Glancing skyward, Rian saw not a single cloud breaking the blue of Nancora's sky. Behind him sat his close friend Arvalis leaning against the remains of their escape pod the Taldryanites had used to escape the death aboard the Altur's Storm when it was hit by a blast from one of the Collective's star fighters and now they were stranded in here right in the middle of nowhere, deep within the Badlands. Cast in the shadows of the escape pod, Arvalis worked the only datapad that had survived their crash, hoping to release a call to anyone of the Brotherhood listening to them, but there was none.

Coming over a nearby dune, *Orcus*, Arvalis personal HK-droid closed in on them. "Statement: My long range sensors have picked up several artificial objectives in a radius of ten kilometers. I suggest we move at the direction of thirty minutes east, twelve seconds north. It will bring us to the closest of the obectives."

"Arv, anything on the communications side?" Rian asked.

"Nothing." came the crisp reply. "But maybe we should sit this out."

"Remark: May I add that if the longer we wait, the higher the potential we will be found by enemy forces." *Orcus* said.

"I agree with *Orcus*, the sooner we leave, the sooner we find a better shelter." Rian said, already packing what was of use to the group from the remains of the escape pod.

"Ok, then let's go." Arvalis replied, lifting himself up.

After a good hour of wandering through the remorseless sun they eventually reached the borders of a long time abandoned farm.

"Come on Arvalis, if this place has been inhabited at some point, there must have been water somewhere, maybe there still is." Rian said to his friend setting up a faster pace.

A minute later the Quaestor was at its threshold. At first glance the house had been stripped of anything both worth and worthless already, but Rian wasn't up to giving up yet. Just when he had started turning the taps in the kitchen, Arvalis and *Orcus* arrived at the abandoned house.

"You may search the basement, Master Taldrya." *Orcus* said helping the dehydrated Umbaran into one of the rotten chairs.

Following the suggestion of the droid went down the stairs into the darkness of the basement. Fighting the darkness with his lightsaber, Rian worked himself through toppled shelves and crates until he ended up in front of a rusted door. Pushing the lever the door didn't move a single milimeter, thanks to the rust having turned it into a single piece of metal. Hoping the best, Rian burried the tip of his blade into the metal, slowly cutting a hole into it. Once he was done the cut out plate of metal fell to the ground with a bang echoing through the basement.

Stepping through the hole Rian ended up in just another room, though this one being built upon a set of generators and machineries. Picking the one that most likely seemed to be still able to work, Rian pulled the archaic handle and after a few tries the generator sprang to life, thundering. It took a few seconds until the generator had assembled enough energy for the lights to go on, allowing Rian to see the whole mess he had come through. Turning back around he found a pumping station in one

corner of the basement. Finally a good thing. Reaching it, he thanked the Force for it being electric. Assembling a flask full of the brownish water coming out of the pump he returned to Arvalis and his droid.

"*Orcus*, can you check if it is drinkable?" Rian said once he was back in the living room.

"Drinkable yes, though the quality is far below galactic standards." The droid answered.

"That will do it." He said, handing the flask to Arvalis. "Here, drink."

Arvalis emptied the flask in one sip, almost vomitting its content again. "Urks, this is disgusting."

"I'm sorry, but it was all I was able to find. Here, now eat." Rian said handing his friend a ration bar to eat before taking a bite from another.

"Master Arvalis, Master Rian, if you don't mind, I'd suggest to search the rest of the farm, as my sensors have picked up a rather large metallic object in one of the attached buildings."

"Fine, let's do it." Rian said between taking two bites.

"Now thats something." Arvalis exclaimed with a whistle.

"Yeah," Rian replied, inspecting the rotten and rusted V-35 Courier. "You think it will still work."

"You were lucky with that generators as well, so you tell me." Arvalis tried to encourage.
"Master Arvalis, I concur your optimism, but from my first glance, the battery of the reactor is missing, we will need to find something to replace it." *Orcus* said.

"Any idea what we can use to replace it?"

The droid tilted his head for a moment: "If you could manage to extract one of the condesators of the generator, it may solve our problem."

"Ok, *Orcus*, go for it. In the mean time Arvalis and I will free the speeder from all the junk.

And there was plenty of junk and other things to be removed before the two Gray Jedi could move the speeder outside and *Orcus* had managed to connect the condensator into the speeders system. It was in a more worse state than they had expected, not a single visor hadn't remained intact and the hull was covered with rust, dents and missing parts in its coverage but when Rian tried to start it, it went to live stuttering.

"Alright everyone, jump in, next stop Axio." Rian said from the driver's seat while steering the speeder away from the farm.

Even while the sun remained as remorseless as before, travelling with a speeder was much more pleasant than moving by foot Arvalis thought, just when he heard the whine of an approaching speeder in the distance.

"Are we getting a welcoming party?" Arvalis shouted to Rian.

"No, I dunno who they are but they are on an intercepting course." Came the reply from behind.

Leaning out, Arvalis looked behind, only to see a dark spot between the dunes, expanding rapidly as it closed in. Suddenly a gout of sand exploded to the left of their speeder. The other speeders have grown much larger now and the V-35 used by the Taldryanites rocked from another near-miss. Definetly not a Welcoming party.

"Rian, can't this scrap bucket go any faster?" Arvalis called, standing up, drawing his lightsaber as a precaution."

"This ain't a pod-racer." came the immediate reply.

"Fine then its fighting our way out." Arvalis said grinning. "*Orcus*, get yourself ready to cover me."

Rian banked the speeder to the right, evading another shot from their pursuer that had by now come close enough so Arvalis could make out the details of the person working the single turret on top of the speeder.

Just when the person commanding the turret, a female Kiffar, angled it to unleash another deadly shot at them, the familiar shape of an Assault Craft came in low and fast from behind them, swooping over and past them. The ship looped around and came in back low enough to whirl up the sandy ground firing deadly energy from its quad-turrets.

The pursuing speeder broke from their speeder to avoid being turned into a pile of debris but the pilot had anticipated the speeder tanks change in course and altered its course just so slightly that its blasts tore into it, turning it into a ball of fire.

Slowing their speeder to a halt before the newly arrived Assault Craft, *Orcus* announced. "Announcement: I am sorry that I may have gone beyond my orders and called for the assistance from Major Aurum when I had the chance to."

The End.