Sands of Time pt II:

***Terrors from the Deep***



Joint Fiction

by

Mystic Mactire #14320

Captain Sabe Baize #14728

Battlemaster DarkHawk #264

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1DAjTDx9AHcmNlwQQ-DQj5eWBtPR3Qx6X7znM4fuWo4k/edit>

***Near LZ ‘Hawk’***

***-13°9'46.5", -72°32'41.9"***

***Moraband***

DarkHawk watched as the remaining personnel around the crash site were pulled under one by one.  One of his own battle team members is missing and the knot in his gut could not be ignored.  First astonishment, then the rage began to fuel him.

“GET TO SOLID GROUND!!” he exclaimed.

One of the remaining troopers was already corralling personnel towards the rock formation just to the east of their location. The sand bubbled like hot water, a rumbling, then shrieks of terror filled the air.  DarkHawk watched as the crew were dragged into the sand and vanished.  As he watched this unexplainable act take place, the trooper who was assisting the Equite grabbed the gloved hand of the Sith.  Desperately trying to stay afloat.  DarkHawk noticed a shadowy silhouette of what seemed to be arms.  They were wrapped around the legs of the trooper like a constrictor squeezing the life out of its prey.

DarkHawk pulled with all his might, screaming in rage like a feral beast.  The entity that had a grasp on the trooper was winning the battle and would take him to an unknown abyss in a matter of seconds.  DarkHawk let his emotions subside, allowing the Force to aid in his thoughts.  Only one solution to this situation, the Equite without hesitation allowed himself to be taken with the immersing trooper.  One last deep breath, then everything fades to black…

Flashes of dim light crossed over the face of the Equite.  His head was pounding and body ached.  He tried to move but surprisingly could not.  His vision seemed to be impaired as everything was out of focus.  The sounds of movement were near, but could not judge the distance at the moment.  Again the Equite tried to move, this time focusing his sight as to the cause.  DarkHawk grunted slightly as he struggled.  He could see that he was in a very unexpected dilemma.  He was suspended inverted and was bound by unfamiliar bindings.

“SHHHH!, they'll hear you.” said a familiar voice.

“Sabe?” asked the Equite.

“They are not too far away, stop all the ruckus.” she whispered.

DarkHawk focused on the ground which was now above him.  He reached out to the Force, feeling, scanning.  His mind’s eye traveled throughout what seemed to be a cavern.  Glimpses of movement, but could not quite make out the detail as of yet.  His eyes slowly opened, the red tints to his eyes narrowed.  The rage was embracing him, like a euphoria, oh how he relished this feeling.  He managed to get some slack to the bindings at his wrists.  The retractable talons in his gloves now came to play.  They made quick work and his hands were free.  From there he worked the bindings to his torso and within just a few minutes was cutting the bindings that were suspending him upside down.  With a couple of jerks of his legs, the bindings snapped and the Equite flipped and landed on his feet.

With his vision back to normal he could see the others that were suspended from the cavern walls.  He made his way over to Sabe and cut her down.

“Thanks” she whispered.

“They took our weapons.”

“Where and who are they?” asked the Equite.

“I have no clue, to either.” she replied.

“Ok well, we do this old school.”

Sabe just looked at her battle team leader with a confused look.

Before she could even say anything DarkHawk was at the other side of the cavern scoping the scene and gave the all clear signal.  He pointed down the passageway of the tunnel to their right and stealthily made his way to the entrance.  The two peered down the tunnel, they could see silhouettes of figures moving about.  Shadows fading in and out, then moments of nothing.  DarkHawk reached out once again with the Force, his mind’s eye saw nothing in their proximity.  He gave the signal to move forward, the two Sadowan’s proceeded with utmost vigilance.

The two scaled the wall until they made it to the next tunnel passage.  Sabe tapped DarkHawk on the shoulder and pointed in the opposite direction.  There on a small bench, they could see their equipment.

The two crept up to the bench, watching for any signs of their hosts approaching. The coast, however, was clear. As quick as they could, they started sifting through the various weapons and items taken from the various abducted victims, retrieving their own items.

“Okay, so, how do we get back to the surface and regroup?” Sabe asked, looking around as she adjusted the stock on her rifle to the first position it extended to.

“I’m not sure. But we should focus first getting away from our captors. We stand a good chance of being overwhelmed if we’re spotted.” DarkHawk replied. He started looking at the passages around them and pointed to one that headed down.

“We’re likely to find an exit going further down first, and then we can worry about going up and regrouping. Follow me and be quiet.” DarkHawk said.

They headed down the passageway, illuminated by torchlight. As they descended further down, the passage became more and more narrow until opening up into a massive cavern, with the passage becoming a natural bridge across the ravine.

“We get caught out here, we’re dead,” Sabe said, more to herself than anything, but it was still audible.

“Then we won’t get caught out here. It reaches that pillar ahead and then spirals downward. Let’s go.” DarkHawk replied.

The path continued into a downward spiral as DarkHawk had suggested it would, but once they reached the bottom of the path and onto firm ground, there was a dark shadow against the poor light. Toggling her helmet’s HUD to night vision, Sabe saw what was making the shadow.

“Looks like a massive temple, Sir. Underground, like it was built that way on purpose.” Sabe commented.

“Might be a way through, or one of the other teams might be investigating it.” DarkHawk continued forward towards the underground temple.

***Morarband Catacombs***

Mactire slowly stood around the room of artifacts. Each seemed to be calling to him. Wanting him to pick them up, and be used. They etched his mind with potential. Playing on his fears, making promises that seemed like reality.

An amulet sung the loudest towards him. Begging him to pick it up and be worn.

He reached slowly for the first amulet within his reach, the power surging through him, enticing him was euphoric. Taking away all his doubts, his pains, giving him the power to do anything that he wanted. Though at a great cost as he was seeing within his mind.

The Mystic was holding his head in intense agony. The artifact was showing him a world in which he was leading a vast army. An army of the creatures from this planet, the one’s that he fought earlier. The beings in which he still didn’t understand.

Though these ones he did. They were his Clan members, all encased in and trapped as one of these savage creatures. Their might was spreading across the universe. Taking anything and everything that they came across. He was building an empire for himself. Any and all that challenged him met with a swift end and their worlds were completely entombed by these creatures of death. Allowing none to survive.

Mactire howled in pain and sorrow, fighting against the visions. Though he knew that they were manifestations of his own doing he still didn’t want to see them. There was little he could do to stop them in the dream state.

***Unknown Temple***

***Moraband***

“How do you think this was built,” Sabe asked.

“Unknown, but it is definitely ancient.  Whomever built it, took time and devotion to keep this hidden.” replied the Equite.

“Look there, northeast corner, about a half a klick, that looks to be our way through.”

“How can you tell Sir? Asked Sabe

“It's the only one..” the gruff voice of the Battlemaster responded.

The two Sadowan’s made their way along a narrow cliffside path heading towards their target cave opening.  The path narrowed as they hugged the cliff.  Sabe had the lead, the two were about midpoint and DarkHawk paused, grabbed Sabe’s shoulder.  The Equite pointed to below them, hunting parties were searching the cavern floor.  By the looks of it, was normal patrols, they still did not notice the two were missing from their nest.  DarkHawk put a finger to his lips and then pointed to their destination.  Sabe nodded and discreetly maneuvered the cliff’s ledge until they reached the opening of the cave.

The two took cover at each side of the cave entrance.  DarkHawk peered around the corner, the HUD in his cowl showed no signs of movement or of anything.  He reached out to the Force, nothing there, though something told him that all was not what it seemed.

“Be vigilant, we are not alone, this could be a trap.” the Equite said with much gravity in his tone.

“This just keeps getting better.”

The two moved into the cave, silently they traversed their path.  As the two came to an intersection of the cave, Sabe looked at her battle team leader and gestured with both hands.  DarkHawk once again reached out to the Force and felt his surroundings.  The Equite pointed to the right, Sabe took the silent order and proceeded.  The two Sadowan’s tracked about twenty yards in their new direction when they heard it.  The sound of footsteps echoed through the catacombs, distant at first, but moving closer.  There was nowhere to hide if they needed, whatever the origin of the sounds were, the two was on a collision course for it.

Sabe unsheathed her vibroblade, DarkHawk followed suit and unsheathed his quarter staffs.  As the sound was nearly upon them, Sabe could feel the anxiety, she was never one to fray from a good fight.  It was the unknown that spiked her feeling, she looked over at the Sith, he seemed steady as a rock.  Little did she know the turmoil inside her battle team leader.  The feral rage inside him was growing, the hatred consuming him.  His personal precipice danced between learning to control the hatred or giving into its madness.

Sabe tuned her night vision so clear up the static.  She could make out the faint shadows as they approached.  DarkHawk pushed her up against the wall, she knew what the Sith’s intention was.  She allowed herself to hug the wall as closely as she could, almost becoming a part of the cold damp surface.  DarkHawk poised along the cavern wall, there just a few meters away three figures approached.  Sabe readied her blade for the kill.  Startling, the voice in Sabe’s head boomed…

*“Wait...Let them pass first…”*

Even with the night vision, the characteristics of the figures were almost unrecognizable.  A gray hue to them, their bodies covered in ragged “cloaks”.  Claws adorned their hands, some carried weapons, these three were carrying staffs, nonetheless their demise unquestionably imminent.  Sabe’s heart pounded as they were within arms reach of the Sadowan’s, their movement erratic at best.  The stench that protruded from their bodies, left bitter residue in the back of pallets.  Sabe thought that the ass end of a Rancor would be more inviting than the smell lingering in those caverns.

As the second one passed, an ill-timed reflection bounced off Sabe’s blade.  The gray figure slammed its body into the Captain.  DarkHawk immediately went on the offensive and slammed his quarter staffs into the heads of two their assailants.  His quarterstaff found another mark in the solar plexus of the second gray, it buckled over and the Equite drove his knee into its face.  He immediately spun and caught the first gray at the legs sweeping it off-balance and to the ground.  He rolled with his maneuver atop his victim and using his talons shredded the figure's throat.

Sabe had dropped to one knee with the force of the blow from the gray.  She rolled away from her attacker.  She popped to her feet, timing her swing with the dagger it caught the charging rag covered figure across the chest.  Without hesitation, she managed three quick decisive blows, two to the inner flanks, and one directly under the armpit.  The gray slumped to the cavern floor, Sabe sheathed her blade and watched her battle team leader checking the status of the other two.  He seemed though he was searching for something.

“We need to keep moving.  There is obviously a way out of here, probably will be others on patrol through here as well.” instructed the Equite.

The two quickly and quietly moved down further into the tunnel.  As they cleared one curving part of the passage they had a clear shot at the opening no more than ten meters ahead of them.  They exited the cavern, before them a massive courtyard and what looked to be another part of the temple.  This time they were able to crouch behind some boulders and survey the scene.  No grays could be seen in the vicinity, though a cloaked figure could be seen just below them.  Acting very erratically, talking to themselves, pounding palms to their head.

“Sir, that’s Mactire, what the…”

**Unknown Temple**

Mactire’s body was convulsing as if an electrical discharge was passing through him. The amulet was still tightly clasped in his hand, allowing the sights and sounds of his dark desires to consume his senses, unabling him to tell what is or was real and what was pure illusion.

As the Mystics eyes glaze over, his left hand smoothly draws out his lightsaber, igniting it allowing the hiss to spark and coax it to life.

Darkhawk and Sabe look at each other perplexed. Wondering what is happening while the Mystic is slashing and kicking at the air. He is looking like he is fighting many opponents at once, though none are present.

“Darkhawk why is Mactire, acting like he’s fighting? Or does he see something that we don’t?” Sabe pondered while slowly raising her blaster rifle up in a defensive position.

Darkhawk looked at Mactire and slowly reached out with the Force to see what was going on. “*Better to know if this is only affecting him or if the others might be in danger of facing the same thing. If they are we might have another battle on our hands.”*

As the Battlemaster allowed the Force to embrace him, trying to find what was causing his comrades to lose control of themselves. For if the sight of Mactire was any indication. This could become extremely bad quickly.

Mactire’s mind was being consumed by the amulet. In his mind, he was fighting an illusion of himself, of what he once was, and currently is before the amulet took ahold of his mind. The bodies of friends and family were under him as he was fighting his doppelganger.

When one kicked the other parried, and vice versa. Though who he currently was showing more calm and grace in his movements then the one with is all his darkest desires coming true.

Darkhawk was struggling to sense the power behind the artifacts that were eating away mentally at his comrades. Sweat was dripping from his brow, but he was unable to see the power behind the artifacts, nor separate anyone from it through the Force.

Reluctantly he looked over at Sabe. “We may have to try some out of the box thinking. If it's possible to think you can pull off a trick shot and shoot Mactire’s clenched hand so that he can drop whatever he’s holding it might release its grip on him,” he muttered lightly while catching his breath from the strain he used to try to free everyone.

“Possibly but what if it doesn’t work?” the Captain asked while sighting in the shot.

“If it doesn’t work then we have possibly lost great Clan members and this would be a shame.” The Battlemaster spoke with renewed vigor and sureness that it would work.

While Sabe was squeezing the trigger, Mactire’s inner struggle was coming to a halt. A blue light was shimmering before him, calling him, reminding him of everything that he was, that he lost. Telling him that he needed to still fulfill an oath that he took.

As the blaster bolt struck the upper part of the Mystics right hand, pain resonated through his arm and his skull. As he dropped the amulet, he turned towards two figures and looked at them, while his eyes slowly came back into focus.

“Alright, who’s there and is this real or am I still trapped in a dream state?” Mactire said while turning his lightsaber off and lightly placing his left hand on his right near the blaster burn, and slowly starting to heal it.

“You’re among friends Mactire, now what do we do to free the others? Are they all trapped like you were or is it different?” The Battlemaster spoke, with concern, but also friendship in his voice.

Looking closer at the two Mactire saw that Darkhawk and Sabe had arrived from the Clan.

“Well, finally reinforcements. Took you long enough, and I honestly have no idea. Think maybe we should try to get them to drop the artifacts but who knows what may happen.” the Mystic lightly mocked while thinking about his own experience.

“Let’s get out of here first, because we need to get word to the others about these things. You were fairly passive as a target, but if someone else is more aggressive, the truth dies with us if we just go in blind and alone.” Sabe replied, looking around for any signs of their pursuers.

“An excellent point, Captain, and one I’m inclined to agree with. Let’s get out of here before we’re compromised by the artifacts in here.” DarkHawk said. He stepped off first, leading the way further down the corridors of the underground temple.

“Then I’ll go and find the others.” Mactire protested.

“Abso-karking-lutely not. You’ve been affected once, there’s no telling what’ll happen if we leave you down here by yourself.” Sabe replied, nodding to Mactire to start moving.

“You don’t understand the power of the Force, Captain.” The Mystic replied.

“No. But considering that I’ve been hearing a rather unpleasant voice in the back of my head since we’ve arrived and it’s getting louder by the second, I think I don’t need to. Move.” Sabe said with a menacing growl to her voice.

“Are you going to be alright?” DarkHawk asked, looking over his shoulder.

“Good to go.” The pilot-commando shrugged, “Might start talking to myself, but I’ll toggle my helmet vocoder off if that happens.”

With a final look of hesitation, Mactire finally fell into step behind DarkHawk, and Sabe brought up the rear.

“*I could show you that power of the Force, child.*”

Sabe’s frown deepened, unseen under her helmet as she swept her E-11D down every corner they passed, occasionally spinning around to check the rear. Blinking at one of the HUD icons, her helmet stopped broadcasting her voice openly.

“Shut up.”

“*You’re weak. I can make you strong. Give yourself to me and to the Dark Side.*”

“I’m pretty sure a couple dozen centuries haven’t been too kind to your artifacts. I’m thinking a close quarters concussion blast would shatter a lot of your toys. So. Shut up.”

“*You don’t want to do that. You want the power I’m offering you.*”

The group continued forward, until reaching a pair of large metal doors. Pushing them in enough to step through, DarkHawk waved the others up. The next room was a large antechamber, with a very high ceiling, and what looked like a sort of coliseum style seating and a large slab of stone on the floor below.

On the slab, a staff sat, glowing with an unnatural red hue. Everyone’s eyes were drawn to it for a moment.

“*Take it. Take it. Take it. TAKE IT!”*

In Sabe’s mind, she started to recite her oath of loyalty to the Warhost and Clan, but physically, she let her E-11D hang on its sling and pulled a concussion grenade from her webbing’s pouches.

“What are you doing, Captain?” DarkHawk asked. There was a moment before her helmet vocoder clicked back on.

“...I swear to uphold and defend the ideals of the Clan, to pursue all enemies foreign and internal to their defeat. I will fight with courage and honor, and uphold the ideals of the Clan.” Sabe spoke as if she was falling into a trance. She then flipped the arming handle and tossed the grenade into the center of the chamber. The grenade flashed and chirped as it sailed through the air and landed on the stone slab. The chirping got faster and faster for a few more second before detonating. The grenade’s shockwave blasted the staff across the chamber, snapping it in half. The red hue began to slowly fade.

“What was that all about?!” Mactire demanded.

From all around, the sounds of battle cries echoed from the various chambers to the antechamber. And then there was a piercing shriek, a cry that was so intense that it brought all three Sadowans to their knees until it passed.

“Ungh...I broke its stupid staff.” Sabe grunted as she hauled herself to her feet.

“You angered it and told everyone where we’re at, you lunatic,” Mactire replied.

“Enough, both of you. We’re getting close to the exit. Move.” DarkHawk ordered and led the way down into the center of the antechamber. Mactire stared at Sabe for another moment before setting off after the Battlemaster. Sabe readied her carbine and headed down the stone steps after her compatriots.

As soon as they reached the bottom, doors to their left and right slammed open, and Greys ran in, brandishing blades of various types, ranging from knives, all the way to battle axes and pikes.

“Contact!” Sabe called out and already had her E-11D up, opening fire.

“Push for the door! Go!” DarkHawk called out. Lightsabers from both DarkHawk and Mactire hissed to life, and the first Greys that tried to leap into the fray were cut down by humming blue blades. Crimson bolts with little sound made continued to carve into the attacking formations, but the Greys kept coming.

A pike armed Grey and another armed with a pair of swords jumped in front of DarkHawk, the pike lunging forward to spear into the Battlemaster. Deftly, DarkHawk stepped aside and then executed a swift kick to knock the end of the pike into the ground and pin it there. As the dual sword Grey charged, DarkHawk stepped back, and kicked the pinned pike upwards, using it to block the swinging blades. He then plunged one of his lightsabers into the sword-wielding Grey before turning his attention to the pike Grey. He stepped further into the remaining Grey’s defenses and kicked one of their legs out from under it. The Grey fell to the ground on its stomach, and then a blue lightsaber was run through its head.

Axe armed Greys attempted to gang up on Mactire, three of them leaping to surround him. With a swift roundhouse kick, Mactire dazed one and then twisted around to put the Grey he stunned with a boot across the head between himself and the other two. He then kicked his enemy in the back, sending it stumbling towards its compatriots. The Mystic then ran his blade straight through his enemy, catching two of them as the blade went through the first Grey and into the next one. Both Greys collapsed, and the third attempted to go after a seemingly occupied enemy, but Mactire was ready, and held up his hand, stopping the axe mid swing before executing a series of slices across his enemy’s torso. The final gray collapsed.

“Come on! Come on!” Sabe shouted at the Greys as they pushed into the antechamber. Every bolt was finding a Grey, there was just no way she could miss with so many enemies, but it was like trying to stop a waterfall with a bucket; there was just too much to stop with what she had. There was a click as she pulled the trigger again, her HUD started flashing “0” on the ammo count. Grays were starting to get closer, and one with a massive sword charged, raising its blade. Low on options, Sabe kept backpedaling and angled her weapon’s side facing her enemy. Hitting the clip release, the spent pack was shot free and into the broadsword gray’s face, staggering it. She then let the E-11D hang on its holster and drew her sidearm, a WESTAR-35 and shot the creature in the leg. An opening created for her escape, Sabe took it and bounded up the stairs to the exit behind Mactire. As soon as she reached the doorway, she holstered the pistol and pulled a pair of concussion grenades, arming them and rolling them into the room before ducking out through the door. DarkHawk and Mactire shoved the doors shut, and a pair of explosions echoed from the other room. Using the Force, DarkHawk and Mactire then blocked the door with a large metal beam that slid into place over the door.

“There. Our way out.” DarkHawk pointed, and Sabe saw it as she had to turn her night vision off, stone stairs leading to the surface.

“Never doubted it for a moment,” Sabe commented with a dark chuckle, reloading her E-11D.

The trio advanced up the stairs and found themselves in a cave that opened up to the primary LZ, where the Warhost was busy setting up defensive positions and a command post. Durasteel slabs were being set down inside the perimeter, hoping to keep anyone else from being pulled under. The three Sadowans approached the encampment, waiting to see who or what was waiting for them here.