him with the chest of credits and they made their way back to a very pleased Zukalo. The casino owner had decided to give Reiden a sizeable bonus due to the abundance of extra credits the chest had contained.

Reiden stayed on in Zukalo's employ for a couple more weeks after that. Then Kadain informed him that they would be leaving. Reiden let his master know about everything that had recently happened and how the Force had come to his aid, giving him strength. What he left out, however, was how intoxicating it felt to use the anger to fuel him in combat. He wanted to taste that feeling again. The older man seemed concerned about the rage dwelling within his apprentice, but said nothing of it. The next step on their journey together would be the planet Kashyyyk, home world of the Wookiees.

[Music: "Session" – Linkin Park]