

Unexpected Capital

#13486

Kessel sector

36 ABY

"But Master Tameike—"

"No!"

"Coach, c'mon."

"I said no, Ruka. And you, you know better than to call me that."

"Apologies, Miss Satsi."

"Screw saying sorry, we're trying to help, here. You've got no reason to leave us behind."

"I don't need a reason. I'm saying so."

"Oh, of all the stupid kriff—"

"Ru, don't be rude."

"Babe, is this really the time?"

"There is never a time *not* to be a gentleman."

"See, there you go, go learn some manners from Blue, Green. Me and T are shipping out."

"Not alone!" growled Ruka, glaring fiercely at his Human master. Satsi glared right back. Corazon moved gently between them.

"We really can help you, Miss Satsi. That's all we want to do, is do our part for our people too," Cora said diplomatically, his aristocratic voice soothing but sure. The scarred mercenary softened a bit at that.

"I don't doubt that, honey. I know you two can take care of yourselves, you're not kids or idiots. But that doesn't mean this is the best thing for you to be doing. Neither of you are trackers or good players, and me and Turel gotta be careful catching up to Icasta and her frakking *Shikari*."

There's gonna be plenty for you to do by the time this damned skirmish is over, I'm sure, and I don't want either of you running into the firing line like like frakheads any sooner than you have to, got it?"

Ruka crossed his thick arms in frustration, but his Pantoran husband merely nudged the Mirialan and dipped a slight, lovely bow.

"Yes, Miss Satsi. We'll do our best. Be safe as best you can."

"We'll be back before you know it, boys. You don't die either, hear me?"

She yanked them both into a spine-crushing hug and reached up to ruffle the hair on both of their heads roughly. Then, the woman released them, slung her bag of guns and equipment over her shoulder, and marched into her ship. The two Lotus agents stood and watched her take off, seeing Turel wave from the cockpit. When the freighter had passed through the energy shield of the ship's hangar, Ruka turned to his husband with a tiny scowl.

"That was really nice, even for you. You're really okay with getting benched, babe?"

"Of course not," protested the Pantoran noble with a frown. "There's people out there who need us! But Miss Satsi wasn't going to budge, so..."

He trailed off, blushing violet pink and looking abashed but thrilled all at once. Ruka couldn't help but melt into a smile.

"So?"

"So I, ahem, well. I thought it best to just concede so she wouldn't be overly suspicious and, ah, put one of the trackers Master Sorenn gave me on her belt when we said goodbye?"

The Mirialan gaped at his husband for a moment. Then, he threw his head back and laughed, hugging Cora proudly.

"Oh, Bogan, Turel is rubbing off on you!"

"Well, so are you, angel."

"I feel like it should be illegal to corrupt someone so pure. In spirit, anyway." His grin sharpened and he winked. Cora's flush deepened and he coughed.

"Flirting later, love. For now, we must find ourselves a transport and a pilot not in use. We don't want to compromise any of the Clan's scheduled operations."

"Satsi brought her other droid, the creepy one that can fly and murder a guy. Think she calls it Spotter. We can use it."

"I'd best have Grinder along too, then."

Ruka grunted. "As long as it—"

"He, dear."

"As long as he doesn't grab me too much."

"He'll be good."

"Alright." The Sith glanced around, then pressed a kiss to the other's forehead, over the marks that they shared. "You sweet-talk us one of those shuttles for an 'operation to investigate,' I'll get the droids and gear, okay?"

"It will be done," replied the Jedi with his best flourish, every inch the noble.

"Meet you back here soon. Comm me."

"I will."

For a moment more, they lingered close. Ruka felt the sudden urge to hug his husband again, hold him close awhile longer, maybe not go at all. Dread was churning in his gut, but he was ignoring it, knew it was normal and expected to be overcome for missions. They'd been through war; of course he was uneasy and felt they'd get hurt again. It was normal worry. But for a moment, he hesitated.

Then, the Mirialan shook himself and stepped away, both hurrying off to their respective destinations.

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"...Have you ever considered a little thing called accessorizing, honey? Because it would do you a GALAXY of good. Stand out. Make a statement. Make *yourself* the statement."

"Command not registered."

"Pshaww, stock personalities. So tragic. You have GOT to—"

A green hand slammed on a console. "Enough, Grinder. Leave it alone and let it pilot. I'm not even sure anymore this thing is really meant for spaceflight."

"Well, honey, Master Cora didn't necessarily pick you for your brains, now did he?"

Ruka glared while Cora made an affronted noise from his seat.

"Grinder! That is completely uncalled for and utterly untrue. Apologize, now."

"Ugh, fine." The rainbow-painted droid threw the scarf it had worn over its shoulderplate.

"Master Ruka, I'm sorry for implying Master Cora only liked you for that tight bod. Obviously he liked other things too. Like what you do with it."

"That's it, it's getting deactivated!"

"Ru, no!"

"Try me, muscles. No, really," taunted the droid, and Ruka once again cursed whatever malfunction of a personality Turel had given the damned thing. He pointed a menacing finger at the bucket of badly painted bolts.

"I *will* take you apart. Now shut it and get to the back of the cab. We can't focus with you chattering all *ay, ay, ay.*"

"Do as he says, Grinder," Cora added, expression stern and hands on his hips. The droid muttered obscenities and made a mechanical huff as best it could, swaggering off. Cora sighed. "He's just worried about me going into danger is all."

"No, it's never liked me. The excuse is just a bonus. When are you going to get that thing rewired?"

"*He* isn't a thing, love. None of them are. And Grinder's fine just as he is, he's just...you have to get used to him, is all."

"Why does that sound so familiar?" the Mirialan asked wryly, and they shared a smile. The moment didn't last, though, as their problem still remained.

While departing and charting an initial course with consultation from the many astromechs in the hangar aboard the ship hadn't been hard, adjusting had been. The Kessel sector was horrible and deadly to travel on a good day, and Arcona only got by getting to and from Dajorra because of their knowledge of navigating the route. Satsi's droid had quickly dropped them out of hyperspace and informed them that they were heading towards a nebula or black hole or something and that plotting a new, adjusted course was beyond its programming capacity. Even knowing the direction in space Turel and Satsi had gone, they couldn't follow.

Now it was even a wonder if they'd be able to get back to the fleet.

Ruka dropped his head onto his knees while Spotter continued running an algorithm to sort through hyperjump data from the shuttle's flight logs, hoping to just retrace their route. Cora was bent studiously over his datapad, reading about astronomy. Not for the first time, the Sith regretted not asking his Master for piloting lessons, but he really hadn't cared for it.

"We can hail the fleet for assistance if we don't have a resolution within an hour," Cora had decided, voice sure. "We'll try a secure and then general broadcast, since I'm not certain how grievously the gravity storms in this area will affect our communications."

That had been two hours ago, by the ship's chrono. They had no answer and were growing more worried and agitated by the minute.

"It will be alright," soothed Cora, reaching out to place his hand on Ruka's shoulder. The Mirialan relaxed at the touch. "Perhaps if we meditate, we can *sense* where we need to go."

"I'm not sure following our senses is gonna save us from being ripped apart instantly when we crash into something in hyperspace, babe, but I love your optimism."

The Pantoran frowned at him. Before he could comment further, however, Spotter chimed in.

"Systems detect incoming hyperspace travel," the security droid buzzed. "Systems detect arrival of vessel."

"What? Where?" gasped Cora, straining to look out the cockpit.

"Aft," answered Spotter. Then, "Attempted to transmit security codes. Security codes not received. No reply received."

"What?" Ruka got up then, coming to join them. Even Grinder emerged from his sulk. "What's any of that *mean*?"

The shuttle suddenly rocked around them, toppling both men to the floor. They clambered back to their feet.

"The vessel has been targeted. Analyzing. Probability of weapon of targeting being tractor beam: ninety-nine point nine-nine percent."

"Oh, Ashla," Cora said, gripping the console. Ruka swore and punched his fist into the wall.

"Are you saying we're being attacked?!"

"Vessel has been targeted—"

"WE KNOW THAT PART."

The shuttle rocked again, but this time it was less of a jarring motion at all and more of an uncomfortable hum passing overskin while electronics popped and shorted. The security droid stopped speaking mid-sentence, frozen in its seat, while Grinder toppled over with a crash. The lights went out. The rush of the engines and the carbon filters and air filters went silent. Everything was still as the two men blinked in the dark and empty space.

"Ruka," Cora whispered, his anxiousness a physical thing around them in the Force. Ruka reached for his hand and clenched it, breathing hard.

They felt the ship moving slowly, and them with it.

However long it was, the moments stretching to forever, it passed. Without warning, the lights came back as power returned, systems rebooting, some faster than others. Both droids beeped, but neither yet stirred.

And then came a voice, crackling over comms loud yet faint.

"This is the Gravesend and escort Kilaeon of Battle Group Vordania, hailing unidentified Brotherhood shuttle. You are being notified of your arrest. Your ship will be taken in to our hold and boarded. Do not resist. Place any armaments aboard at the rear boarding hatch of your vehicle and place yourselves and any other sentient crew on the hull floor on your stomachs with your hands behind your head. If any droids are aboard, order them to transfer command status to your arresting unit. If you move to attack, flee, or otherwise not cooperate, you will be destroyed."

The partners looked to each other, violet eyes meeting saffron, wide and afraid.

"Gravesend, out."

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Blood flashed behind his closed eyes and he clenched them tight around tears, counting *one, two, three*, one, two, three, trying to breathe through the pain, trying to hold on to the other heart beating, alive and fast, next to him, the other set of arms and legs and deep breaths and they just both *held on*.

They just held on.

But they couldn't hold forever.

Ruka and Cora gasped in synchronized symphony as their melded minds broke apart, unable to connect any longer. They'd thrown all their concentration into the battle meditation, trying to focus on one another and shut out the physical world. It just wasn't enough. Even with the conversation of their combined strength, they were beyond their limit.

"Done playing silent yet?" asked a deep but melodious voice above them.

The pair looked up through bruised and swollen faces at their captor. Ghaffa Ordam far outstripped the dossier the clans had on her, the holos and data doing no justice to her looming, confident figure and ease of swagger. Her armor plastics gleamed in the harsh light of their cell, the shadows on her olive skin deepened. She stared unblinking at them as she had since their arrival.

They *had* resisted, of course. But even a Force-blessed duo trained and tried together could only fight though so many soldiers before being completely surrounded and stunned to the ground. After that, they were trussed up, drugged, blindfolded, and dragged through the Collective Escort-class ship while the other blew their shuttle into space dust.

It was almost as if they were considered humanoid weapons or something.

Things were blurry after that. Cora had woken first, better at using the Light to control his body and purge the last dregs of whatever they'd been shot up with. He'd eventually been clear-headed enough to extend his healing to Ruka, who quickly started trying to escape their binds while shouting at the ceiling and at their captors. Only when he'd worn himself out threatening and yelling in two languages had the Mirialan stopped, and only then did Ghaffa enter and introduce herself.

It wasn't hard to guess she'd been watching them all the while.

Ruka had attempted to mind trick her into letting them go, but she'd been quite resistant. And very happy to break his ankle with a stomp of her boot.

He'd screamed, and Cora had screamed with him, and it had only grown worse from there. Ordam brought in troops to take turns beating at them, demanding their names, their clans, their mission. The retreat into their shared minds had only bought them so much time.

"I'll ask again. Your *names*," Ghaffa said, and then put her heel back to Ruka's leg, levering pressure on it. The Mirialan half-sobbed, half-screamed, and his partner began crying openly next to him.

"Stop, stop stop stop, please, leave him alone! It's Cora, my name is Corazon, Corazon."

She pressed harder and Ruka wailed.

"Corazon Ya-ir! I'm from Clan Odan-Urr and I'm a Jedi and this is Ruka and he's with Arcona and we were just trying to help our masters, we had no job, please please stop stop stop..."

"Better," the Collective general commented, finally stepping away. Ruka sagged, and Cora bowed his head and cried when they were left alone again.

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Time passed.

They didn't know how long, couldn't tell. Ruka's ankle swelled until it was straining against his bootlaces, bigger just above the edge of the hard leather than his whole foot itself. He said it didn't hurt anymore, had gone numb, but Cora could sense his pain and his lie.

They grew thirsty and hungry and stayed that way, until their eyes and throats and noses were all dry enough to crack and bleed in the cool, dry recycled air. Their stomachs were mostly ignored knots. They meditated to keep up their bit of strength and Cora did his best to help Ruka's ankle heal. They would probably need to rebreak it when — if — they ever got the chance, to set it right, but at least the agony wasn't a constant distraction anymore. It made meditating easier.

Eventually, Ghafa came back, returning with even more troopers and observers, as if the two Lotus operatives were exotic animals. They were given water, then poked at and prodded. Ordam noticed Ruka's mended wound and actually seemed fascinated. Fascinated, then angry. She narrowed her eyes at them.

The Nautolan woman pulled out a datapad and began reading, and slowly, their dread and anxiety only grew. She was talking about them. About their association with the clans, their missions, their accomplishments, their own students, even their home planets and Cora's family, some notes on the Vatali Empire and Dajorra both. She paced as she spoke, glancing at them occasionally and half-smirking.

"Intelligence gathered from the interrogation of Sorenn, Turel, confirmed our previous data that this boy, Ya-ir, Corazon, is associated with Sorenn. His student and a partner, it seems. Force-Users tend to live and work in pairs with one or multiple students, by our observations."

"The term is actually *Padawan*," Cora corrected absently, breaking their silence, and Ruka shot him a disbelieving look. The Nautolan swiveled her attention from her troops to her captives.

"Indeed." The Collective general smiled thin lips at the Pantoran, coming to stand over them. "There are records, stories, and such witness testimonial from the time of the Jedi in the Grand Army of the Republic that when your people lost a 'Padawan' or 'Master,' that it was nearly unbearable. That it drove several to madness or even death shortly thereafter, while others simply never recovered or experienced what you refer to as a 'fall.'"

The tall woman leaned close. "*Your* Master is quite the subject of ours. We did not get to finish with him. However, the calculation in his value is not set. He is more of a liability than of any use in my estimation, and I will kill him at the next opportunity I get. Tell me, now, Ya-ir, Corazon: will killing you kill him too? I would rather like to use minimal resources."

There was an animal noise, and then Ghafa was flying backwards and slamming into the opposite wall. The agents and guards rushed in immediately, closing rank around both the general and the Jedi and Sith at once. Cora, wide-eyed with dread, gave a cry as stun batons were shoved up against their necks, their heads slammed back. The response only made Ruka writhe harder, limbs straining such that a few personnel flinched in instinctual discomfort.

"Don't you **dare** touch him or I'll rip out your *throat*," the Mirialan snarled, eyes entirely golden and wild. Lightning crackled up and down his arms, blackening and puckering the skin there. The cuffs and collar on him sparked dangerously.

Ghafa climbed back to her feet, coughing and shaking her head, a smattering of fluid on the wall as she patted at one bruised headtail. The beautiful tentacle purpled under its lines of blue ink, but it seemed her armor had otherwise absorbed much of the damage. She made an expression at the pair that was both smile and grimace, all sinister, cold amusement.

With sure movements, the Nautolan strode back over, her subordinates parting before her as waves to rock. When she was close, she drew her blaster from one holster, flipped it about, and swung it hard into the side of Ruka's head with a wet, squelching *crack*.

"*Ruka!*" Corazon shouted, rearing forward only to be stopped by the baton choking him. He gagged, tears leaking from his eyes. The Mirialan went unnaturally limp, moaning. All the power that had surrounded him a moment before was snuffed like an errant moth drawn stupidly to flame.

Ghafa wiped the gore off her weapon's handle and reholstered it expertly, gloved touch brushing its metal with care. Then, she reached out and took the Sith's chin in hand, lifting it until his dazed gaze was level with hers, blood trailing down the side of his face. His eyes rolled in two different directions, but she shook him, snapping meticulously groomed fingers right before his nose, and they slowly refocused.

"Don't worry about your husband yet, Ya-Ir, Ruka, formerly Tenbriss, Ruka. Congratulations, by the way! I will not kill him nor you immediately. If I did, I wouldn't be able to present this opportunity to Mouk, Daggo, and Kat, Rakkas, and then Antillus, Varryn would never hear the end of it, and as he has no patience for anything but numbers, *I* would never hear the end of it. None of us want that, Ya-Ir, Ruka." She muttered to herself, "Likely give you to Kat, Rakkas, first. Like him a lot more than those Techno-snobs."

"What opportunity?" Cora whispered in horror, obviously wishing to help his partner but unable to muster the focus; not with his heart thundering in his chest so fast and loud he could scarcely feel anything else, not with a baton choking him, and not with his love in pain.

"Your scholarship was hardly the only thing we have long noted and observed, Ya-ir, Corazon, nor the only thing Sorren, Turel, confirmed while in our residence. The old Order's testimonies only spoke of bonds of some sort between you Jedi and another of your ilk, but I know personally that your Brotherhood mixes with unmutated species as well. Use us. Murder us. Breed us for generations of servants. Some *choose* to work with you, even those come from outside, not just the ones you've used and broken."

"We don't *use* people!" the Pantoran protested, though his plea was strangled slightly, both literally and otherwise. He had to *try*. "It doesn't matter who you are, where you come from, whether you have access to the Force or not — you are a *person* and we are *people* and we only, all of us, want to *live*. Please, you needn't do this. You and I, we are both people and we can make different choices. We don't have to fight. We can choose *peace*. Please, Miss Ordam."

This time, she swung bare-handed, but the slap still made the young Odanite's ear ring while his head snapped 'round. His cheek burned, then quickly ached bone-deep.

"I'm nothing like you," Ghafa replied lowly, her sanguine, lidless gaze shining bloody and black. "You're scum, worse than the slavers amongst you for how you stand idly by. But I'm going to make use of you. We shall see just how effective a blow the death of an apprentice is to a Master. Both between two of your kind, and," she turned back to pat at Ruka's skull, causing another groan, "between one of your kind and one of ours."

Miss Satsi, Cora realized, though the thought seemed very far away, echoing around with a vague worry for Turel, for Ruka, for himself and others. Distantly, Cora knew he was panicking, but he couldn't stop it. His breath came in rapid, shallow gasps.

Ghafa straightened, observing them — one half-conscious, the other spiraling — and smiled. She tilted her head and laughed. Some of her subordinates chuckled behind their masks with her. Then her demeanor changed completely, all the humor and ease she'd shown since she arrived vanishing to chill focus.

"Behave, Ya-ir family. I will treat you well until you leave my hold only so long as you earn it. If you cost me, I *will* make you pay. Am I understood clearly?"

Neither man gave a response. The general waited a moment longer, then spoke softly to her company and left. Most of the guard followed her, though four stayed outside the cell as a barrier hummed to life over it.

In the quiet that followed, Corazon began panting, shallow and rapid, his shoulders shaking minutely. The distressed sound roused Ruka slightly, who shook himself and inhaled the Dark Side so it would steady him. It pulsed around them, strong and shouting, fed richly on not only

their fear and anger and pain but by that of the Collective officers who tended them, hate feeding hate feeding hate.

"C...Cor," Ruka hissed, drawing in more of that power. It did for him what his own blood and nerves couldn't, dissipating the fog in his head. "Cor...Cor, answer me."

"We're gonna die here," the Pantoran hiccuped. "W-we're going t-to die and never finish our house o-or have children or become Jedi Masters or or see my mother or Angie or the boys again or anyone—"

"Cora, Cor, hey, no."

"W-why, why else would she tell us all that, R-r-ruka?"

"To freak us out! And it's kriffing working! We're not going to die, babe."

"You d-don't know that. M-master Turel says they don't, don't really tell you the plan, that's just in h-holos. If they tell you an-anything it's b-because they want the attention, to confirm their a-agenda, or because you might as well already be d-d-de—" his voice broke around a raspy sob.

"Shhhh, shhh, shh. Listen to me, me, love. Hey, ay, ay. Corazon. Breathe. Okay? I need you to breathe with me. Like this."

The Mirialan took a deep breath, opening his mouth to make it loud. Cora made the same noise, if more mucousy. Ruka did it again. Cora did it again. Again.

And again.

Deep breaths.

"Okay, okay, love. Ay, ay, listen. We can breathe, right?"

"Right..."

"Right. Now, c'mon, listen here, and keep breathing too. Deep breaths. Look at me, okay? Look at me." With the limited space allowed by their cramped positions and the stuncuffs and shock collars binding them, Ruka rotated his good foot just enough that, if he strained until his leg muscle screamed, he could brush his husband's boot with his own. It wasn't much. It wasn't what he wanted, holding the other man safe in his arms with their foreheads pressed together. But it was a tiny little something to hold on to. He exhaled carefully to hide the shake and made his voice confident. "We're going to get out of here. I promise you, on our vows and Ashla and Bogan and my grandma's best cooking spoon, okay, we're gonna be okay. I promise."

"O-okay," croaked the Pantoran, and Ruka could hear tears in his beautiful voice, the fear and pain from their hurts. "You're right. Okay. *Ashla*. Okay, okay. Be strong. Be strong like Master Sorenn and Ru... Don't be afraid... Breathe." Cora was definitely talking more to himself at that point, but Ruka nudged their feet together again anyway, since he couldn't squeeze the other's hand.

"Think about something else," the Mirialan suggested. "And then we can try to plan, yeah?"

"Yeah."

"Cora?" Ruka's tone went soft in a different way, surprised and reverent, and the Jedi looked at him. "You wanna have kids?"

Corazon had to blink a few times, dislodging tears and trying to remember anything of what he'd said in the last few minutes. He couldn't, but the question remained, so. "Well, yes. Don't you?"

The Mirialan chuckled and then moaned when it hurt his abused ribs. "Bogan, I can't believe this is where we're having this talk. Kriff."

"Ru," Cora chided, some of his normal tone back despite the weakness of his voice, and the Sith smiled.

"I mean, of course I thought about it! But I've already got Noga and Leda and that's more than enough to put on you." At the mention of his little brothers, Ruka clenched his fists, the pain of the burns there giving his sudden tears an excuse.

"'Put on' me? Pardon me, mister, but you said your vows too. I agreed and they're my family just as much as yours now. *We're* family, pardon *you*."

"Ay, I didn't mean it like that, but— but you're right, I'm sorry, babe. I just meant that we're still taking care of them, and there's the Lotus and stuff and, I dunno that we'd have time for kids? Like, ever? But Stars, yeah, would I want some with you!"

"Really?"

"Duh! I actually, uhh," he flushed, "had this dream once when we were dating that I never really shook, like, after you met my family and stuff. I dreamed of these two kids, boy and a girl, and I don't remember anything else about it really, just their faces, but they had like, your hair and eyes even though they were Mirialan. Kind of way too many colors honestly. But it's still the most beautiful thing." The man paused, then admitted softly, "I *know* it didn't actually happen, they're not real and we'd adopt anyway and all, but it's still my happiest memory. I think about it a lot."

Corazon sniffed, determined not to cry again but feeling his eyes water anyway. At least it was for something good this time.

"Angel, that's beautiful," he whispered. Habitually, he reached to cover his mouth, but the cuffs stopped him. "I'd love to see that."

"Yeah?"

"Please."

"I'll try."

Ruka wasn't the best at either meditation or telepathy, and had to practice long hours every day to maintain his concentration as a result under normal circumstances. The Arconan closed his eyes, exhaling and trying to focus just on the image in his head and not his nerves or injuries or the ship humming under them. It was hard.

But Cora's boot nudged his foot this time, so he tried.

Their minds touched again like they had hours or days or weeks ago. First a brush, a tentative commingling of consciousness, then more. Not one thread, but several. Not several, but a pattern. They wove together, pieces of their souls, colorful and bright, gleaming with light or glittering and dark. Laughter and sorrow and all in between came to them in balance and measure, because that was them. So different, but so complete when they were united as equals. Pull and push. Water and fire. Light and Dark. Cora and Ruka.

Balance.

"Perhaps," Corazon said dreamily, his tone soft, like speaking was a sin unto the careful communion of their meditation and had to step ever so lightly not to soil it, "we should call for help again."

"How?" Ruka asked just as hazily, though he already had a piece of the answer, an understanding, from their connection.

"In our way. The way."

"You're right. We should have in the first place. I should have listened to you. And to the Force. It tried to warn me. Cora, I'm sorry."

"Don't be. We were both foolhardy. We can only try this."

"We have to warn them."

"Yes. But who?"

"Turel. You're most connected, he's most likely to feel it. Remember Vorsal's lessons?"

"Yes. But what of Satsi?"

"Satsi can't hear us. Uji could, but...no. Turel."

They both exhaled, decided. With their minds as one, Ruka's fury bolstering Cora's patience, the Pantoran reached for the Force and sent out their call, into its nothing and everything, a desperate shout.

Help us, Master Sorenn, he thought, you're our only hope.

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Hundreds of kliks away, across the vast, chaotic space of the Kessel sector and all its hungry pits and maws and swathes of slowly consumed stars, Turel Sorenn stiffened in the middle of a firefight beside Satsi Tameike and said, "Oh, kark."