

War Stories

By Ka Tarvitz

Kashyyyk wasn't simply full of life, it was overflowing with it. Every tree, hundreds of feet into the sky, was home to a thousand species which fought, died and rutted among its branches. Predators sailed between the broad beamed walkways of the wookiee villages, snatching unwary prey from their homes and occasionally even daring to challenge the gigantic shaggy humanoids themselves. To his ears, the constant scream of birdsong, roars of reptiles and layered echoing bellows of larger creatures reverberating throughout the forest had been discordant, drowning out even the sounds of arriving starships. To his inner senses, to the world he listened to through the Force, it was deafening.

Whereas some worlds had been tempered, tamed or even controlled by their populace, the wookiees had been largely content to leave things as they were. There was an odd beauty in that, even something he could respect in a strange way, but the longer he stood here the more it felt as if it had been strangling him. The likes of Korriban had been a void, a place all but ready to drain the living Force from a man, and silent save for the echoes of long dead Sith Lords. Yet, in a place like this, he felt as if he was drowning, utterly overwhelmed by the creatures about him.

Shaking his head in discomfort, Tarvitz blinked several times as he tried to focus upon the task ahead of him. The relative safety of the village was far behind him, barely visible through the leaves of towering trees, or the choking mist which seemed to cling to the lower reaches of this world. Advancing with no small measure of caution, the Jensaarai kept one grip on the blade sheathed at his belt, half expecting to see something monstrous lumbering out of the twilight gloom at any moment. More than once he had turned about, hearing the telltale barks of hunting packs elsewhere in the forest, and even the luminous glow of eyes watching him as he stumbled over the knotted masses of roots which dominated the ground.

He released a shivering sigh, tugging the dull coloured camo-cloak about him as he trudged forwards. Perhaps he had been a fool to forgo a guide here, even mad, but there was no telling of what lurked within the forest. Or, for that matter, how the wookiees would react if they knew what he sought. Every world had its old tales, its ancient stories warped and twisted with the passage of time, but a few always remained clear. Those which involved the Jedi were often dressed up in sorcery, or tied into the religions of the local churches, but one in particular on Kashyyyk had proven especially clear. It had been all but forgotten save for a few local villages - and Tarvitz had only heard it in passing at first, thanks to a friendly freight trader - but there was no questioning what it related to. A man carrying a glowing weapon of light, aged to the point of death, returning to a place within the Shadowlands to immortalize his last memories.

A Jedi, or perhaps a Sith if he was unfortunate, had died here it seemed. Leaving behind them something of indescribable value in this forsaken age: A holocron. A living memory of things past and events which had been lost to time. Vader's purge had permitted for only a precious few to be left in the dark, forgotten corners of this galaxy, and Tarvitz's years long

hunt had found only scattered ashes of such treasures. He hoped now, in braving this world's predators, to finally give the old Jedi Order a voice at last.

Brushing a long strand of hair from his artificial eye, he frowned as something odd came into view, highlighted by the photoreceptor's ever searching scanners. It seemed to have selected a chimney amid the roots of the titanic tree ahead of him, breaking up from the wood in a rusting stub of aging metal. For a moment he was dumbfounded, certain that his last modification had perhaps broken the internal circuitry, until it began to cite other elements close by. Windows, what had once been a door, strong walls and trace remnants of a power core, which had all but corroded into dust over the course of thousands of years. Tarvitz laughed slightly as he squinted, picking out the details for himself. It was old to be sure, not so much rotten as utterly fossilised, overrun and reclaimed by the forest.

Still keeping his wits about him, and glancing more than once over his shoulder as the howling of creatures continued, Tarvitz stepped forwards, pressing one hand against the aging wall. Part of it came away at his touch, loosely clinging together and held in one piece by the very roots which had impaled themselves through its structure. The interior, as he stepped inside, was little better. Anything of value had long been looted, lost or decayed into nothingness. Here and there he could pick out what had once clearly been a bed, a cupboard, even a crude fresher in one corner, but it would have taken a team of archeologists months to pick out the true identities of any object which littered the grounds or had once hung against the walls. After a few moments, his eyes settled upon the one gleaming crystalline object which seemed strangely untouched by the ravages of time. Well, if that wasn't it, he didn't know what was.

Extending one hand forwards, Tarvitz reached out with the Force, closing his eyes as he tested his will against its inner locks. His mind brushed against something aged, almost cantankerous, which seemed to fight back against his will before begrudgingly accepting activation. Lights pulsed across its surface as the crystalline circuitry flashed into life, burning away the thin layer of greenery which had clung to its surface, before coalescing into the image of a grizzled man in frayed Jedi robes. He was a far cry from the usual majestic depiction of old Knights, or the few memories of the heroes who had dominated the battlefields of the Clone Wars. Balding, with a grey beard and dark weather-beaten skin, he looked more akin to a moisture farmer than a member of the Order.

"Yeah, what is it?" he asked, staring up at Tarvitz in annoyance.

The Jensaarai couldn't help but cock his eyebrow at that. No "Who has awakened me?" or anything more dignified? Did he even have the right holocron here?

"You awoke me for something, kid, so just ask away already," the figure continued as Tarvitz tried to consider how best to react to this almost nonchalant response "What do you need to know?"

"You are a Jedi, aren't you?" Tarvitz asked, not entirely certain of this fact himself.

“Am I a - Four thousand years and people still end up questioning that,” the figure projected by the holocron said, shaking its head “What, isn’t appearing from beyond the grave enough for you people?”

“No, no, i’m sorry,” Tarvitz answered with an apologetic gesture “You’re just not quite what I was expecting. Mind if I ask who i’m speaking to here?”

“Usually it’s good form to introduce yourself first, and skip the obvious questions,” the figure continued but waved away Tarvitz’s response before he could even offer it “But fine. Jolee Bindo at your service, crazy old man who lives in the dangerous woods, and occasional Jedi. Retired, until now.”

“Retired?” Tarvitz asked incredulously.

“Supposedly,” Jolee grumbled, “You have Revan to thank one for making me come back to this life the first two times, and pestering me until I left this behind for someone to find. Another Jedi, I had hoped.”

He gave Tarvitz a wary look, noting the armoured look and heavy build, his eyes lingering on the facial scarring which had robbed him of one eye.

“I’m guessing you’re not quite what he had in mind though,” he laughed “So, what are you, bounty hunter, treasure hunter, someone hungry for a few old sagas from a half-senile coot?”

“None of the above,” Tarvitz admitted, allowing himself a slight grin. Despite himself, he was starting to like the memory of this old Knight “Someone seeking to restore things the galaxy has forgotten, for most part.”

“I can only talk as far as the Star Forge,” Jolee answered “And the battles which ended there. Anything else involved the Exile and others besides me…” he trailed off, seeing the blank expression written across Tarvitz’s features.

“The Star Forge,” he repeated, obviously expecting some sort of reaction, “Darth Malak, the rise of Exar Kun. Is this ringing any bells here?”

“No,” Tarvitz admitted, lowering himself to the ground and sitting cross legged before the holocron “That’s why I am here. Master Bindo-”

“Jolee,” the holocron corrected “I’m not a Knight and certainly not your Master.”

“Jolee then,” Tarvitz continued “I’m trying to recover what little’s left of the Jedi Order. The centuries have not been kind to the Jedi. Most of the galaxy don’t even know that you existed.”

The holocron was silent for some time after this, and the projected figure seemed to take on a grave expression, as if feeling every one of those four thousand years weigh upon him. Tarvitz already knew he should not have mentioned this purpose, or the fall of the old Order, but some part of him knew that the Knight deserved to know.

“Well then,” Jolee said after some time “We’ve got a lot of ground to cover. How far back do you want me to go?”

“The beginning,” Tarvitz said “Or as far as you.”

“The beginning it is,” Jolee answered, nodding “Or at least my beginning. You’ll have to find someone else’s ghost for everything else. I’ll start with the Great Hyperspace War, and we’ll see what you need from there.”

So they sat, talking into the early hours of the morning of ages lost, changing times and legends forgotten. Remembering a galaxy unafraid of change, where Jedi were once thought of as heroes and trying to, if only for a short time, forget the darker reality doomed to repeat old mistakes.