

Phantasm
A Rite of Supremacy: Meridian Story
Alaris Jinn
9426

Kessel

“The spice mined here is medicinal,” Alaris Jinn spoke loudly enough to be heard over the constant sound of machinery that echoed through the quarry. “At least that’s what is said on all the flimsiwork.”

“Why even bother lying about it with open slavery?” the Twi’lek’s apprentice, genuinely curious.

Slavery was technically illegal in the Republic, but since the destruction of the Hosnian System, the Republic was in no position to enforce it. While most major businesses continued to operate freely and openly, there were many that required hard, manual labor. Kessel had already been ripe with indentured servitude and the step to full blown slavery wasn’t that much of a leap for many mining companies in the Outer Rim. Living conditions had worsened, rationing was tightened, and working hours pushed to 18 hours every day. Chains had finally been reintroduced after a labor strike had threatened to shut down the record profits that had been piling up over the last few decades.

The two cloaked figures, not too dissimilar in height, walked through the dusty surface that surrounded one such spice mine. Trandoshans, armed with whips and an array of firearms, were spaced fairly evenly throughout; each assigned a group of slaves they had dominion over. Some made passing glances at the mysterious figures, but most kept their eyes at their work. Whipping barely clothed slaves was a genuine joy for many Trandoshans.

“Much of what remains of the Republic needs the medicinal properties of this spice, but probably wouldn’t pay for it if they knew what else was being made from it. Clients don’t see the work site; just the product. Besides, they’re not going to make the same mistake they made during the Galactic Empire,” Alaris explained.

Alaris looked into a large tunnel that led to an extended mine beneath the quarry, twenty meters off to his right. A large drill had broken down near the cavern’s mouth and several slaves were moving pieces of machinery and tools toward and away from it. Another twi’lek, wearing scraps for clothes and caked with dust and dried blood, tried to make eye contact with him, pleadingly, but Alaris sneered and changed his focus.

Kahlora nodded. “How many of these spice mines were shut down and reorganized by the New Republic?”

Her master smiled. "Precisely. Without knowing if the First Order or the Resistance will truly prevail, they're not taking any risks this time. War is a funny thing." A Trandoshan tried to intercept them while they walked into the complex, but a simple hand wave sent him on his way. "Life may snuff out by the billions, but the most shrewd beings will always find ways to benefit from either war or peace."

"Is making money really that important?" The young Togruta had no qualms about showing her skepticism.

"It's not unimportant, however influence and power weigh so much more than credits." They stepped into a turbolift and the gravity well shot them deep into the planet's crust.

"Is that why you spread your influence across the Brotherhood?" It was phrased as a question, but it came to her as more of an epiphany. "Left Hand of Justice; Grand Inquisitor; Magistrate to the Fist."

Alaris didn't show pride in other people very often, but Kahlora was impressing him more and more every passing day. If she didn't end up killing him one day, Alaris would be surprised and disappointed. "That's why we're here and not on Arx." The doors opened into a control room and both Twi'lek and Togruta stepped through the door out onto the durasteel floor, shaking the dust off their cloaks as they walked.

It had been three days since Vance's signal. Although, Alaris's influence in the dark side and the signal had pointed to the Kessel sector and hadn't moved, the Akkadese Maelstrom was making an exact point a little difficult to figure out.

"You're calling in another favor?" The young woman grinned. Watching her master work gave her such a sense of satisfaction.

An elderly Pyke scurried across the control room toward the two Dark Jedi as soon as he saw his old debtor. "Lord Pythras," The Pyke bowed deeply, "how can I be of service to you?"

Alaris's voice lightened and his accent shifted from Coruscanti to Nubian. "Efram Vias. I have come to collect part of my debt."

Vias returned to his full height. "Of course, my Lord." He shifted laterally and turned, guiding the two Inquisitors into a side office. "Your recommendations and alterations have increased our profit margins by forty percent. We're operating at peak efficiency and any labor loss is having minimal effect on those margins."

"This is excellent news, Vias. My accountants have been pleased by the punctuality of your payments. You can be assured, that I do not come today with any planned ill will." The three

figures, marked by a very noticeable height difference now sat in a luxurious office in privacy. Alaris removed his hood and Teka followed suit.

“This is my apprentice, Lady Daimon,” Alaris indicated the young Togruta who tilted her head slightly in greeting. “Her words are to be treated as my own from here forward. But, to business.” The Twi’lek handed a file chip to the Pyke. “Bring up these files. Cipher key: phantasm.”

The room darkened as Vias inserted the chip into his console and a holo lit up the room. It showed a bust holograms of white human male marked with a manicured goatee and a slightly pale Chiss woman with a cybernetic right eye.

“We are looking for them. Any information that leads to us finding them will reduce your debt to me.”

Vias shook his head. “I don’t recognize the man at all, but her -” he trailed off.

Kahlora raised a pierced eyebrow. “Yes?”

Vias wiped his face. “She is here on Kessel, or at least she was yesterday. It appears that they had a technical issue with their ship. Something about a VIP passenger who had become too lively and damaged their hyperdrive somehow. She and two women, who must have been sisters, claimed they were from Capital Enterprises and demanded assistance in their repairs.” He frowned and stroked his chin. “My engineers took one look and knew it was going to be one mess of a fix, so they’re still working on it today I believe.”

“Where are they now?” Kahlora raised her voice in mild impatience.

“Hanger Bay E-21. It’s usually reserved for cargo transfers, but they claimed VIP status and landed there rather unannounced.” Vias had a mild annoyance in his voice but shook it off. “I can inform them that you’re here and summon them, if you’d like.”

Kahlora raised her lips in a warm, inviting smile. “No thank you. We’ll head there now.”

“Your help is appreciated, Vias.” Alaris stood and turned for the door before stopping and glancing back at the mine’s owner. “I’m curious. Why would someone from Capital Enterprises stop here in particular with several other mines available to them?”

Vias removed the datachip from the console and tossed it over to Alaris who caught it cleanly. “CE has a forty percent stake in this mine. They’ve invested quite a bit into helping upgrade our technology out here.”

Alaris smiled a toothy grin. “Of course. Thank you again, Mr. Vias.”

Alaris returned, cloaked his head and marched out through the door, apprentice in tow. They made directly for the turbolift. The instant it was closed Alaris let his face drop into a sneer.

Kahlora felt the anger dripping off the Twi'lek. "Master?"

"It's no coincidence that CE has invested in a company with my influence," Alaris explained.

"The Huntresses aren't of Capital Enterprises, though," the young woman stated with mild confusion. The realization came to her fairly quickly. "No more than you are Lord Pythras or I am Lady Daimon."

The Twi'lek chuckled. "I cannot give you a Sith name, but we can't just walk around the galaxy announcing our true names now can we?"

The Togruta let herself smile; she knew what was coming next. "Shall we?"

Kahlora's master could feel her excitement and anticipation bubbling just under the surface of her skin and he was instantly grateful that they weren't about to engage anyone competent in the use of the Force.

"I admire your tenacity, my young apprentice, but you must still yet learn patience. Your lust for blood is shining like a beacon through the dark side," Alaris explained as they exited the turbolift and headed for the Eastern hangar bays. He opened himself to the Force and found the mind he was looking for. It was quiet and unassuming; patient. He closed his eyes and focused briefly, then reopened them and continued his gait.

Kahlora looked around her and frowned. "Something's wrong, Master."

Alaris turned his gaze back to his apprentice and instead was drawn to something beyond her. It wasn't movement that he saw, but a lack of it. The giant drilling machine still lay dormant, but it was surrounded by machinery and tools with no slave in sight. The Pykes and Trandoshans who had been overlooking the work camp were gone too.

With barely time to sneer, Alaris Jinn threw his cloak off with a wave of his hand and his lightsaber sprung to life, Kahlora was a split second behind him. In no time at all both Dark Jedi stood back to back, viridian and vermilion blades casting their hues on the ground. Their familiar buzz was barely audible over the sounds of large machinery deeper within the tunnel.

If they had not been in tune with the dark side, the sudden gunfire would have struck both diminutive Equites to their deaths. Instead, the slugs landed harmless into the ground where Alaris had just been standing. It was immediately followed up with a volley of plasma from two different angles.

“To the cave?” the young Togruta asked quickly, already shifting her weight toward it.

“No!” Alaris quickly responded. “It’s likely rigged with explosives. Huntresses like to direct their prey.” The Twi’lek quickly surveyed their surroundings. Durasteel rigging was set up all over the depression in the ground of the quarry. He glanced up at where the slug shots had come from and saw a distant blur of blue. “Up!” he yelled over the commotion.

“Toward the guns!” Kahlora could barely contain her excitement and she was instantly sprinting at the rigging fifteen meters in front of her. Alaris split off to the scaffolding on his right. Like children who had just heard the starting gun, they bolted up the durasteel frames as quickly as they could muster.

This didn’t deter the Huntresses. They no longer masked their hiding spots and were now in the open, lining up shots to kill the two climbing Dark Jedi. Kahlora had returned her lightsabers to her belt, finding foothold after foothold at breakneck speeds. Alaris was eschewing any semblance of the three-points-of-contact rule, electing to keep his lightsaber ignited. He was quick, but knew he might need the deflective assistance of his blade.

It came in handy. He was forced to bat away a plasma arrow which ricocheted through his rigged scaffolding across into another standing structure. The second structure met with a different fate. The bolt snapped through the durasteel roping. The tension sprung loose and sliced upward, damaging the wooden planks that operated as catwalks amongst the rigging.

In all, the released tension, with the added touch of Alaris extending his hand helping a few bars along the way, forced two structural collapses. A pile of durasteel bars, rope, and planks fell to the surface.

His Togruta apprentice was less lucky. One of the bolts struck a support bar which alone wouldn’t have done any damage to the scaffolding, but with the collapse of Alaris’s two structures and a few unlucky breaks, the weight from additional durasteel bars tore through her climbing apparatus and sent her tumbling to the ground, swearing the air blue the whole way.

She’ll blame me for this, the Twi’lek thought to himself, *I didn’t even do it on purpose this time.* Alaris knew that there were two Shakari Huntresses waiting for her down there and decided that this would be the perfect opportunity for her to test her mettle. She would either survive or deserve her death.

The Twi’lek felt the dark side surge through his muscles. He leapt upward further landing softly on the top of his rigging. Immediately spinning, he stared straight down at Kendra Icasta. She let go a volley of slugs which Alaris either let miss or get melted down by his lightsaber. Using a combination of the dark side and his own physical training, Alaris ran across the top of his precarious support and began to leap from one beam to the next.

As he closed in on his prey, he saw a red light crossing between two vertical support beams. He evaded it just barely, but couldn't manage to miss the second one. His forward momentum took him out of the blast radius of the trip mine, but the shockwave knocked him slightly off target. He crashed down onto the next platform, but instead of landing deftly on his feet, something he had managed thus far, he landed hard on his side.

The momentum carried him off the side of the platform and Alaris instinctively extended his free hand grasping at whatever he could. His open palm secured itself on the durasteel rig rope, but the sweat that had gathered on his hand caused him to slide down it. The metal tore at his flesh and the Twi'lek gasped. "Mother karking frak!" he screamed out at nobody.

He paused for a moment dangling from the scaffold and let out an audible sigh of relief. The dark side gave him a warning causing him to tense up. He looked up directly into the barrel of a Reynolds DE-21. "Sonuva..." He let the thought trail away. In his panic, he sliced at his support rope with his emerald blade and the tension immediately gave way. A slug squealed by his head.

The rigging carried Alaris into a second support system, crashing unceremoniously against it. His still lit lightsaber tore through the structure and it began to collapse quickly. Alaris pressed his feet against the falling frame as hard as he could and let the Force carry him to the ground, following his apprentice's linguistic examples of profanity. He didn't land so much as crash against the ground. He heard the crack in his right forearm before he felt the pain, a side effect of the adrenaline pumping through his veins.

As the dust settled, Alaris helped himself to his feet and looked at the mess he had made. One one dead Technocrat lay nearby, evidence of lightsaber wounds across her body. A small, red Togruta stood stoically, looking violently angry and incredibly determined, blocking off the path to the Eastern hangar bay keeping the remaining Huntress at bay. Alaris found his lightsaber sitting harmlessly and quickly retrieved it with his good arm.

He looked around for Icasta and quickly spotted her joining her Technocrat sister. "Oh, no you don't," he muttered under his breath. The Twi'lek moved as quickly as his beaten body would allow to join his apprentice. The four warriors stood in a near standoff. They both prepared to strike when a red blaster bolt flung itself from seemingly nowhere directly through the Kiffar's skull, sending the oblivious woman to the ground.

Icasta frowned. She quickly grabbed a small device from her belt and flung it to the ground. Smoke immediately enveloped the area.

Alaris's eyes widened. He immediately began focusing on the area around him. After a few seconds the air shimmered from the protection the Force provided. As the smoke dissipated up into the atmosphere, Alaris and Kahlora found themselves alone. Both cleared as much smoke from their lungs as they could.

“A smoke bomb?” Alaris yelled out. “A little cliché for you isn’t it, Icasta?”

There was no response, leaving the two Inquisitors alone, surrounded by smoke, dust, and shattered rigging.

After a moment, Alaris pulled out his comm and spoke clearly. “Thank you for the help, Dantavi. Icasta was the preferred target, however.”

A female voice came back over the comm. “I thought you might like me to leave the more talented enemy to you. I didn’t expect a smoke bomb.”

Alaris smirked. “Next time, expect a smoke bomb.” He looked to his apprentice and spoke deliberately. “We’ve been betrayed.”

Kahlora’s eyes lit up and her mouth split into a sinister smile. She knew what this meant. “Permission to not be gentle, Master?”

“Vias betrayed me. Permission granted, with earnest, my young apprentice.”

“What of Kordall?” the young Togruta asked of her teacher.

“I’ll head to E-21 myself. One does not get captured by the enemy and expect to live. I’ll meet you back at the ship.”

Alaris didn’t expect to hear Vias’s screams of horror at what his apprentice had in store, but as he strode through the complex looking for the Huntress’s ship and Vance Kordall’s prison he thought he could hear pleas for help coming up through the vents.

Alaris Jinn: https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/character_sheets/8838
Kahlora Teka: https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/character_sheets/8544
Mira Dantavi: https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/character_sheets/8398?page=2