



Quest for the Holy Grail

Written by Aedile Mystic Alara Deathbane (Dossier #12681)

1300 hours
Helia Lowland Jungle
Ptolomea

The sun stood high upon the horizon as sun shone and birds flew over the jungle sky. Alara could just barely see the setting through the lavishly vegetated planet surface. She continued to trod through the damp ground, puddles, and plant life around her. Thankfully it didn't seem to be raining anytime soon.

I've got to be getting close to its location, Alara thought to herself. I'm surprised I haven't run into anyone else yet.

According to the ancient Krath texts the Dark Jedi had found among the Shadow Academy library shelves, the Holy Grail was sent here after the destruction of the Antei System. Legends spoke of the Triumvirate attempting to utilize this archaic artifact to lengthen their lives and strengths within the Force. After the Star Chamber of the Triumvirate was torn apart from the inside, the texts stated that Tiamat brought the Holy Grail here to Ptolomea for safe keeping. This was long and forgotten in time and space for years. Many librarians claimed that the legends within the Krath text was only to strike fear into the hearts of Jedi and Dark Jedi and to ensure no one would underestimate the Krath again. History wrote itself onwards and decided to forget that part of itself behind. Or rather that's what Alara thought before she heard the news on Judecca.

The Mystic was at her favored bar, or what was left of it, within the streets of recently devastated Ohmen. After a long day of arguing with frightened and angry civilians, hauling debris, and keeping peace on the streets, the Aedile stopped by for a favorite cup of rum to soothe herself and relax. The work of her new-found position was something she had been craving for so long, but was still something to grow into. The challenges and predicaments that revealed themselves to her and her Quaestor brought up all sorts of tangles and snarls to deal with in House Excidium. As she was sipping her beloved "amber fuel", she overheard some loudmouth human mercenary going on about becoming a god.

"Who cares if I don't have powers?!" the mercenary's words echoed in Alara's imagination, "I can become the best killa there is! I don't need no Force Powers! This cup-'ll get me there!"

When her Sephi ears perked up at this, she knew she couldn't ignore it. He may have been an idiot merc, but he was going on about something he was not well educated on. She questioned

the man almost instantly. He quickly revealed to her that mercenaries were being hired on for an archaeologists' expedition to search for the mystical Holy Grail. Alara was baffled at first, but when she contacted the archaeologists after taking their contact information from the human, they made it clear they were very serious.

The older voice she spoke to over her datapad reverberated in her mind once again. "We are doing dangerous work here. This won't be your average dig site. Now that people know about our conquest, they will realize the grail's story is true. They will hunt for the power themselves. Be prepared to do some bloodshed."

"Of course I'll be ready for bloodshed. I'm always ready for it." The assassin did not need to explain herself further due to her reputation that began to make its way around the galaxy. People were beginning to know her by her true identity: the bloodthirsty killer that lets none stand in her way; not even her parents who she slaughtered only days after her youngest sister's elopement.

These archaeologists she had been speaking to asked her to do one thing before she ventured to Ptolomea to join them: retrieve the Krath texts from the revered Shadow Academy. This she could do with ease. She was always recognized upon visiting there due to her status as Graduate cum laude. It wasn't too hard for them to allow her into the restricted section as well. A quick dossier check and a look from her intimidating fiery eyes wholly sealed the deal.

She reached again for the texts from her leather bounded knapsack. The she-Marauder took a quick glance around the jade, chartreuse jungle around her in efforts to be sure she was still unaccompanied. Feeling assured by her senses, she paused in her steps and looked through the contents of the text.

After roughly translating the ancient language, the half-Sephi learned that the Holy Grail would be found in an underground temple in the bleak portion of the forest. She had already been walking for quite some distance, but the trees did appear to be fewer and more far between sectors she had been in earlier. She placed the Krath text back into her satchel gently and sealed the clasp for extra assurance of its cargos safety. The crack of twigs and sticks caught her attention. Her blonde locks spun in the air as her head turned to investigate the noise. She spotted the claws of a reptilian snake-eater scurrying across the mossy floor of the jungle. A sigh of slight relief escaped her lungs, but she could not completely discharge her suspicions of being followed. She continued on through the lowlands with alertness straightening her spine.

She eventually came across an almost barren meadow within the jungle and encountered the rockbound debris of the Krath temple. A few tents, scattered freight, and makeshift tables were located near the entrance. As the Dark Jedi stepped out of the emerald shadows of the jungle,

she could distinguish the figures of middle-aged Omwati with feathers of vibrant plumages upon their heads. She confidently stepped out into the grass fronds of the meadow, her sabers clipped to her belt for good measure.

“Good afternoon, patrons. I assure you that I have not happened upon any enemies during my journey to meet with you here.” Alara spoke formally, her abdomen betwixt in a bow and her arms draped outwards.

“You must be Miss Alara Deathbane. It is a pleasure to finally meet the heiress to the name in which we have heard so much about,” the eldest-looking of the group stepped forward and offered his hand as a symbol of trust though his brow still held slight concern in disposition toward the neoteric individual before him.

“No need to fear. I only kill those who give me good reason to. You have given me good reason to only protect you and your cause. That is what I plan to do.” Alara grasped the Omwati’s hand and shook it gently in a reassuring, peaceful fashion.

“That is good to hear, m’lady.” the Omwati smiled, his cerulean wrinkled cheeks lifting at the exertion. “My name is Aldhibah. These are my fellow colleagues,” he turned and lifted his hand towards the group of archaeologists standing a distance away in both concern and acquisitiveness. “This is Raeleph, Cyburne, Taes, and Madesi. We have all been studying together on the Holy Grail for years. I am pleased to welcome you into our group’s fold this day.”

“Very nice to meet you all. Where shall I keep watch?” Alara smiled at the group in politeness.

“Such a kind lady despite her fiery reputation,” Raeleph spoke up as he stepped forward to voice his opinion, “I believe staying out here to keep an eye on things would be best.”

“No, no, Raeleph. She must come with us. There is nothing in our reserve between the canvas of our tents that has necessity for preservation such as the minds of my bretheren and the secrets of the grail.” Aldhibah placed his hand kindly upon his friend’s shoulder. Raeleph scowled under his breath and nodded, stepping backwards in his previous state. “Come with us, Alara. We will need your acclaimed strength and wit.”

Alara bowed once again in obedience and stepped closer to the group. The Omwati, each robed in various leather fabrics dyed in hues of deep crimson. Their saddles softly padded the ground beneath them as they stepped into the temple’s depths below. Alara advanced behind them and unclipped her sabers from her belt at the ready. Torches lined the left walls of the stairway,

flickering a faint yellow light to lighten the steps ahead. The assembly continued the cascading steps in airs of anticipation and apprehensiveness. Once they reached the end of the stairs, light from larger lanterns that hung from the ceiling of an anteroom which was furnished with tables, food provision barrels, and cots. Scrolls and delineated sketches of the temple's layout were scattered across the corridor. Another hallway trailed towards the staircase's left. The Omwati leading the Mystic went further in their descent down this very path. It seemed as though the torches grew further apart from each other, opening the tunnel up to the darkness and mystery that shrouded the ancient ruin's walls.

"Do you not have light, Aldhibah?" Alara spoke concerningly from the rear.

"Oh my..." the elder laughed, "it appears that I have. Perhaps you can aid us in this field, miss Deathbane?"

Without hesitation, Alara ignited the lightsaber in her right hand, allowing the vibrant xanthous plasma to rise to life. As they reached the tunnel's limits, the yellow glow illuminated a large rectangular chamber.

Inside the chamber walls were large ancient sculptures of Krath culture depicting a Sith warrior, a sorcerer, and an alchemist in their respective stances. There was an ochre chest placed before each sculpture. Glyphs of ancient Krath were written above the sculptures, about ten feet up the wall. There were no exits whatsoever. It was as if the group reached a dead end in their adventure.

"Well now what?" Raeleph huffed.

"The inscription reads," Aldhibah began, ignoring Raeleph, "For each of the Krath must take a test. They study, they practice, they fight in conquest. But only one truly knows the way. One will live on, but the others will stay."

"Hmm. I wonder what it could mean?" the Omwati named Taes spoke up. The colleagues began to discuss options with one another as to what it could be.

Alara's intuitive mind began to wander in the delves of her imagination. "I think it's talking about the statues. There must be a secret to one of them that has to do with the next path.

"Why would it be one of the statues? The Krath didn't play favorites! Each and every one of them were powerful in their minds." Raeleph retorted.

“Ah but that is where you are wrong, Raeleph.” Aldhibah smiled, “They did play a favorite. The warrior was the one who lasted the longest in battle. The others could not. Alara, do me a favor dear and open the chest in front of the Krath warrior.”

Alara nodded and walked towards the statue. It's black charcoal-like texture glowed orange with her nearing presence. The she-Marauder instinctively clicked her saber in her left hand back onto her belt, and moved her ignited saber to her left hand. She then with her stronger grip opened the chest carefully. All that lay in the chest was decades' if not centuries' worth of dust, and a wooden handle. Alara pulled the handle upwards. The sliding sound of rock resounded through the chamber as an opening was revealed behind the warrior statue.

“Simple enough.” Alara smiled at her work and stood up to meet her companions.

“I wonder what happens if we open the other chests...” Cyburne reached his curious fingers towards the boxes only until his hand was slapped backwards.

“No! The inscription reads that only one makes it. Let's not figure out what happens when you inspect the other two.” Aldhibah spoke with an exhorting tone. Cyburne pulled his hand backwards quickly and stepped away in conformity. “Alara, lead the way please.” Alhibah instructed her.

With another nod, Alara stepped behind the statue and led the way down the dark passage. At the end of the darkened cob-webbed pathway the company came across a stretch with three paths. Another inscription was engraved onto the floor.

“The Force guides all. It knows all. It's claimed to be true. It will save those that are fortunate. Will fortune lie with you?”

“Okay. Well we have to use the Force. Makes sense.” Alara spoke plainly.

“Good! Good!” the leader exclaimed. Do us another favor, young one.”

Alara called out to the Force and closed her fiery amber eyes in order to concentrate. She began to clear her mind in efforts to listen for response.

“This is silly, professor. One of us can do it much faster than she can.” Raeleph conveyed his frustrations.

“No. Let the lass do it.” Aldhibah refused his answer. Even more frustrated, Raeleph scoffed and crossed his arms begrudgingly. A smirk crossed Alara’s lips for but a moment until she realized her focus was cut. She clenched her eyes shut and finally heard from the Force. Her mind began to form the picture in which the Force was communicating to her.

“The middle path is the one we must take. It leads us to the grail.”

“Fantastic! Let’s get going!” Cyburne stated excitedly.

The crew affirmed Alara’s intuition and began to head down the middle path. Rodents could be heard scurrying around the floor. The ground’s texture grew to be more and more damp. A humidity began to fill the air as they continued onwards. Alara’s Sephi ears perked up at the sounds of rushing water.

“Sounds like there is a waterfall ahead. Stand back. I’ll get a closer look.” Alara held her hand out behind her to stop the others. She paced her steps carefully around the tunnel’s exit.

As light dilated her eyes, the Mystic observed the cave’s open mouth to house a grand waterfall that flowed upon a river. This river spun itself around a large onyx platform. Stalactites and stalagmites glittered with dew and sunlight. The jungle’s hum was also once again present here. Alara looked upwards, ensuring she was safe from any acrobats that may have tried a trick on her by hiding over one of the cave orifices. She called to the others once the coast was clear. She continued to lead the group onwards to meet the middle of the platform. Mist hung in the air all around them, causing the ground to practically fog at their steps.

Much to his surprise, Taes’ foot activated a press which then elevated a pedestal from the ground in the center of the platform before the company. On its centre stood the sought after item: the Holy Grail. The goblet was as reflective as glass, but was however an array of various colors as if it shined a different chroma with every glance.

“There it is. The Holy Grail.” Aldhibah grinned widely. “Now how do you suppose we try to remove it from its pedestal?”

“This seems... much too easy. Its as if someone or something is just waiting for us to pick the grail up.” Alara spoke softly in case prying ears may have been listening.

“What do you suppose we do then?” Cyburne asked.

“I say we take it anyway. No matter what happens, we have to get it off the pedestal eventually. Might as well just be ready for the surprise now.” Raeleph vindicated his logic.

“True. But what if it springs some sort of trap from below us? Or above us? How do we get out then?” Cyburne voiced his concerns.

“Well then we just run towards the same way we came. Perhaps we can stand in position to be ready to receive the grail. Then if anything were to happen, at least someone would be able to run with the Holy Grail and get to safety.” Taes constructed his plan as he spoke.

“Sounds good to me,” Alara agreed.

“Perfect,” Aldhibah clapped his hands together proudly. “Alara, you stand closest to me. I’ll be the one to grab the grail. Raeleph, stand in front of Alara. Cyburne and Taes will follow in the rear closest to the exit.”

Everyone lined up as instructed and awaited Aldhibah’s move. The group tried their best to stay in place though they wanted to watch the Holy Grail get taken off of its mantle. Aldhibah reached his hands carefully around the goblet and with a deep breath lifted it from the pedestal. Every member of the party quickly winced and awaited any danger that might ensue. After a few breaths, the crew breathed a sigh of relief simultaneously.

“Well, looks like we are good to go.” Taes pushed some stray plumage back out of his face.

“Nah’t quite yet you ain’t,” a malicious heavily-accented male voice was heard from around a cave entrance. The mercenary Alara had met not a few days ago in the cantina on Judecca came around the corner, a large sledgehammer in hand and a team of three ruffians by his side.

Alara clipped her other yellow saber from her belt and ignited it, pointing both sabers in fighting stance: Her right saber pointing left and held upwards with her left saber pointed right and held downwards. “You’re going to walk away and leave this place, leaving your foolish dreams of power behind you,” the half-Sephi ordered.

“I aint afraid of you, pretty gurl. Not when I have these three with me. Here’s Teddy, Leo, and Donovan. They’re my boys from Judecca. Each of them used to be part of your precious Brotherhood Empire until they saw what’s good and came to work for me. Now they’re pretty angry with you and your Clan and what ya’ll did to our Ohmen.” The mercenary led his men into the cave and smiled coyly at the group.

Damn that Scholae Palatinae business, Alara growled to herself, keeps getting me into trouble being involved.

“I’ll have you know I had absolutely nothing to do with the Emperor’s strike onto Ohmen. I was working on a mission at the time. I wasn’t even there. If I had been, I --”

“That’s the point, Lass! You’re still on their side even though they *obvvioussly* tricked you into leaving so you wouldn’t catch em! You’re just as at fault as they are. That’s why we are going to get that grail, and you won’t! Go get em guys!” The mercenary pointed towards the crew and directed his men onwards.

“GO! Go out the exit! I’ll take care of these three!” Alara yelled to the others and leapt from the pedestal to a stalagmite. Using this jump to give herself more momentum, the Aedile flung herself from above and crashed her sabers down onto Leo. His arms and head fell to the floor faster than the rest of him did.

“wwwWWHAA?! Leo!” the mercenary roared, stomping loudly. “GET HER NOW!” The man swung his sledgehammer towards the Mystic, but her agility was too quick. Alara leapt off the ground and towards an opposite-facing stalagmite. The mercenary’s sledgehammer wacked the onyx platform very loudly, causing a crack to form on the surface.

Donovan jumped towards the she-Marauder, steadily keeping her pace though she tried to lose him by climbing other various rock formations. Seeing this, the Aedile stopped abruptly on the surface and held her sabers in position as Donovan fell right into them. Blood sizzled and hissed as it hit the lightsabers’ blades.

“AAUUUGUGGHHHHHH!” the Mercenary howled with fury. He screamed at the remaining mercenary to try his chance while he himself ran after the Omwati. A gasp filled Alara’s chest.

I can’t let him get to the archaeologists! Alara’s mind screamed to her inner self. Even idiots like him will be able to do some damage!

She launched herself from the ground and did a somersault in the air, tucking her sabers in under her feet as she soared high above Teddy’s head. The half-Sephi landed successfully and dashed to follow the mercenary in the tunnels. Every spin and twist of the tunnel sped past her as she recalled the steps she took before to get through this temple in the first place. Series of shouting caused Alara to amplify her speed even further, calling to the Force for aid. Due to her experience, the Force answered willingly. She came upon the scene just seconds before it was too late.

“Well, well, well! I’m blocking the only exit you have now!” the mercenary laughed obnoxiously. “You won’t be getting past me unless it’s over my dead body!”

The Force immediately beckoned Alara with an idea. *We just might be able to figure that out for you, Sithspit.* Alara grinned to herself. She stepped towards the human and put on her acting face that she wore so well, turning off her sabers and clicking them back to her belt.

“Well, sir. If you’re going to kill us and steal the Holy Grail, why don’t you loot the other chests?”

“Wha? Hmmm... Is this a trick? Are you trying to get me confused or something?” the Mercenary’s IQ wasn’t too high, but it was high enough to be suspicious of Alara.

“Why would I try to trick you? I’m already dead. I’m just saying if I were in your position, I’d be checking the other chests as well.” She turned to her Omwati companions who were doing their best not to smile.

“But of course, Alara. All sorts of wonderful findings worth millions of coins rest in this archaic temple. Would be a shame to see them go to waste.” Aldhibah added.

“Hmm.. Well I suppose you’re right.” The Mercenary took the bait and headed towards the chest in front of the sorcerer’s statue closest to the wall.

Teddy’s footsteps could be heard by the half-Sephi’s ears from the path. In brisk yet silent motion, Alara pulled tactics from her beloved battle team assassin guild and quickly shoved a knife from her boot through the young mercenary’s esophagus. This not only got the job done swiftly, but inaudibly as well. After Alara caught the body and placed it down carefully onto the temple floor, she went back to join the others who were already devising a way out. The mercenary kept himself busy trying to figure out what was in the chest before him.

“What are these!? Jewels? They look like rocks! Pebbles!” The Mercenary growled. In his hands silver spheres reflected off the light in the dimly lit chamber.

“Ohh! Those are not just pebbles. Those are tools used by Ancient Krath to decipher the Force’s will! Even non-Force users could utilize them!” Raleph edged the human further into curiosity.

“Oh! Hmm.. Well, what’s in this chest?” the Mercenary shoved handfuls of spheres in his pocket and walked towards the chest in front of the scholar. As soon as he lifted the toes of his feet off the floor in front of the sorcerer status, the room began to shake violently.

“I WAS RIGHT! YOU TRICKED ME!” The brute roared with an enraged moan. He reached towards Aldhibah who was still holding the grail.

Aldhibah met eye contact with Alara and suddenly threw the goblet to her while jumping into the mercenary’s reach. Instinct tore Alara to reach after the aged Omwati, but she obeyed the elder’s wishes and caught hold of the grail instead. Aldhibah’s last movements included opening the scholar statue’s chest which impaled both he and the mercenary, thus freeing the rest of the company. A few cries rose out of the crew’s lungs, but they could do nothing at this point but run. Rocks began to fall from the ceiling above them as an avalanche began to make its way through the tunnels.

“RUN! THERE’S NOT MUCH TIME!” Alara pushed the remaining Omwati ahead of her, practically picking them up as they went. Though pulse in their hearts and sweat on their brow told them they would never make it, the Force willed them to survive. Alara, Raeleph, Cyburne, and Taes made it to the surface of Ptolomea alive.

“What are we going to do now?!” Cyburne spoke through sheer panic, distress, and fear. “Aldhibah... my teacher. He’s... gone.”

“He sacrificed himself for you all. For the grail. I think we need to focus on our safety and the grail’s safety. We will pay respects later, I promise.” Alara kept the situation under control as the group stopped for a brief moment to catch their breath. Raeleph fell to the ground due to trembling limbs and ended up regurgitating all across the grass in front of him. Alara grabbed a water sack from her satchel and threw it to his side. She then took the Holy Grail still in hand and placed it into her bag. “We will rest for but a moment. However, we need to get a move on. Who knows what else is awaiting us in the jungle out there. Or even the skies for that matter. For safety’s sake, you’re all coming with me back to my planet. We will discuss the finding of this grail with the Emperor, or rather what’s left of him.”

“I don’t think now is the time to argue with you. Thank you for everything you’ve done for us.” Taes spoke through teary eyes. Alara wasn’t too practiced in responding to emotions in other people. She gave him a half-smile and a nod which is the best she could come up with in such a situation. Once Raeleph was back to his sorts, the group followed Alara’s leadership into the jungles of the lowlands.

CRACK!

“EEPP! What was that?!” Raeleph screamed. The company, not far into the jungle turned and realized they were not quite out of danger yet. A large and hungry looking nexu stood hunched

over the ground, ready to pounce on its new-found prey. The Omwati immediately huddled together in fear as they watched Alara, who seemed rather unbothered by the nexu's presence, begin walking towards the deadly creature. She only lifted her left hand in the air as she focused deeply into its eyes. She channeled the Force and began to soothe the creature before her palm even met its fur. The nexu's several eye pairs immediately softened their look under the half-Sephi's magic-like countenance. He even let out a soft purr once she finally made contact with him.

"It's alright everyone. Hop on his back. We will be brought to my shuttle safely thanks to him." Alara beckoned the group forward. With slight hesitation, the Omwati eventually did as they were told. Alara remained at the profile of the nexu, whispering soothing tones and words of peace to the feline-like specie while her friends climbed onto its back. Once everyone was mounted, Alara rubbed the nexu's face once more and climbed onto its back in front of the others.

"Hold on everybody! It's about to get bumpy!"

Alara, the Force whispered in her mind, Ignus Manus, the Holy Grail needs safe keeping. Do not let it out of your sight until you get it in the hands of your Emperor.

But what of all that he has done? Alara challenged.

All is not as it seems. Trust your Emperor. All will be told in due time.

Alara's right hand reassuringly stroke the satchel to ensure the goblet was still inside. Once her senses told her it was so, she let out a sigh and allowed herself to enjoy the breeze the nexu's back provided. She could feel constant tugging on her cloak from the other passengers trying to stay on top from time to time. Alara smiled in the sun for what only felt like a few breaths when the nexu came to a halt before her very own shuttle.

Well, time to get off this blasted planet. Let's go, Alara, the half-Sephi thought to herself, Who knows where the Emperor will send us now once he knows the Holy Grail legends are true.

The Aedile swiftly pulled her datapad out from her belt and unlocked the shuttle doors for anxious Omwati to climb aboard and dialed her Quaestor's contact information. Braecen Kaeth's hologram immediately appeared before her eyes in dull, green pixels.

"Alara, good to see you. We've been wondering where you've been. What can I do for you?" Braecen held his hands together as he inspected his Aedile before him.

“I’m on the planet Ptolomea, just about to depart. Send some troops my way for protection. Have a guard waiting for us to land in Ohmen as well. I’ve got some news you’ll never believe.”

~ End ~