

*Malachor*  
37 ABY

“Nope. No. *No. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, NO -*”

She sprinted down the dark, dank corridor, the sounds of her boots ricocheting off the stone walls, as she attempted to exit the Malachor Sith Temple. The growls soon subsided behind her - what kind of beasts were they? Chemically altered behemoths? Banthas gone mad? - and she managed to prop herself up in a narrow tunnel, struggling to catch her breath. The kyber crystal that had once powered the Malachor superweapon was nowhere to be found - neither were any remaining Sith holocrons. Ronovi bit back a curse and allowed her head to loll back until it touched cold rock.

“Why do I always agree to go on these stupid scavenger hunts?” she mumbled to herself, running a grimy hand across her sweaty face.

She knew all too well the history of this temple - Darth Maul, Darth Vader, the rebels - and yet, somehow, Karn had figured there was something salvageable in here. But in the end, it had all come to naught. Instead of treasure, she had been surrounded by unspeakable horrors - perhaps left behind by the Dathomirian Zabraks and their brethren years back - and she was one hundred and ten percent done.

Of course, she hadn't gone alone. Khryso Mallus's voice crackled on the comm on her utility belt.

“You all right, Wrath?” he asked.

“Go jump off a cliff, Mallus,” Ronovi growled.

“Now, that's not very nice, Tavisæn.”

“I didn't ask for your opinion, Whuloc!”

Zuser's voice on the comm sounded slightly hurt. “C'mon, now. Haven't you found anything?”

“Just some goddamn alien creatures ready to eat my face off.” Ronovi sighed again. “Beasts. Why did it have to be beasts?”

She then stopped the conversation when she heard the rumbling. Adjusting the collar of her jacket, she remembered her saberstaff and crept back out of the small tunnel into the open atrium. Sparse light trickled in from the vaulted ceiling, and she felt like dancing with the shadows nearby. This was where the holocron was meant to be, and yet, there it was - a magical empty space where it used to rest. Ronovi groaned and pressed her palms together, as

if she were praying to be teleported out of this place and back to her quarters so she could drink herself stupid.

Right! She remembered the flask on her hip. Pulling it off its ring on her belt, she unscrewed the cap and swallowed a good portion of Whyren's Reserve. Her comm conveniently buzzed to life again.

"So when are you going to let me try that whiskey, Tavisæn?"

"Go back to treasure hunting, Zuloc!"

Silence - then, a chuckle from Khryso. "Zuloc? Is that a new one?"

"Yeah." Ronovi grinned. "Yeah, it's sticking."

"I don't mind being called Zuloc," said Zuser over the comm.

"Okay, now your name is Buttmunch. Why am I babysitting you two again?"

"You're babysitting Zuser, not me," Khryso argued. "Wait...hold on. I see you up ahead."

The Jedi Hunter and the Mystic both emerged from the darkness, and the three Dark Jedi convened once more. The Chiss, with the very dark blue, almost black hair, was holding what looked like a gem - not a kyber crystal, but still intriguing. Zuser, of course, was halfway into his hidden stash of coin-crabs, munching away.

"So...Mallus," Ronovi started. "Where'd you get that shiny?"

Khryso blinked. "From the forehead of some Sith statue. Why?"

"...Oh...oh, no."

"What?"

Zuser was sneering. "Most likely, you sprung a trap."

"...What kind of trap?"

There was already a rumbling beneath their feet, like an earthquake. Then the walls began to shift, and like a closing hand, they approached.

"Run!" bellowed Ronovi. "Abort mission! Flee! I never got to kiss my one true love!"

And with that, before the obsidian veered on them, the three bolted out of the temple.