

# Visions of Holographic Fun Land

## CH 1 - The Mission

The shuttle's maneuvering in sequence rolling the shuttle through open space. The short bursts sent clouds of white mist silently into the void. Jinius kept his attention on the display, waiting for the mooring clamps to appear on the docking feed. He hated flying. It was a practice of instinct, bordering on being a game of chance. It was thoughtless. He nudged the control stick.

*Subtle movements. Calm, subtle movements,* Jinius reminded himself.

The ship's holoprojector flickered to life and the crystal-blue image of Erik Cato, Jinius's Battle Team leader, flickered to life. The image jumped and fuzzed as Erik swayed casting dancing blue light along the console.

"Find the station?" the holographic Erik asked. His voice was broken by static pops and noise. This peculiar station was far outside the main holonet transmission lanes. It made communications complicated. SA-TRN93 adjusted the antenna gain. Drawing a little more power into the receiver may help clean up the transmission.

Jinius exhaled impatiently. He genuinely liked Erk. However, a distraction was the last thing he needed while trying to dock the shuttle. Jinius wasn't the best pilot, even when he wasn't distracted. Without looking at the hologram, Jinius responded while keeping his attention on maneuvering the bulky shuttle as best he could, "Yes. I am actively docking with the station now."

"Good," the hologram answered. "I know I said to consider it shore leave and a time for relaxing but I need you to do me a favor. I need you to investigate the station."

"Can you be more specific?" Jinius asked. He hadn't planned on much shore leave in the first place. He needed to look at some research for the Shadow Academy. This was the perfect opportunity.

"No. I've not visited it myself yet. Find out what you can and report back. Do remember to have a little fun in the middle somewhere. You're too tense Jinius." The hologram smiled encouragingly.

*I'm tense because I'm maneuvering this blooming rock with thrusters strapped to it centimeters away from an alien station filled with God knows what!* Jinius thought, giving Erik a nod that

## Visions of Holographic Fun Land

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Competition: [HSD] Horrors of Holographic Fun Land

expressed none of his thoughts. It wouldn't help anything for him to snap at the Battle Team leader.

"Aye, sir."

The hologram faded leaving only the sounds of rushing air that and the quiet structural rumble of the shuttle's thrusters. A loud metallic clunk boomed through the hull of the shuttle. A green light flickered to life on the console. The docking clamps had grabbed onto the shuttle. Chimes and alerts noisily announced details of the successful docking. Already the little shuttle was exchanging atmosphere with the station and verifying that the foreign atmosphere was safe. The environmental display would show a calming green if nothing of concern was detected or a harsh crimson if the environment was not suitable. Jinius waited patiently.

"What's so special about this place?" the droid asked. It tapped buttons on the console as it went through post-docking checks.

"I cannot be certain," Jinius replied. The status bar on the environmental scanners still showed "Waiting."

Jinius continued, "I can speak to my own interests. This station is massive. It contains ships from a half dozen different eras in galactic history. It's unlike anything any of us have ever seen and heralds a time long past. In addition to that, based on the scans other vessels have made, the station seems to use a distributed power network that our sensors cannot explain with any accuracy. Simply, this is not the kind of station one encounters every day, every lifetime, or even in a hundred lifetimes!"

Jinius looked out the viewport towards the colossal station. His little shuttle was a tiny speck on the station's moorings. Ships of innumerable types jutted and poked out from the station's superstructure. In all, the station was an amalgamate of several vessels including an Imperial-era Star Destroyer and a Republic-era Venator cruiser, by far the largest two vessels in the complex. Several weathered CIS and old Trade Federation cruisers created a halo of smaller ships that encircled the central two, larger, ships around their vertical axis. From there, the station branched off with smaller fighters and small transports poked out from the larger vessels like pins in a cushion. Everything was connected to its neighbors by narrow strips of station that likely formed tunnels and conduits inside. The whole structure, while wondrous, appeared as some gigantic, monstrous, demonic head floating in the vacuum.

The display flicked to green. The station's atmosphere was safe. Jinius rose from the pilot's seat and threw on his armorweave cloak. It was time to go exploring.

## CH2 - Oddities and Unknowns

The interior of the structure was reminiscent of its exterior. It was a maze of crooked passages and narrow corridors that connected with the larger body of the structure. Fortunately, Jinius had docked with one of the main two vessels that made the structure's main body. Both cruisers had been hollowed out leaving vast open areas decorated with alien signage directing visitors to the various sections of the station. The sensors had been able to scan most of the complex and had not detected life signs. The thing Jinius was most interested in, the power cores, unfortunately, were invisible to the sensors due to heavy shielding. They showed as voids in the scan data.

Inside the main entrance hung an enormous metal sign. The sign was a collection of cut hull sections from various vessels that had been arranged to form words. In uneven, jagged script the sign read, "Welcome to Holographic Fun Land" in a mixture of varied characters. Both Jinius and SA-TRN93 stared at the welcome sign feeling uneasy.

"That has to be the most horrifying welcome sign in the entire galaxy," the droid commented as he stared at the sign.

"What did you expect?" Jinius asked as he stepped past the sign into the module, "We have stumbled onto some kind of purposeful chimera of discarded ships and parts. I'd expect nothing less than a welcome sign fashioned from the nameplates of the station's membership."

"Doesn't make it any less disturbing," the droid mused. A shiver seemed to move up the droid's chassis as it and Jinius continued into the station.

Inside on the modules, they found another contorted sign. This time the sign read, "Past, Present, Future" in large blocky lettering cut from more ship hulls. The module appeared to be a long corridor that stretched on for some distance into darkness. Interestingly, as Jinius stepped into the module, the gravity shifted relative to the module and Jinius could feel his weight pulled in a different direction than he expected as he moved deeper into the module. Each module, he assumed, would have its own relative gravity.

The deep darkness of the corridor seemed to have mass as Jinius pushed through it. Instinctively he reached for his lightsaber. It was his defense. It was his chance to fight off that which may try to steal from him the only thing he had left: himself. He wanted to be ready.

The room, by his estimations based on the known width of the room, was large enough to play a full game of grav-ball with spectators. It was more than enough room to host a hologram. As he

## Visions of Holographic Fun Land

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Competition: [HSD] Horrors of Holographic Fun Land

stepped deeper into the room a loud boom echoed overhead and rows of fluorescent yellow lights burst on bathing the room in a diffuse putrid-yellow glow.

Row after row of humanoid droids stood in ranks throughout the room. The droids were hunched over at the waist, doubled over their own torsos unnaturally. SA-TRN93 approached one of the droids. He poked the droid in front of him. His metal finger tinged off the metal chassis removing a pea's worth of dust from the droid. They'd been there for a while.

"Something isn't right, Knight Jinius," the droid said nervously. It poked the frozen droid again.

Jinius had found his way to a grouping of droids. Each was similar in structure but very unique in size and shape. "You'll need to be more specific," he replied, distracted.

The droids ranged in size from slender, diminutive models to larger, brutish models. Nearly all the droid chassis were made of a blackened silvery metal that set over the denser droid core. The strangest droids in the room were lanky machines that were little more than pipe clothed in exposed wires. All of the droids shared one feature. They all had holo-emitters set into the frames. The emitters glowed a pale blue.

"Droids don't sit this way," SA-TRN93 informed. He walked over and poked one of the skinny models. "Our gears and actuators seize up when we go offline. Our heads and shoulders may droop, but we never bend over at the torso like we're praying to some fleshy god."

Jinius had pulled out his Shadow Academy datapad and started scanning one of the droids. "You're being picky." He moved from droid to droid scanning the different models, his expression growing more puzzled with each passing moment.

After a moment Jinius looked over at SA-TRN93 confused, "Something isn't right."

"I'm glad we have you to tell us these things," SA-TRN93 said in a sarcastic tone. He walked over to stand next to Jinius.

The datapad showed an outline of the droid. The image of the droid on the screen had flickering lights that traced the droid's profile. To the right of the profile was another profile that showed the wire paths on the droid chassis. Elemental scans showed the composition of the compounds the scan had detected in the droid's body. Jinius pointed at the data coming from the scan. "I get an abundance of data about the droid's exterior. The scans, however, cannot seem to penetrate the metal beneath. Based on the way it is displaying, it appears similar to the radiation shields around the power core and engines."

## Visions of Holographic Fun Land

By: Jinius Griffin, #10545

Competition: [HSD] Horrors of Holographic Fun Land

Curious, Jinius pulled a dagger from the small of his back. He wanted to see if the metal would resist the strike from a small vibroblade. If it did, the metal was shielding the internals. If it didn't break through, something about the design was blocking the scanner. As Jinius raised the dagger to plunge it into the droid's frame, the droid burst to life in a flurry of exaggerated motions.

"Welcome to Holographic Fun Land! You have chosen the 'Past Present Future' module. What time period would you like to relive? What would you like to experience?"

Jinius and SA-TRN both leaped back both falling into combat stances. Jinius had dropped one hand to his lightsaber and still held the dagger out, though switched to his offhand. SA-TRN seemed to have drawn its electrostaff from nowhere and had activated the weapon. Ribbons of violet plasma played along the prongs of the staff.

"Please holster or deactivate any weapons prior to the simulation start. Once the simulation begins you are free to participate as you choose," the holo-droid informed in an empty voice.

"Shall we party?" SA-TRN asked. He too was now curious.

"We are here to study the place," Jinius agreed. He rubbed his chin with his free hand. After realizing the droid was not going to attack, Jinius had relaxed his stance.

"Any time period you fancy?"

"We are Naga Sadow after all. Shall we meet our namesake?" Jinius suggested. He strode up to the droid.

"You're Naga Sadow. I'm here by force," the droid commented with a scoff. "There is a remarkable difference between choosing to join a club for glow stick-wielding magicians and being pressed into servitude." SA-TRN93 deactivated the electrostaff but chose not to holster the weapon.

"We'd like to visit Korriban, 4,935 BrS. We'd like to see the duel between Naga Sadow and Ludo Kressh."

The holo-droid chimed in agreement.

## CH3 - Visions of the Past

The walls melted away pooling in crystal puddles of electric light throughout the room. A horizon formed, obscured by the rust-colored dust of Korriban. Towering brown monoliths and worn red mountains sprouted like weeds to touch the sky. The ancient ruins of the long forgotten world were, instead, gorgeous temples and halls built to honor the great kings of Korriban and the Sith Lords who'd someday inherit the galaxy. The countless holo-droids in the room had vanished leaving crimson-skinned Sith roaming the room. They wore armor hammered from steel and guarded with powerful Sith alchemy, some were draped with clothes dyed a litany of hues, and others dressed in simple garment dyed brilliant hues to contrast against the arid world.

The sea of red-skinned Sith split as a procession of Sith dressed in plated gold and silver armor marched through the center of the crowd. The line was headed by a single Sith, the legendary Ludo Kressh. Jinius had seen Kressh's face a hundred times in holos; it was a face he couldn't forget. Kressh carried the death-helm of Marka Ragnos with its wicked horns of bronze. The procession was followed with the ornamented corpse of the late Sith Lord. The body of Marka Ragnos was draped in an azure sheet adorned with golden pomegranates. Marka Ragnos had as much pomp and honor in death as he'd had in life. Beyond his corpse, the procession continued with the countless artifacts and treasures that would soon comprise the Sith Lord's crypt.

Jinius and SA-TRN followed the procession with silent curiosity. They weren't sure how the procession would react to interference. And neither wanted to tempt fate. The events that played out before them were events of lore. They were things that Jinius had studied and read about during his time as a Shadow Academy acolyte; it even came up now as a Professor. Every true follower of the Dark Jedi Brotherhood knew the story of Naga Sadow and Ludo Kressh. They didn't need a holo to remind them of what was about to come.

They watched the funeral of Marka Ragnos. They watched the pining and groveling of the Sith Lords to their fallen ruler. With each motion, with each action, the intentions of the Sith lords was clear, they were summing one another up. They were preparing the inevitable discourse that would decide who'd rule the Sith in the wake of the death of Marka Ragnos. Jinius knew what came next. He watched as the crowd split once more and the powerful form of Naga Sadow stormed through the procession interrupting the farcical ceremony. He knew as well as Jinius did that the ceremony was meaningless to most -- it was an opportunity to prepare and to see who would stand out. Jinius watched as both Naga Sadow and Ludo Kressh drew silvery blades of Force-attuned steel and began their vicious dance.

The battle was furious. Both Sith were true masters of the Force and masters of combat. Neither had the advantage. Jinius watched for what felt like minutes as the two holograms fought

## Visions of Holographic Fun Land

By: Jinius Griffin, #10545

Competition: [HSD] Horrors of Holographic Fun Land

ferociously. Light gleaned off the polished blades as the two lords pressed against one another. Kressh landed a surprise kick to Naga Sadow's chest sending the Sith tumbling backward toward Jinius. Instinctively, the Sith Lord pulled himself hard towards the ground changing his momentum in the air. While he tumbled, his sword swung wide, uncontrolled. The silver blade drew a thin red streak across Jinius' forearm. Blood welled from the wound. Without thought, Jinius called upon the Force to close the wounded arm. As the wound started to close the room grew silent.

"Why are they staring at us like that?" the droid asked. His voice was a whisper. The droid gripped his electrostaff nervously.

"I'm not sure," Jinius answered.

The holograms began creeping towards Jinius. Their movements were slow and deliberate, almost curious. They did, however, seem focused on him. Jinius took a step back and probed at the Force. With it he could feel the room, Jinius could get an idea of what was going on around him. He felt the room. He felt the droids. Droids were always easy to tell in the Force. They were alive with energy, a false register of life. Jinius had expected shells of raw electricity. However, what he found imprinted on the cosmos was more. He sensed life. He sensed direction. However, he did not sense enough to bond the machines with the galaxy. Whatever connected these droids to the Force was not strong enough to form a true bond as living beings could. These droids straddled that line. Jinius could sense the expected void, the disconnection from the cosmos with each holo-droid. He also sensed the hum, the slight impression life made in the universe. It was faint, but it was there.

Immediately one of the droids sprung towards Jinius. It looked like a well-dressed Sith noble. SA-TRN reacted before the gray Jedi could and swatted the sith-clad droid back with his electrostaff. Another grabbed Jinius's leg from behind pulling him to the ground. Jinius struggled. SA-TRN93 shoved the end of his electrostaff into the back of the droid giving the staff a feral twist, sending pulses of violet electricity coursing through the now-enemy droid.

The hologram of the room shifted. Instead of the beautiful peaks of Korriban accented by the accented sandstone buildings, curtains of red exploded around the room. The images of Sith on the chassis of the droids vanished. Throughout the room was a legion of bare metal droids reflecting blood-colored light.

Jinius made his way to his feet and quickly ignited his saber. He sensed all kinds of wrong; he needed to be ready. The blue light from his blade mixed with the crimson of the room casting a violet glow around him and SA-TRN. The droids continued to advance. Jinius moved a hand out in front of him causing the droid SA-TRN had killed to slide across the ground. Jinius flicked his

wrist and the droid shot through the air. The fallen enemy droid crashed into another pair of droids sending them to the floor.

The droids accelerated their advance. They were trying to swarm Jinius. SA-TRN spun and whirled his staff smashing it into the sides and heads of the droids. Sparks erupted from the sundered machines as SA-TRN dropped them one-after-one into motionless, sparking piles on the floor. Jinius moved his hands quickly through the air as if he were conducting some form of a bizarre symphony. With each motion, a droid flew back into its colleagues. With each motion, the horde of droids continued to swarm towards Jinius. He and SA-TRN would soon be outnumbered. Sweat was forming at Jinius's brow. He couldn't keep this up for long.

"RUN!" Jinius shouted over the sound of clanking metal and dashed towards the exit.

## CH4 - More than Machine

Hundreds of droids flowed from the different holo-modules clogging the main arteries of the station. They were moths attracted to light, except the light, in this case, was the Force. Every time Jinius used the Force it seemed to attract the machines. The became agitated and moved faster, and more desperate. Jinius had been careful to not allow the droids close. When they'd neared him too much, Jinius had taken off their arms or their legs with quick, precise slashes of his lightsaber leaving writhing piles of machine in his wake. SA-TRN had continued bashed droids that got in his way like it was a birthday party as he mowed down a path back to the shuttle. The enemy droids just kept coming. It was a sea of metal bodies.

"You're really good at making friends for an introvert, Knight Jinius!" SA-TRN said as he slammed his electrostaff into a pair of droids knocking them back on their rears. Their faces were smashed in and sparking. Other droids stumbled over their fallen companions.

Jinius whirled his lightsaber cleaving off arms and cutting into the thigh of one of the droids. The droid's legs buckled and it dropped to the ground. It reached towards Jinius's legs before the gray Jedi spun his blade separating the droid's arms from its body.

"I'm not sure this what Master Marcus had in mind when he said to 'Come out of my shell.'"

The fighting had slowed Jinius and SA-TRN's exit. The machines were bunching up around them. More droids flowed the holo-modules like water from a burst pipe. Jinius and SA-TRN pressed their backs together batting back the advancing machines leaving piles of parts around them. A droid lunged towards Jinius. He shifted his step allowing it to slam into SA-TRN nearly knocking him over. Jinius sunk his blade into the droid's neck causing its angry crimson eyes to flicker out.



## Visions of Holographic Fun Land

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Competition: [HSD] Horrors of Holographic Fun Land

Suddenly, everything stopped. No more droids advanced. The only movement was a few final death blows from SA-TRN before he too saw the change in the enemy's behavior. The congress of droids began to split making way for a tall figure wearing black robes. The figure stopped at the edge of the ring of droids that surrounded Jinius and SA-TRN. Neither had realized how desperate things were -- they were completely surrounded. Jinius held his lightsaber ready, pointed at the chest of the cloaked figure.

"Everyone resists," the cloaked figure said. His voice was calm and even. It had an elegance to it, the kind of diction and pattern that Jinius often heard from scholars. It wasn't a droid's voice.

"Everyone fails.". The legion of droids all took a single step back in perfect unison. "Everyone invited joins the Techno Guild eventually."

The words stood out in Jinius's mind: "Techno Guild." Jinius didn't wait. He let out a curse and plunged his lightsaber into the chest of the cloaked man.

The air grew hot and the smell of gaseous metal filled Jinius's nostrils. A grunt came from the man as he took the blade between his ribs. He looked down at the lightsaber stuck in his chest and back up at Jinius. Smoke rose from the wound. Jinius turned the blade and started to move it to the side. The man was going to be cut down, Jinius was going to make sure of that.

The man cocked his head. Jinius sensed him smile beneath the shrouded cloak. The man casually pressed his palm on Jinius's shoulder. The air shifted. It seemed to bow and become denser as the man's hand pressed into Jinius's shoulder. Suddenly, Jinius was flying back, his lightsaber falling to the ground. He felt himself slam into the far wall as the room faded to black.

Jinius awoke to a half moon of droids standing around him. Their strange master stood at their center. SA-TRN stood next to him flailing the electrostaff threateningly to keep the column of droids from advancing on Jinius. The droid fought with an insanity barely keeping the droids away from Jinius.

"This will be far easier if you stop resisting," the cloaked man said. His voice never changed inflection; his face stayed hidden by the cloak.

It was a feat that SA-TRN93 had been able to stop the advance. Jinius did notice a row of fallen droids near the wall. His droid had fought its way to him. It had fought its way to protect him.

Jinius couldn't help but wonder why he wasn't captured. Why SA-TRN93 wasn't destroyed. Clearly, this army had the advantage of numbers, and the strange man had a certain advantage of power. He could kill Jinius with the flick of his wrist; he almost had once.

Visions of Holographic Fun Land

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Competition: [HSD] Horrors of Holographic Fun Land

“Resisting is what I do,” Jinius replied as he pulled himself up. His shoulders and back ached. Nonetheless, he thrust out his hand. His lightsaber leaped from the floor and into his hand. Again, the light-blue blade exploded to life.

“They all resisted. They all eventually joined the Collective. They joined the consciousness. It is the only way they could be controlled -- the only way their thirst for power could be sated,” the robed man indicated the crowd of droids.

One of the droids stepped too close. SA-TRN smashed its head in with a brutal swipe of his staff.

To Jinius’s surprise, the head did not smash in to reveal a wire-filled shell of droid innards. Instead, a pool of crimson flowed from the head pooling around SA-TRN’s feet. The droids weren’t entirely droids. It all made sense.

“What did you do to them?” Jinius demanded. More droids fell to his blade. Pools of crimson forming around them.

“I calmed them,” the man answered, “The Force was too much for them. It’s too much for the weak. You need order, control to command the powers of the universe. I offered it freely to them. I offer it freely to you.”

“What you’re doing is wrong!” SA-TRN shouted. “Why ruin a perfectly good droid with fleshy bits?”

Both Jinius and the man’s shadowed face turned towards SA-TRN.

SA-TRN charged into the enemy droids. They surged against him as a singular, solid mass. Jinius continued cutting down the droids that got too close. He heard a crunch and glanced over. Parts and pieces of SA-TRN were being thrown through the air. His droid had fallen.

Jinius screamed and plunged his saber deep into the chest of a nearby droid. It started to fall to the attack. More droids pressed around them. Jinius felt a sharp pain along the back of his head and the room faded to blackness again.

## CH5 - Hallucinations

“Knight Jinius!” the empty voice of SA-TRN demanded.

## Visions of Holographic Fun Land

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Competition: [HSD] Horrors of Holographic Fun Land

Jinius lay on the floor of the holo-module. Above him were the yellowed fluorescent lights from before. Next to him stood SA-TRN. Another holo-droid looked over him. Its head was cocked.

“Are you in need of medical assistance?” the holo-droid asked.

Jinius shouted and reached for his lightsaber. He cut the legs out from under the holo-droid while pulling himself away and standing. SA-TRN stumbled back and pulled his electrostaff from his back.

“What’s going on, Knight Jinius?” SA-TRN asked. The droid nervously scanned the room.

“They attacked me!” Jinius shouted. He was spinning wildly trying to keep his lightsaber aimed at all of the motionless holo-droids at once.

“Um. No.” SA-TRN put away his electrostaff and walked over. “The simulation started and the walls began flickering. You had a seizure and passed out. Nothing else has happened.”

“It is a violation of ‘Holographic Fun Land’ for any patron to destroy any property of ‘Holographic Fun Land’ while not in a simulation. You have been banned from this facility. Please leave!” an overhead voice demanded. “You will be charged...”

“Fracking bill me!” SA-TRN shouted.

“But the droids,” Jinius said exasperated, “They. They attacked!”

“No, they didn’t. We didn’t even get into the simulation.” The droid paused, looking concerned. “We should really get you to the shuttle. I can have the ship look you over while we head back to the fleet.”

Jinius nodded in agreement.

A few moments later they had made their way out of the holo-module and into the station proper. No droids swarmed the halls. The only sound in the station was the quiet footsteps of Jinius and his droid.

*It was a seizure induced hallucination,* Jinius thought to himself. He’d just had a bad dream.

The door to the shuttle opened. The robed man stood just inside the ship. Jinius screamed and reached for his lightsaber as the man thrust out a hand sending dark tendrils of hate coursing through the air. Jinius fell to the ground as the lightning touched his skin.