

Sands of Time

A Moriband Tale

by

Macron Goura Sadow, CNS, #4856- red, 3338 words

Tasha'Vel Versea, CNS, #14192- blue, 2491 words

Underground Tunnel, Moriband

“Skitter, Skitter, Skitter”

The sound of chitinous legs scraping across the floor from deep within the tunnels produced a slight shudder within Tasha. Through the dark tunnel ahead she was met with a pair of yellowish eyes staring at her as she heard the familiar click of a blaster about to fire. She had no time and had to act quickly. Running up, the hardened Marauder moved towards the left wall avoiding one of the shots. “They are firing, kill them all.” She yelled as she ducked another shot and threw out her hand sending the first humanoid flying backwards into a couple others that had come up. They didn't seem to care much when they continued to fire into their own comrade trying to get at the Marauder. Swinging her lightsaber, Tasha continued to push the now pincushioned corpse into the two oncoming soldiers. Well I guess you would say 'soldiers', they were completely gray humanoids with yellow to red eyes that glowed in the illumination of the lightsaber and glowrod light. Taking her blade, she carved a clean cut right through both midsections and brought it diagonally downward, cutting them down. She could hear more weapons getting ready. “We need to keep going and wipe this group out. If we don't press our advantage now they will shoot us all down.” The rest of her party were following as quick as they could. Mactire was now beside her while Firith was in the back helping Lilith. Having an injured member was slowing them down, but Tasha refused to leave her behind. She was a Versea and a clanmate that made her family in her eyes. She knew that if there were a lot more down the line, they may not be able to make it out alive. This dark tunnel could very well be their graves. Tasha shook her head, trying not to think negatively.

"I will get them out even if I have to die doing it." She told herself. "I am a Marauder and I will kill them all!" She let out a frenzied roar of defiance as her eyes blazed a bright green. She could feel herself grinning like a half-crazed imp as her eyes gave off a murderous gaze. None of the others had ever seen Tasha when her battlefury came upon her. It was like watching a switch go off. No longer was she this calm, gentle sweet Tasha. She was now a beast. She charged forward slashing with her lightsaber.

Left!

Right!

Under!

Over!

The hellish rampage of the Blue Twi'lek kept going. Four bodies and soon a fifth hit the floor completely torn apart by a lightsaber-twirling death machine. Others were sent flying into the walls of the tunnel and taken down by Mactire and Firith. After the 8th body hit the floor, Tasha stopped. her body was sweating profusely as she drew a ragged breath and panted heavily. The Savant's eyes turned to their regular green again as she almost collapsed from the strain. Leaning heavily against the right side of the wall, she weakly raised her glowrod. Nothing could be seen in front of her save for the never ending darkness that followed in the tunnel.

"Well I think we can take a short break. Seems we are in the clear...for now." She managed to say before coughing and taking in a few more deep breaths. The others nodded, still a bit stunned from Tasha's murderous display.

"That was fraking amazing, Tasha." Firith complimented. "Remind me ta never piss ye off."

Tasha smiled and coughed again. "If only I could do this the rest of the way. Unfortunately, I've spent a lot of my energy and will have to rest. We can rest a bit, but we must stay alert. I have no idea if there will be more of them or something else in this place." As she listened, there were very faint skittering noises again. "We are definitely NOT alone."

She kept her eyes on the dark tunnel, watching carefully for any signs of movement as she refocused herself and calmed her breathing again before turning to the group.

“How are you doing right now, Lilith?” She asked, her tone now soft and motherly.

“It hurts tremendously and is very painful to walk on, Tasha, but I can manage.” She winced as she limped painfully to the right wall of the tunnel.

Firith was immediately at her side making her sit down and prop the sore ankle. “Don’t overdo it, Lassie. I cannae have ye hurt worse.” He gave her a soft hug as they both looked at Tasha.

Mactire seemed a little uneasy and constantly shifted around. “I don’t know about you, but I really don’t want to be in here any longer. I’m starting to feel a bit stifled.”

The situation was still grim. They needed to find a way out and get help, but with the condition of Lilith’s leg, she couldn’t go very far.

Someone needed to scout ahead and clear the area of potential threats. Firith had to take care of Lilith, that much was clear and having more than one Equite to assist was better in case something did happen. That meant it was up to Tasha.

“All of you stay here, rest up and wait for a bit. I am going to move on ahead to see what is out there. If I don’t come back in a couple hours go on ahead without me. Remember you are all strong as a unit so please work together. I will see you all soon. Be safe.”

As the group nodded, Tasha grabbed her glowrod and descended deeper into the dark tunnel ahead. She did not know what horrific things would lie in wait, but she was determined to clear the way for her team.

“I promise I will get you out of this somehow.”

After fifteen minutes of walking, she was met by the sounds of weapons unholstering and pairs of those familiar glowing eyes glaring at her.

“Oh Frak!”

Zelden Zlas Cantina
San Korinar
Amphor

The floating city around Amphor known as San Korinar was generally regarded as a first-class craphole. This particular cantina was smelly, dingy, small, and located in a back alley. The watering hole mostly catered to Tibanna miners and those who wanted to escape notice. In short, it was perfect. The regulars ignored him. The cloaked human had garnered interest the first time he had visited some years back but he had quickly gained the reputation of someone better left alone.

The cloaked figure drank slowly from a glass of high-octane booze. The heavy robes did little to hide his bulky form or mask the clanking sounds that emanated from beneath. "Wish I could actually get drunk off this bantha-piss," the Sith mused as he stirred the noxious mix with a finger idly and added a vial of kerosene. "Can't even get drunk on rocket fuel. Hell, maybe I should try actual bantha piss. Fracking biologically sad." His melancholic reverie was interrupted by a comlink chirp.

Not wanting to share his private business with the other unsavory patrons the message was converted to text. The characters scrolled across a gauntlet screen raised to eye level. "Contact requested." It was an ultra-secure link and not one of the regular Clan or Sons of Sadow channels. This was from someone who was not to be ignored.

"Interesting." The madman stood and dropped a few credits on the table for the cleaning droid. He quickly walked deeper into the alley towards where his bike waited with an HK droid sitting on it. The Adept was without fear and only a soon-to-be dead fool would try to steal that bike with an assassin droid sitting on it. Macron tapped his comlink earpiece. "Go ahead, Lord Ashen."

Never one to waste words, the Grandmaster got right to the point. "Macron, I am requesting your service. A number of Clan and House Marka Ragnos operatives are trapped deep beneath Moriband and have not reported back as scheduled. Tasha Vel, Lilith, Mactire, and Firith are your target. We need you to reinforce and extract them. They may be injured and your skillset is right for the mission. Due to the surface combat we cannot spare a large team."

"Tasha." The silence was palpable. "I would enjoy having another Echani conversation with her. I understand, Lord Ashen and will comply immediately. Please transmit the coordinates and situational data to my new ship." The Sith turned, unlocked his speeder

bike, gestured to the droid, stepped on, gunned the engine and began to make his way with alacrity towards the docking pod where he kept his StarCruiser. "I'm on my way now."

"They have already been uploaded Alchemist. New ship eh? You should name her. Ashen out."

"He's right," thought the madman as he began to near the dock. "Easier said than done though." Macron keyed the initiation code to remotely start the vessel. Between an astromech droid and the autopilot brain the vessel could practically fly itself. "Mynock? Dianoga? Vornskr? No, already taken. Hm. Panthac. That's it. Mean motherfrackers, Mantessan Panthacs."

Not long thereafter the coal-black ship was breaking orbit and had entered hyperspace. "Flank speed, R3X7. Moriband is not far from the Orian system as the warbird flies. We should be there in just a couple of hours." The Sith tapped a few controls to activate the autopilot. "HK 22, check your gear and load up that RT-97 blaster rifle. We are entering a situationally target-rich hot zone right off the bat."

The droid was sarcastic as were most of the HK series. It was also programmed to be a stone-cold emotionless killer. "Yes Master. I am ready to eliminate meatbag targets."

Macron chuckled. He was not interested in a droid bullshitting him- he was only interested in results. "Very good." He turned to his own kit and plugged both lightsabers into a charge-port. "It's been a long time since I visited Moriband. I do enjoy meditation at Dark Side sites. Quiet introspection is valuable but bloody combat is my favorite form of the discipline. In combat you come to know yourself and your foes true self. Hehheh."

Star Cruiser Panthac

Landing Area

Moriband

Macron stood with his legs splayed over the speederbike and the HK droid was seated behind him. "Ready yourself 22. The ship will drop in, open the bay, and out we go. Cover me while I drive." The droid grumbled an assenting blip as the cargo hold door opened. The hot rodded 74-Z bike screamed like a banshee as the thrusters kicked in and Macron pushed it hard. After a few minutes of high speed transit several enraged soldiers began to shoot at them with blaster carbines. A surprise blaster bolt slashed

into the speederbike's cowl and blew out sparks and smoke. "Infeculated frackers. Hostiles on the left. Neutralize them 22."

"Yes Master." The droid turned its torso in a twist almost impossible for living flesh and lashed out at them with the heavy blaster rifle's searing bolts. It was a weighty weapon, but to the droid's metallic strength it was a minor inconvenience. Twin perfectly-placed headshots splattered the burning brains from both soldiers as the hot plasma bolts blew out both sides of their helmets. "Targets eliminated Master."

"Good." The Sith struggled to control the shuddering bike and not kill them both. "Darthdamn. Come on old girl." It quickly slowed down and stopped as Macron kicked out the parking stand. "Well shavit. She's slagged until the repair droid can get to her. No matter. We are close... I can feel them." Both bipeds stepped off the ruined speederbike.

HK 22 held the heavy blaster rifle in both hands and plugged the auxiliary power cable into his chassis. "I'm tracking several hostiles a few hundred meters away. I have no clear shot but neither do they."

"Copy that 22. How do you know they are hostile?" The madman closed his eyes and sought for the feel of the area. He could vaguely feel they were indeed hostile but wondered how the droid knew.

"Everything is hostile until proven otherwise per my programming." The droid continued to scan the area. "There is a colder thermal anomaly in that direction. Perhaps the tunnel entrance. My sensors are not refined enough for an accurate rating however."

"You'd make a fine Sith if you weren't a sad sack of metal," giggled the madman. "Yes, I sense those we seek are down there. Come on 22. In we go." Macron keyed his Inquisitorius comlink. "Tasha Vel, this is the Alchemist. I am inbound to your position with HK 22. What is your status and the status of your party? Over."

Underground Tunnel,
Moriband

Tasha gritted her teeth as several shots came towards her. Rolling to the left side of the wall and unleashing her red lightsaber, the Marauder dodged most of the bolts save for one that grazed across her cheek. She charged up to the first soldier that she saw, slammed her hand to the ground, and sent out a rippling wave of telekinetic energy to knock several of the soldiers backwards. Without hesitating, she swirled her lightsaber and began to take out the fallen soldiers quickly before they had a chance to rise. She took out four of the six before the two left began to fire again. One of the blaster shots hit her left shoulder causing her to cry out a bit. Focusing herself, she pushed through the lancing pain and threw her lightsaber at the soldier on the left side cutting his head clean off before the blade returned to her hand. Panting heavily, she mustered what strength she could and charged the last one. The blade sliced deeply into the grey soldier's sides as the Marauder ripped the blade upward dispatching the last one. Just as she finished, her communicator went off. She could barely make out the message, but it was definitely from Macron. She closed her eyes and began to search out for Macron. She could feel he was near. Perhaps he could reach her.

"Macron, the comm system is not working properly, if you are close I am inside a tunnel to the left side. I hear more footsteps coming and I don't have much left in me. I've been shot and I've used up a lot of my Force powers. Please help if you can." She hoped he heard the message sent telepathically and looked at the dark tunnel. There were more footsteps on their way to her location. She propped herself up against the wall and waiting till the first grey head came into view. She had pulled out her vibro dagger and threw it straight into the soldier's face burying it deep. Using what little strength she had left, she concentrated on forming a small bubble around herself just as another set of soldiers began to open fire. Shots began to dissolve in front of Tasha as her small force barrier held.

"Please hurry Macron, I can't keep my barrier up for long."

The grey soldiers continued to fire without any hesitation as Tasha continued to hold up. Unfortunately there wasn't much she could really do unless she brought down the barrier and for right now that wasn't a very smart idea. She tried to think of how her grandfather would have taken down a group like this with basically no powers. He had told her countless war stories of his youth involving close quarter situations and every time save for a few scratches he always managed to come out safely. She remembered

asking him at one point how he managed to get away. His reply was, "I will tell you some other time."

"Well now would have been a great time to tell me, Grandfather. I really wish you didn't have to go the way you did."

She let out a sigh and looked on at the seeming never ending fire from the soldiers. They now were starting to close in.

Underground Tunnel Entrance **Moriband**

"Nothing on the comm, 22." Macron peered at his comlink. "Worthless Inquisitorius crap." The Sith dropped the device back into a canister on his belt. "You get anything on yours?"

"Negative, meatba... er, Master." If a droid could grin, HK 22 would have done so. "Nothing on my standard internal comlink channels sir."

"Synthetic meatbag to you, droid. Watch it." The Sith felt something odd cross his consciousness with whispers of desperation. It was a telepathic message and from a familiar source. His own mastery of the telepathy skill was poor but the sender was more skilled. He could not understand the words but the gist was clear. As well, the Elder could almost foresee or perhaps sense the conflict. "I sense something. Tasha... she's in trouble up ahead. Let's move out and hurt some people." The Sith pushed aside a boulder with some effort and the assistance of the droid's mechanical strength. "In we go."

Macron keyed the operate switch on his personal energy shield and stomped ahead purposefully with a measured tread. "Excellent. Time to kick ass and chew juma gum, and I'm all out of gum kiddies. 22, you go first and eliminate any watchers quietly. I will then do my hurt-thing, as it were." Stealth was not his forte, and the Adept did nothing to hide his presence. "Let's go frack them up."

"Yes Master." The droid shouldered the long blaster and drew a shorter Tenloss disruptor pistol and vibroblade which would be more useful in close confines. "Ready to

eliminate hostiles.” The assassin droid was considerably more stealthy and moved ahead whenever possible to get the drop on any rearguards.

Within less than a hundred meters blasterfire could be heard and little flashes of colored light eked out a brief existence from ahead in the darkness. The attackers were experienced and had posted a guard. Which mattered little as the blacked-out HK droid quietly slit his throat with a vibro-blade. The droid pointed 2 fingers ahead, and Macron nodded.

Macron took a second, gathered himself, and roared as he clomped past the droid into the attackers from behind. HK 22 was right behind him. “Peekaboo, motherfrackers! Feel the FEAR!! Yarrggghh!” The Adept wasted no time in creating mayhem. The first line of crazed soldiers he came to had the explosive joy of a thermal detonator being tossed in between them. As the actinic baradium flash flashed a few into flaming chunks the Juggernaut followed right behind.

Orange flashes of light mixed in with the red and green of blasterfire as a lightsaber took one soldier apart at the waist. HK 22 disintegrated another’s right arm and most of the right side of his chest. The Tenloss had been somewhat de-tuned for a slow and painful disintegration for maximum demoralizing effect. As the soldier’s abject howl turned into a bubbling death gurgle others turned towards the new attackers from the rear.

Macron stood dead-on in front of the soldiers and howled with channeled rage in order to distract them from Tasha just as her barrier gave out. Blaster fire came at the Sith as he moved forward. Some shots were deflected with Vaapad, other missed bolts splashed against the shield generator, armorweave cloak, Dark Armor, or were simply deflected by the Force. A whirlwind of lightsaber cuts, thrusts, Echani strikes, and heavy crushgaunt blows followed the madman wherever he went like an iron wall of bloody death.

HK 22 ran right beside the Adept and the droid had been programmed with pure combat in mind. Limbs were removed by vibroblade, faces melted with the Tenloss, metallic feet and elbows crushed bone and punctured organs. The stink of blood, ozone, voided bowels and channeled terror soon filled the chamber. Ten frightened men were no match for the pair of them, at all.

Macron stopped, panting with exertion as the droid leveled the Tenloss at Tasha. “No, you idiot!” gasped the Alchemist. “She is...a... non-hostile.” He wiped blood from his face. “Dumbass. I knew that new combat programming would be trouble.”

“Yes Master.” The droid lifted the weapon and regarded some blaster scarring on its own coal-black chassis. “Dumbass is at 87% operational status. Disruptor charge is zero. Compensating.” The droid holstered the Tenloss and began to scavenge e-clips from the shattered corpses. “I have a functional heavy blaster rifle, 2 fragmentation grenades and 7 scavenged e-clips. Vibroblade at 60% charge. Acceptable.”

“No, your name is not... good grief. Tasha you okay?” huffed the madman as he regained his focus. The exertion had been considerable both with the Force and his physical body. “Are you injured lady?” The Sith bent over and put his hands on his thighs. “Ugh. I’m getting too old for this shavit. Looks like my shield projector is spent. Hope I don’t puke.”

Underground Tunnel,
Moriband

The Twi’lek smiled as the barrier collapsed around her. She tried to stand, but due to the sheer exhaustion from maintaining the barrier, she blacked out. After a few hours, she came to again to find Macron tending to her left shoulder.

“That’s a nasty hit, but nothing a little bit of nano repair bots can’t solve.” He grinned as he let the mini bots do their work. “So what in the Nine Hells were you all doing out here? I don’t remember getting any invite. This place has a lot of good artifacts you know.”

Coughing a bit as she sat up, Tasha smiled. “As far as I am concerned, we were sent here to look around and possibly dig up some artifacts. I am very surprised that you weren’t already here. Anyhow long story short, there was some sort of earthquake that dropped my whole team into this dark and dismal place. Lilith had injured her ankle from the fall and then we had several of these weird grey soldiers attacking us. I was able to keep them safe for the time being. After going a short bit down the tunnel, Lilith couldn’t keep up so I decided to let Mactire and Firith stay behind to guard while I scouted ahead. No sooner than I went a few yards, I was attacked again by these creatures. I am not sure what they are or who is in charge of them, but I do know they will be back and usually in greater numbers. I was just lucky you got to me in time. Any later and I would’ve been toast.”

“Well just means we better get moving soon and reach the group.”

“I agree with you, Macron. I felt bad just leaving them.” Tasha rose from the ground after the nano repair bots finished their work and began to make her way back towards her fellow Sadowans.

“I am hoping that they are still all right. I'm not sure how much time we got till those things come back again.”

“Not to worry, meatbag. If they do come, I would be more than happy to assassinate them for you. Nothing brings me better joy than the sound of a blaster bolt penetrating through flesh,” piped Macron's HK droid.

“As long as it isn't me, I'm fine with that.” She grinned as she led them closer to where she left her fellow clanmates.

After a few moments of silent walking, Tasha remembered something she had wanted to ask Macron about.

“Macron I know you are very skilled in Sith Alchemy. I was wondering if it could ever be used to bring someone back from the dead?”

Macron's eyes lit up. “Resurrecting someone unfortunately isn't possible, however there are ways of possibly speaking to spirits.”

The Marauder stopped in her tracks and turned to face Macron. “Then you can help me. My grandfather's spirit used to always be with me, that is until he was brutally murdered by an Anzat in order to save my life. If there is any way, I can speak to my Grandfather again I will do what it takes. I would be in your debt, Macron.”

The Mad Scientist grinned like a Cheshire cat. “I would be more than happy to assist you my dear Tasha as I detest filthy Anzats, but first let's find your friends, get out of here, and then we can begin.”

“Right, duty first. Let's go!” With that she took off again with what seemed like a new vigor about her.

“Soon Grandfather, I will be able to speak to you again”

Just then skittering noises could be heard behind them.

“Something’s coming, Macron.” Tasha yelled as weird hissing noises and more skittering were approaching.

“Something different than before...”

Underground Tunnel

Moriband

“Skitter, skitter little mouse, who’s that skittering in my....” Macron frowned. “That sounds kinda big for a mouse. Too many legs.” HK 22 followed along behind them guarding their flank. “Yuk.”

“Yeah. Whatever it is, it’s between us and the others and coming this way.” Tasha winced. “I can fight, don’t worry.”

“Good, Marauder. I expected as much.” The Sith Adept quickly checked his chemolyzer as the noises came closer. “Acid vapors. We’re on Moriband... skittering... I think this all adds up in a rather disturbing way. Take cover. It’s got to be an infant Silloth!”

“I’ve heard of those,” the Savant replied. “Old bioweapons of the Sith. They devastated Kalsunor right? Aren’t they supposed to be huge?”

“Yeah. Not surprising one would be down here. Probably a baby you know? Not much to eat I imagine. Still could be pretty big and they can live for a very long time like most Sithspawn.” The Adept hunkered down behind a boulder. “Grab some cover 22. Acid spray is no good for anyone, droid or no. They are not especially quick but they are built like tanks. It would be foolish to engage in melee with the beetle.”

“Yes Master Meatbag. Shall I use grenades?” The droid unshouldered the long rifle, flipped out the bipod mount and found a protected position. It lit a glowrod and tossed it ahead into the darkness. “Target zone illuminated.”

“No you might blow out the roof of the tunnel droid,” responded Tasha Vel dryly as she looked at Macron. “I see what you mean. I’m not down with the ranged weapons

personally. Any suggestions?" She leaned back into a crevice in the wall. "This looks like a pretty protected spot."

"Direct Force attacks are less effective. However..." The Adept looked down at the cracks in the tunnel floor. The skittering came closer, followed by the sounds of clinking stones. "I have an idea. Target the joints on the legs 22."

"You better lay it out quick- here it comes!" The mass of the armored beetle hove into view on skittering legs as the Twi'lek gasped.

It was disgusting and sickly. Slavering jaws dripped emerald-colored smoking goo. Far too many legs scabbled at the debris in the tunnels. This immature Silooth was three meters long, tepid white, and hoary-looking from existing deep below the ground. Waving fungal growths resembling a moth's antennae obscured the places where the abomination's many eyes should have been. Blind or no, it sensed prey and came towards the two Dark Jedi. It appeared to ignore the droid.

HK 22 opened up with the heavy blaster rifle as Macron shouted. "Telekinesis! Hit the floor beneath it hard!" The droid concentrated fire on the legs as the beetle sprayed the room with acid. Macron screamed as some vapor splashed along his face. Both Force-users heaved with all their invisible might. Cracks resounded as the tunnel floor gave way. The insectoid horror tried to hold itself above the hole but it's joints had been weakened by the droid's relentless and accurate blaster fire. As it fell down into the darkness below with an inhuman shriek the Sadow warriors let out a sigh of relief.

"Why did it ignore the droid?" asked Tasha as she began to slip out of the crevice in the wall.

"It was blind from living down here, and sick. I think it could sense our biochemical exhalations. Carbon dioxide, that sort of thing." Macron grunted as he sprayed the right side of his face with synthflesh. "Augh. The droid, being unliving, gives off no such signature." An injector followed as the madman made faces to work the chemical into his muscle tissues.

"That will only add to your... questionable good looks. Haha!" The Twi'lek chuckled as Macron grinned and then grimaced. "I found something back here." She pulled from the area of the cracked tunnel floor a piece of an old tablet covered in dust and writing. "It looks pretty old."

“Truly,” giggled the madman. “Hate that it ruined one of my tattoos but a few skin grafts back at the lab should fix it up. In the meantime, it makes me look even more wonderfully horrific. Lemonade from lemons, as they say.” He squinted and looked at the basalt tablet Tasha held. “That’s old Sith writing. From a quick glance it looks like a ritual to contact the dead. Curious that it would come to light at this time.”

“Truly,” remarked Tasha Vel Versea as she looked at the stone writings. “Almost as if I was meant to find it.”

“Perhaps you were.” The Sith peered at the hole and estimated the distance. “Six meters. That’s a longish jump without a running start.”

“Yes master.” The droid regarded the hole as it unfolded itself from its protected position. “22 can jump this. How do you meatbags intend to cross?”

“Using the Force of course 22. We can discuss that old tablet later,” said the Alchemist as he looked at the Savant meaningfully. “The Dark Side works in strange ways. Especially on this ancient Sith world. Come on, let’s jump this thing. The Force will carry us across.”

Underground Tunnel, **Moriband**

Tasha stared at the chasm in front of her. It was going to be quite a jump, but she steadied herself and calmed her mind. Concentrating, she moved back several feet before charging forward towards the deep abyss in front of her. As she neared the edge, Tasha propelled herself onward to the gaping hole. At the last possible moment, she leapt across the chasm. She could feel herself almost gliding over as her feet descended onto the ground again on the opposite side. To her it felt like a leap of faith, trusting completely in the Force to guide her safely. Turning about she waved to Macron. “All right old man, it’s your turn.” She teased.

Macron chuckled as he prepared to jump. “I’ve leaped farther distances than you, child.”

“Then show me what you can do.”

Macron took a mock bow. “With pleasure, Tasha.” She watched in amazement as the old scarred Sith came to life. He gave a running start and practically flew over the edge

with such a grace that you could see the age in his face almost disappear. It was like staring at a younger version of Macron.

“Careful you don’t lose your jaw, little one.”

Tasha closed her mouth and smiled.

“Well good to have you here. Now do you think 22 can make it?”

“I heard that young meatbag. The probability of me falling down the chasm is 1 in-”

“Just jump already” Tasha interrupted.

“So rude, meatbag.” The droid sighed as he took a final running leap over the chasm.

“Now then, let’s go on. We must get to your group quickly, Tasha.”

Tasha nodded to Macron as she led the way to her companions.

“As long as they stayed put, we should be able to get to them.”

Underground Tunnel,

Moriband

The trio made their way deeper into the tunnels. “This way,” directed Tasha as the three slogged along. “I’ve sent a telepathic message ahead. We’re expected. Lilith has an injured leg so you’ll need to address that.”

“I will. You are talented with that mental discipline,” the Adept commented in an off-hand manner. “I’ve heard force-sensitive Twi’leks can be rather gifted that way.”

“It has something to do with our lekku,” replied the Savant. “I’m surprised your own skill is so limited. I thought Elders were good at everything.”

“That’s a rumor that is perpetrated by those who are afraid to really look at their own weaknesses. Telepathy is something I have only a rudimentary grasp of unfortunately. One cannot be good at everything. As my former Master Nekura Manji once said, it is better to be a master of a few disciplines than a weak devotee of many. I focussed more

on the killing arts.” Macron smiled with a wince as his injured visage stretched. “Speaking of which, I hear your Echani skills are becoming formidable.”

“I’d be happy to have a conversation with you once we get back to Orian space. The others are right up here. Firth? Mactire? Lilith?”

“Over here lassie,” came the response from Firth further down in a side chamber. Several bodies of the warped soldiers lay here and there, obvious victims of lightsaber play.

The Sith, Gray Jedi and droid rounded the corner to find Firth awaiting them. “We’re glad to see ye. Lilith is unconscious, and Mactire has a wounded arm.” The Mystic eyeballed the Sith and droid with some trepidation. “You’re the…”

“Madman,” chuckled Macron as he handed a bacta hypospray to Tasha and then bent to the unconscious form of Lilith. “My reputation precedes me. Don’t worry, we will have your friend on her feet shortly.” The Alchemist removed a medkit from his belt and set to work.

“You’re nae worried he won’t do something to her?” whispered the Mystic to Tasha as she ministered to Mactire’s arm.

“Ouch,” winced the Sentinel as Tasha injected his arm with bacta. “One of the nut-job soldiers hit me in the saber arm with a glancing shot. I did my best after that but it’s hurt my saber-work.”

“It looks like the two of you did for a more than a few of them. I’m not worried about Macron,” replied the Twi’lek with a smile. “As long as he’s on your side, he’s okay. How’s the arm feel now?”

“Well, not aching anymore. I can move. How’s Lilith?”

“She’s coming around,” stated Firth. “The madma… Adept has some skill. What happened to his face?”

“Do you mean in general, or recently?” chuckled the Savant. “Acid burn. I wouldn’t mention it if I were you.”

“Roger that,” said Firth quietly. “Come on, let me help ya up Mactire.”

Lilith groaned and opened her eyes. Macron gestured at HK 22. "Get over here droid and help her walk. We're getting out of here. When we get close enough to the surface, I will signal the ship and between R3 and the autopilot brain it will pick us up."

"I'm sure we will see more of those gray-faces before then," Tasha said with a tight lipped expression. "And we will take care of them. I swore I would get all of you out of here and I will. Let's get moving."

THE END