

Formos
Kessel Sector
Outer Rim



“This is stupid,” a voice called into the comlink channel, “This is how Jedi get killed.”

“Hush, we have movement.”

The grey shaded mine shafts just outside Formos’ main spaceport held a canyon-like complex that reeked of spice extract. Lieutenant Commander of Hoth, Creon Saldean, walked with a protocol droid in the open towards a man-made opening to one of the mines. He appeared as a large Wookiee, holding a pilot’s helmet on his hip with a bowcaster slung around his back. Two Gamorreans that looked to be common thugs came out from the shadows of the mine to meet with him. Beyond them, three of the Technocratic Huntresses took post along the outer cliffside. The Gamorreans may have been fooled by the holoshroud, but the ID9 scouts belonging to the Huntresses knew better.

The 3PO droid explained to the guards in their tongue that Creon, named “Tarkazza”, came with a Baleen-class heavy freighter. It was the truth too, he actually did. What wasn’t true was that the freighter was to be used to store and transport 50,000 tons of spice bought directly here where it was being processed. Instead, the vessel was the *Idiot’s Array*, the home vessel of the Wildcards Battleteam. Creon proposed a joint operation with Hoth’s O.T.F.¹ and the Wildcards for a search and rescue. The rescue target was Vance Kordall, a person of interest to High Councillor Alethia. The bounty was hefty, which is what drew the Wildcards. For Creon, however, it was more about the individual. The profile on Vance was limited, but its

¹Odanite Task Force; a spec-ops group in House Hoth. See textbox optional links for details.

believed he may have ties to the occurrence on the *Psi Termina I* and some unknown artifact. Regardless, if he was a high priority individual for the Collective, he would be too for the Inquisitorius and Odan-Urr. Even though the spat at the *Psi Termina I* was only between the Inquisitorius and the Collective, it would be only a matter of time before the Jedi were dragged into it. There were enemies on both fronts, so the O.T.F.'s job was to gain intel and be ready for when the storm comes their way.

Luna Okami dropped from above and exchanged poisonous darts with one of the Huntresses. The Mando's suppressive armor allowed for an advantageous approach. But from upon her landing, the Shikari was able to roll to the side and fire off a dart in reply. The dart struck true unlike her Mandalorian foe, and the Huntress was confident that the poison would do its work. She was disappointed and shocked when Luna was able to charge forward and bring a subduing blow to the temple.

"That's one," the medic called to the rest.

"And that makes two," Jetsam relayed shortly after.

"There's a third, and she's about to take the shot," Len lode called.

"No she isn't," Celevon replied. He focused with the Force to bring hesitation and doubt into the Kiffar's mind. The impact caused the woman shook her head and wiped away the sweat from her brow. Stress and anxiety filled her mind and drained her will. What if she missed the shot? Why aren't her sisters taking the shot first? She knew that one more slip and Kendra would replace her too. It was better if someone else took action first, and have any repercussions be set on them. *Take no chances*, she thought to herself.

Creon was led into the cavern entrance by the two guards without interruption.

So far so good.

He put faith in the team to keep things smooth until he could either find out about Vance or get to Kendra. He had to do the Jedi thing first, which for him was try and talk things out. He knew there was no way he could convince someone in the Technocratic Guild to go about things peacefully with a Force User, but the more intel he could learn from talking the better. This would also keep the attention on him, making it easier for the actual infiltration team to do their part.

The Gammorean escorts came to a door in a stone wall and gave a few grunts to 3PO. The droid then turned and told something to Creon in Shyriiwook. Creon had no idea what he said and there was an awkward pause before he gave a silent nod. It was all he could think to do. The 3PO unit looked to the Gammoreans, who then opened the door and went inside. Creon

was about to follow, but the 3PO unit stood in his way and held up an arm to halt.

“Most Wookies understand basic, you know,” Creon told the droid.

“Apologies, master. I thought it would be more convincing. They simply asked us to wait outside for further confirmation.”

Creon did *not* like that. It was probably standard security procedures, but he didn't want to linger in case the Gammorean's found out and were more sly than he took them for. He deactivated the holoshroud on his belt; he needed to save as much power from it as possible. In fact, when he checked the battery life, it was pretty close to empty. He may be able to get another minute or so if he's lucky. The soldier sighed, placed the device back on his belt, put his helmet back on and activated the HUD system inside.

“Sitrep,” he called to the rest of his team.

“Three of the Shikari captured and two ID9 Droids destroyed. We are looking for a third, as they seem to be paired up,” Len's voice chimed in. “Jetsam and Celevon are looking for alternate routes in. Luna, Dral, and I are outside the entrance on your six.”

“Go ahead and make your way in, there was no one behind us and I didn't see any...” He was going to finish with the word “cameras” but the thought made him check the front door he neglected in detail. Lo and behold, there was a small camera lens at the upper center. Creon tested the door handle with the Force and learned that it had been locked. He cursed to himself for the obvious mistake.

“I'm going loud,” Creon called to the others through his helmet. He drew out his saber and thrust it once into the camera, and again on the handle. The protocol droid gasped in alarm and turned around to make its way back to the entrance. When Creon opened the door, he threw himself against the side wall just as a plasma arrow whizzed by him. A small group of Gammoreans began rushing towards him and behind them armed thugs with blasters led by a Shikari Huntress. The rest of the individuals in the room looked to be Twi'lek women with oxygen masks. The room he had just opened to was a refining lab for the mine's spice extract.



The Jedi flipped on his personal energy shield and ran towards the group with enhanced speed. The shield was able to keep the blasters at bay temporarily while he dispatched the Gammorreans wielding various vibro-weaponry. His bladework tore through their weapons and flesh. He had to be quick. The volume of blaster fire coming at him would short out the shield generator at any given moment. Once it did, Creon turned his attention from the remaining Gammorreans to deflecting and redirecting bolts back while he tried to find cover amongst the lab. His enemies turned their attention back to the front door once Len, Dral, and Luna arrived with suppressive fire. A single smoke bomb was thrown in the middle of the room and began to spread. The thugs and their Huntress leader then took cover among the crates, tables, and machinery within the processing room.

The sound of Dral's roar in pain came through the comlink. Creon looked to see that his reinforcements were taking fire from the rear. He used the Force to shut the metal door closed as well as set down the large deflector shield generator strapped on his back in front of them.

"Set it up!" he called. The Jedi commander then rushed to his teammates and threw up his hands to generate a large barrier with the Force in the direction of the smoke clearing. The smoke was beginning to fade, and shots from the enemies within flew from its shroud. Their rate of fire grew as the smoke became more and more opaque till eventually, it brought Creon to his knees to sustain the barrier's integrity.

"It's done!" Luna called out. Creon turned to see the large deflector dome surrounding his comrades. He then released his hold and retreated back into the shield.

"How's Falgorth?" he inquired to the medic.

Before she responded, Luna injected Dral with a shot of adrenaline from her medpack. His eyes widened, and the younger Mandalorian roared in a tone that expressed both pain and pleasure. "He'll be fine," she said, "The impact will leave a bruise, but it was low caliber and hit the brunt of his backplate."

"They are so **FRAKED!**" Dral growled.

The door a few meters behind their dome was kicked open, and more thugs of various species with blasters began to funnel in. They had little concern over the dome that surrounded the Odanites, given the fact that the shield deflectors repelled blaster fire from both sides. Even the ones engaged earlier exposed themselves from cover just enough to take aim and wait.

"Now what?" Len asked while his head swiveled to scan a large number of targets that now filled the room.

"Oi! Lookie e're lads, found me mum a good man to take home," Jetsam's voice called into the comlink channel.

"Come again?," Creon asked.

"He says we found Vance Kordall," Cevelon explained, "He's breaking him out now. I'll make sure he's cooperative until we get to the *Idiot's Array*."

"Roger, make it quick. We'll give you as much time as we can, and then some," Creon ordered. He then turned to address the others that stood with him, "You heard them, team. The mission can still be a success if we keep their eyes on us. If you get shot, shoot them back. If you die... You get back up."

Dral beat his chest with a shout of motivated valor as he set up his heavy repeater on a mounted tripod. Len adjusted the scope to a shorter range on his A280C and moved the selector to a higher rate of fire. Luna took a knee to lock and load her AB-75, and turned on the thermal spectrum opticals in her helmet. Creon ignited his lightsaber and took up a stance resembling the Jedi Knight. Each of the operatives covered a different sector of fire to a full 360 degrees in their surroundings. Once their leader deactivates the deflector shield telekinetically, all hell will break loose.

Getting out of this with everyone alive was going to require a miracle. Creon embraced hope in the Force, for it was in hope that miracles were made. He closed his eyes and quieted his mind to connect the others together. They had to be a perfectly well-oiled machine, synchronized in a perfect harmony of coordination and teamwork. With their hearts bolstered, and their focus enhanced, the four hearts of the Odanites now beat as one.

Creon took a deep breath...

Blaster bolts soared in every direction **from** every direction. Each of their bodies shifted clockwise, and then counter-clockwise with shots as precise as they were rapid. Creon's body weaved through his companions as they fought, and his lightsaber whirled around each of them everytime an enemy bolt would come their way. Even as his blade flashed nearby or even directly in front of them, their focus remained vigilant. They would even sometimes step to the side, duck, or twist their bodies as Creon entered their personal space to their defense. The entire team moved in sync with each other as if rehearsed and covered each other's blind spots.

A single thunderous crack from a slugthrower made everyone in the room stop.

The zen from the Force faded from each of the Odanites and they were surprised by the number of enemies they managed to defeat. More than half of thugs that filled the room were now dead, with less a handful remaining. The slugthrower came from someone whose identity was covered by three more Shikari Huntresses. When they dispersed from each other, Kendra Icasta came into view.

“What... the Frak?” she asked raising her palms up in frustration and confusion, “Why couldn’t you just be a Wookiee and his droid coming to buy a shipload of spice? That would make for a much better weekend.”

The growled in frustration, pinching the bridge of her nose with one hand and loosely twirling the trigger well of her pistol with the other, “So which is it, the Inquisitorius? You’re all in black, but *this* one,” she says pointing the slugthrower at Creon, “has a green lightsaber. He also looks too much of a boy scout jarhead to be Sith. So, Jedi right? Help me out here.”

“I’m Jedi,” Creon confirmed in a calm tone.

“Why?! You do know that half of us are okay with you guys living in the middle of nowhere, so as long as you don’t frak with the rest of the galaxy? The other half want to just add you to the list when we’re done with the Dark Council. Well... guess which half I am now?”

Creon couldn’t tell if she was actually being honest or lying about half the Collective debating on involving the Jedi. They had attacked us before on New Tython, but really, all the Jedi really do want is to be left alone.

“We’re in the *Idiot’s Array* with Vance,” Cevlon’s voice called into Creon’s helmet, “Awaiting orders.”

“Take off, now!” Creon relayed back, “Get the HPT² out of here, finish the mission! The Harbinger³ can take us home.”

“Take off- the frak?” Kendra asked. It only took a few more seconds for it to click for her what was going on. Her only good eye widened in reaction to the realization.

BANG

Kendra shot Creon right through his chest...

² High Priority Target; referencing Vance Kordall.

³ The Black Harbinger; the main vessel of the O.T.F. See textbox optional links for details.

“Man down!” Luna called and caught Creon as he fell. Len Iode dove to the deflector shield generator and re-activated it just as the remaining thugs and Huntresses resumed fire. Dral brought his MWC-35c to the hip and held down the trigger. The barrel reached just outside the border of the deflector shield, allowing his bolts to fly at the group and keep him well protected. The Mandalorian held the line as Luna and Len carried Creon from the back of the dome towards the door leading to the cave entrance. Dral then took out a thermal detonator, activated it, and threw it. He then said his goodbyes with a derogatory hand gesture before turning to join the others in their escape.

The explosion only reached the escaping Hothians with its sound. Although they weren’t being directly pursued, they wanted to take no chances in allowing the Collective to escape. Len Iode was next in line of succession in the O.T.F. should Creon go down. It was now his call to make.

“Tarvitz, light it up and bring us home,” the Chiss called into his comlink.

In the upper atmosphere, a single TIE/D fighter from the O.T.F.’s Nightingales⁴ squadron hovered in waiting. Tarvitz came back from his lull of waiting when he received the message. He sent the order to central command to land the Black Harbinger to extract. He then flipped on his favorite song⁵ and activated his thrusters to dive down towards the mine shaft. It didn’t take very long for the mine to come into his targeting relay, given the speed of the vessel he was in compared to his N-1. He could see Len and Luna carrying Creon, followed by Dral leaving the area. He could also see a few others escaping in other routes along the cliffside. He fired a few laser cannon shots at the armed thugs and Shikari Huntresses making their escape. He then pulled up hard from his descent, making the TIE/D vessel screech in the air overhead. After a swift roundabout, he aimed for the mining facility itself and let loose two ion torpedoes. Upon impact, the entire cave complex tore into pieces and reached up to the sky before collapsing upon itself below. The Nightingale and its pilot soared over the escaping Odanites in a celebratory maneuver before rising back into the skies of Formos.



⁴ Spec ops flight squadron attached to the Black Harbinger. See textbox optional links for details.

⁵ I’m going with a resemblance of *Shoot to Thrill* by ACDC. Feel free to comment what song you had in mind. I’d love to hear about it.

O.T.F. Medical Bay
The Black Harbinger
Hyperspace

“Morning sunshine.”

Creon’s eyes strained open to see Lucine Vasano, someone very close to him, who stood beside the bed he was on. She had removed the gloves on her hands after disposing of bloodied wound dressings and excess bandages.

“Sweetheart? What are you doing here?” Creon asked. He coughed almost immediately after. It took a lot of effort for him to speak, but it was worth it with her here. Lucine got a bit closer to him and slapped him across the face. When Creon looked again, it was Luna instead.

“Oh,” Creon said in disappointment.

“Patient suffered minor delirium brought on by blood loss,” she said out loud while writing on a scribbling on a datapad that digitalized her words, “If he calls me sweetheart again, I’ll need to put him back under anesthetic and fix the dislocated jaw.”

Creon got the picture. Instead, he moved his focus to try and recollect what all had happened before he lost consciousness. “Kordall?” he asked.

“On his way to Kiast,” Luna replied.

Creon relaxed his head back into the pillow and looked at the roof of the marauder, “Let’s hope this guy is worth the mess to the High Councillor.”

“I’m sure Celevon is peeling his mind like an onion as we speak. You, on the other hand, aren’t going to be doing anything strenuous for a few weeks. The sooner you get back to sleep, the quicker your wounds will heal.”

There was no arguing that, but the thought of being a few weeks out of commission worried him. This was only the beginning, he could feel it. So instead, Creon closed his eyes and let his mind slip away into the Force. He always maintained a proficiency in maintaining his body, but repairing it was a skill he had only used once before. His mind centered on the opening from the slug’s trajectory in his chest and out his back. He was lucky no vitals were pierced. In time, with his full effort and concentration in a meditative trance in the Force, the body began its work.