

## **Vault of Erised**

“Seriously? All this trouble for a stupid holocron?”

--+==

## **Geonosis**

### **Badlands**

#### **3 Hours Earlier**

Sand blew across the rocky terrain in tufts of red and orange, slowly building up around and eventually burying large ruined constructs scattered across the landscape. The *Wraith* entered the atmosphere, observing that the entirety of the Badlands was not even fully visible from her cockpit due to its sheer size. Zuser Whuloc exhaled through the side of his mouth, surveying the red landscape below.

“Somewhere down there, there’s a big ass vault, *supposedly* holding whatever the seeker desires most. Maybe, just maybe, I can get my old ship back.”

Tilting the throttle slightly and engaging the repulsors, the young pilot began the landing cycle right as an impact alarm started flashing on the console.

“What the-?!”

Even as the words left his mouth, the Ghtroc lurched to port as a rocket slammed into the starboard side of the ship, almost instantly knocking out the engine.

“Ah, damnit! Brace for impact!” he yelled out loud even though it was just him and his two droids. Doing his best to at least land in an upright position on the ground, Zuser grit his teeth as the red and orange surface got closer far too fast for his liking. With a loud bang, the *Wraith* hit the dirt, gouging a line in the earth as it slid. The hull let out loud metallic groans as it slowed and stopped at the base of a mountain range.

Groaning in irritation and with a quickly building rage, Zuser unfastened the safety harnesses of his seat and shot up, trying to get a read out on the ship’s conditions, but got nothing .

“Argh! Blast it all!”

The maverick slammed a fist into the console, cracking a screen and leaving his hand stinging .

Spinning on his booted heel and storming out into the 'hall' of the ship, he grabbed a scarf-like garment and shoved it over his head. Adjusting it around his neck, he cursed out loud to no one in particular.

"What in all the *kriffing* blue hells is still operational on this damn, stupid dust ball of a planet?!"

The former Obelisk stormed past a disoriented Skull and Widget, the latter giving off several accusatory sounding tones. Zuser's arm snapped out and pointed furiously at the smaller droid as he passed.

"I am in no mood!"

Grabbing the handle to manually open the boarding ramp, Zuser yanked, and with a whine followed by a loud bang, the ramp slammed into the dirt, kicking up a cloud of red dust. Scowling, the Mystic pulled up the scarf to cover his nose and mouth before grabbing his polarized goggles and placing them over his eyes. Checking to make sure he had his twin hidden blade gauntlets, blaster and lightsaber, he reached back and pulled his hood over his head before storming out to inspect his ship.

There was a pause as the two droids watched their owner leave. Widget gave a series of beeps and chirps, prompting Skull to look down at the small astromech. The K-Series droid looked back out the open door and replied in its depressed tone.

"Well. Whatever it was, it's probably my fault."

## **Geonosis**

### **Badlands**

#### **About 1 ½ hours later**

"Stupid planet. Stupid operational anti-air turret."

Zuser stormed across the badlands, kicking rocks and scanning the terrain. The place was barren, rusted metal littered everywhere.

"Why in the blue hells would someone, *anyone*, decide to put a mythical vault on a barren planet! Now I've got me a fun little side quest to go and find the turret that shot me down, kill the operator and destroy the stupid gun!"

While kicking a stone along the ground, the former Obelisk didn't notice he had turned into a canyon until he kicked the stone harder than before causing it to ricochet off the walls before hitting something metallic behind a boulder. A familiar sound caught Zuser's ear after he heard the sound: a chorus of tinny voice accompanied by an all too familiar clanking march.

“JEDI SCUM DETECTED. KZZT ELIMINATE THE JEDI.”

“ROGER ROGER.”

“ROGER ROGER KZZT.”

“Ah kriff...”

Zuser reached behind his back and pulled the lightsaber from the harness

“Just my luck that there’s some stragglers from the Clone Wars.”

Thumbing the activation switch, the lightsabers three blades ignited in a purple light, bathing the shadowed canyon in a shade of lavender.

As soon as the battle droids photoreceptors locked onto Zuser, they began firing nonstop, red blaster bolts of superheated death flying at him only to get batted to the side by the purple blade. Zuser ducked, weaved and batted his way through the blaster fire. One bolt caught his left shoulder and he growled in growing rage from the pain. Pushing through the pain in his shoulder, he threw his injured left arm out and used the Force to push the frontline droids back into their brethren. Taking the opportunity, the maverick leapt into the crowd of droids, cleaving through their thin frames with ease as the purple lightsaber ripped them apart. Breathing heavily, Zuser turned off and returned the lightsaber to his back holster. Inspecting the blaster wound, he deemed it ok enough to carry on.

“Ok, note to self, invest in carrying bacta spray... Well! That certainly helped my mood! Now to find this stupid vault-.”

As he was speaking he took one step forward and the ground depressed under his boot, prompting him to freeze.

*Don't be a land mine, don't be a land mine.*

After a tense silence the wall of the canyon on his immediate left rumbled and slid open, revealing a hidden door.

“... huh. Well that saves me searching for the rest of the day.”

## **Geonosis Vault of Erised**

“Ah come ON!”

The Mystic vaulted over a large crate and crouched behind it as a wave of bright red blaster fire pelted the crate and wall around him.

“First I get shot down by an anti air rocket, then I get mobbed by a squad of rusty clankers, and *now* I’m being hunted by super battle droids?!”

Zuser hissed as he looked down at his shoulder. The wound didn’t look as good now. Deciding that there was nothing he could do about it now, he switched his focus to his DL-44 in his right hand and groaned, seeing half the battery still full. He had already burned through a battery pack while trying to take down one of the super battle droids.

“Well one thing’s for sure, these clankers are *definitely* more resilient than their predecessors.”

He peeked around the crate and snapped his head back as a blaster bolt slammed into the crate right by where his head was.

While trying to think of a plan, a stray bolt clipped a smaller box and it dropped next to Zuser, causing him to flinch. He paused and read the word ‘grenade’ on the box. Using the Force to amplify his speed, he whipped out his hands and grabbed the box, right before a bolt smashed the ground where the box had been, hissing in pain from his left shoulder as he moved. Ripping open the container with his left hand, a movement not appreciated by his shoulder, he grabbed a grenade, primed it and threw it up over the crate behind him... but nothing happened.

“Ugh, seriously?!”

Zuser grabbed another grenade and primed it, giving it another good chuck over the crate. This time there was a loud bang with the sound of malfunctioning droids. Taking the chance, Zuser shot out from behind his cover and yanked his lightsaber out, igniting it as he ran with the Force accelerating his speed. In a blur of motion, he reduced them all to sparking lumps of metal. During the scuffle, he attempted to use his left-hand hidden blade, but messed up a slash when his shoulder erupted in pain, causing his arm to turn slightly and the blade snapped off as it connected with the chassis of a droid.

“Now then... let’s find that vault.”

He muttered to himself as he walked away, retracting what was left of his hidden blade but keeping his lightsaber out, in case there were more droids clanking about. His arm now started to throb slightly, so he let his left arm hang at his side to prevent agitating it. He wandered around a little before finding a sealed circular door.

“Hello, what have we here?”

Patience having long run out, the Mystic yelled out and slashed his lightsaber through the lock of the door, the purple blade cutting through the old metal with ease. Concentrating, Zuser reached out his left hand wincing slightly as he did, and used the Force to pull open the large door, creaking and squeaking as it went. The pilot walked in, blinking and frowning as he saw the contents of the vault sitting on a pedestal.

“Seriously? All this trouble for a stupid holocron?”

Deactivating his lightsaber he walked over and picked up the holocron from the pedestal.

“Welp. Better see what’s in here.”

Closing his eyes in concentration, Zuser used the Force to open the holocron. The device opened and a hologram shot out on the floor in front of him, flickering and fuzzy at first before an image took shape. The image took the form of two adult humans, a man and a woman both smiling at him. Zuser blinked, and blinked again, confusion spread on his face.

“... I... I-I know you... but... how...?”

The man and woman continued to smile, but the smiles seemed saddened.

“... Mom...? ...Dad...?”

Zuser blinked, feeling something wet traveling down from his eyes. He touched his cheek and looked at his hands, seeing something wet on his fingers.

“Wh- what is this... why am I crying? What is this? *What is this? Why am I crying?!*”

In a confused rage, Zuser threw the holocron, the image disappearing as it left his hand. He stood there sobbing as he ignited his lightsaber and started laying waste to the room, tears streaming from his eyes as his mind tried to process what was happening.