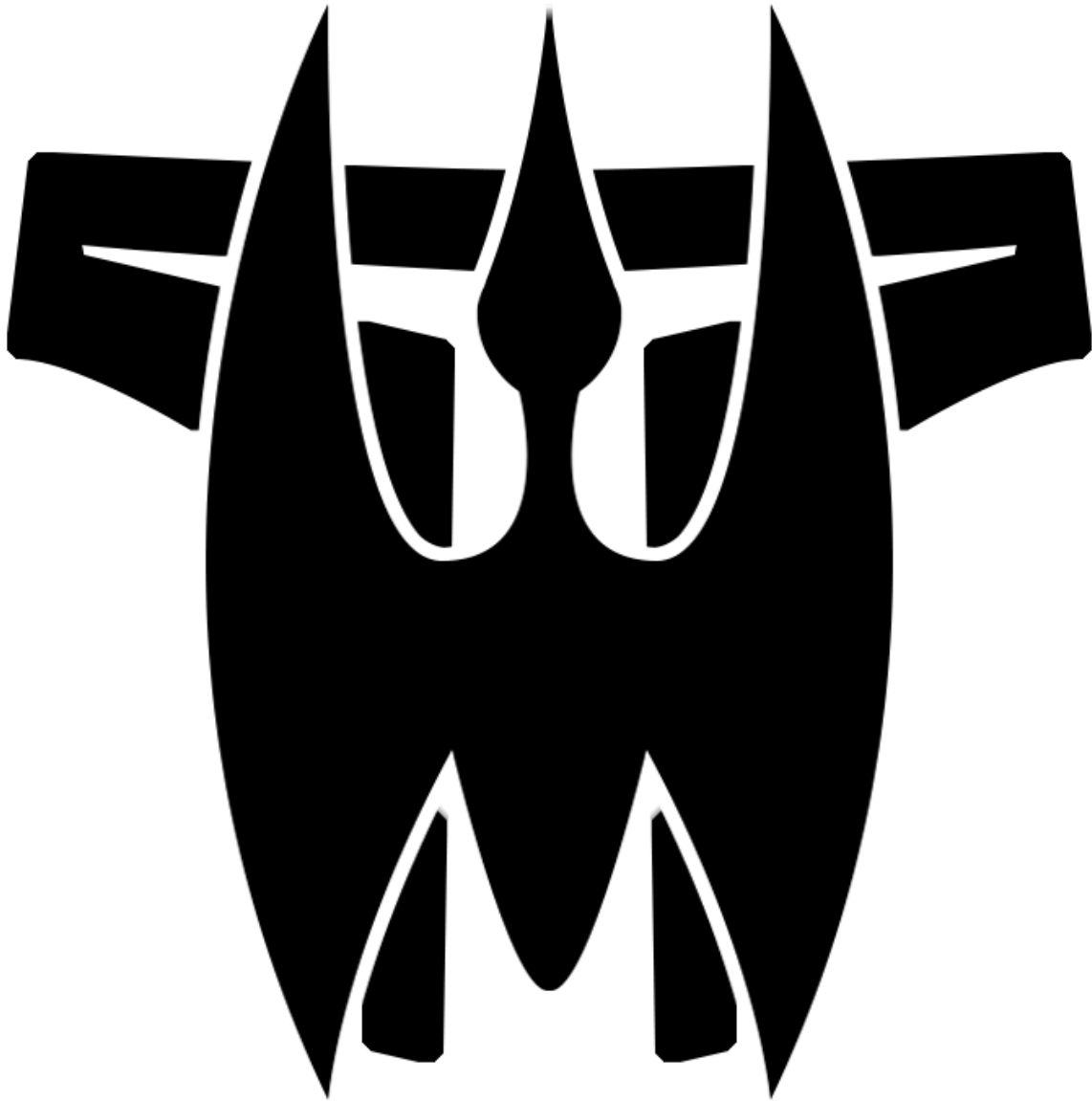


21 Lyra Street

A submission for:

[GJW XIII] Small Team Co-op Fiction



Written By

Idris Adenn (#3783) and Raiju Kang (#4024)

Clan Vizsla

Raiju Kang (4024)'s Snapshot:

<https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/members/4024/snapshots/1783/3337>

Idris Adenn (3783)' Snapshot:

<https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/members/3783/snapshots/1614/3502>

Link to GoogleDoc:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FRZkx3_NELps_RjeH0-EOHUCet8JORHX95eZt-vAJJc/edit?usp=sharing

Thillon Research Facility
Moon of Thillon
Lyra-3K-a system

The hijacked Principate shuttle moved with a gentle hum along the dark side of the moon. It had been surprisingly easy to steal, the Principate was too focused on the many attacks throughout the system to pay much attention to their unarmed shuttles. The transport was clearly designed for the frequent commutes of the Principate's scientists to and from the Research Facility. Simple, basic, built for frequent use and wear and tear.

In the cockpit, the two mercenaries of Clan Vizsla sat without talking. The Nautolan focused on the controls, wondering how he drew the short straw for this mission. The Mandalorian was reclining back, feet kicked up on the control panel head. Both of their heads were bobbing to the background music pumping into the main cabin of the shuttle.

For several brief moments during their flight, Raiju Kang wished he had the eyebrows needed to properly express his befuddlement at his partner in crime for this particular mission. Neither were good examples of having a serious attitude. Usually they were left paired off with someone who would compliment their personalities, not amplify them. It wasn't until they had safely landed inside the docking bay of the facility that the Jedi broke his silence.

"I wonder if this is just an attempt to get rid of us."

Idris arched an eyebrow at the Jedi.

"It's not something we can't handle. Get a crystal. Possibly kill some collective people. In, out, credits," Idris responded.

"Oh I definitely think we can handle it. I mean get rid of us so they don't have to deal with us while they do other things," Raiju said. Idris shrugged and slid on his helmet.

"Their loss."

The shuttle door opened and they entered the facility proper. Oddly, both had their pistols drawn and Idris recalled having earlier ribbed the Nautolan about his choice in pistol. Feeling urged to do so again, he let out a chuckle

"Would you put away that pee-shooter, it's worthless."

A sigh was all that the Nautolan let out in response as they continued into the installation. They were only a few steps into the main hallway when the lights went out. Emergency lighting activated and became the only illumination in the building. Immediately, the Jedi had holstered his pistol and ignited his lightsabers bringing some much needed light to the group.

“Thank the gods, get us out of here,” came a cracking voice from the darkness. Several scientists came running around the corner, bumping into each other as they came to an abrupt halt. They started to scream in realization that Idris and Raiju were not in fact Principate members here to get them out of the facility. Idris fired several shots from his WESTAR-35s over their heads to get them to stop. Raiju’s fingers tightened in grip around his lightsaber. He could *feel* that they weren’t the only ones in the facility looking for the crystal.

They didn’t have a lot of time. He shot Idris a quick glance, one his amphibious face had no issues with getting the point across. Idris nodded, understanding his meaning. The Mandalorian cleared his throat.

“Listen. We aren’t here to hurt you. There is some... explosive things happening across this system right now,” Idris began.

“You have a crystal. We need it. Now,” Raiju interjected spinning on the spot in an attempt to orient himself to where he was sensing the others in the building. Idris sighed and shrugged at the same time.

“Yes. Get us the crystal, and we can get you all safely out of here. I’m sure the ones who cut the power here are less likely to be so generous. So chop chop. Let’s get going” Idris continued.

“No one is going anywhere,” came a feminine voice from the darkness. With energy bows drawn, several *Shikari* huntresses emerged all around the group. One of the scientists wet themselves before all fell to the ground.

“I’m sure we can talk this through. There has to be a mutually beneficial solution here,” Raiju said.

“Doubt that,” said the same huntress as before.

“No I think he has a point. This could be a pretty fun experience. Hidden facility on a moon, bunch of terrified scientists watching. We won’t tell your bosses if you don’t tell ours,” Idris said.

“We are leaving with the crystal, you are leaving in body bags,” she responded.

“If that’s the case what is the rush? Why not get a little more comfortable first?” Raiju said. The huntresses stuttered as she processed what the two were implying.

“Are you two seriously hitting on us right now?” she finally managed to get out.

“Why not? It was worth a shot,” Idris said, finally squeezing the triggers on his blasters. One of the huntresses dropped dead.

The smell of burnt flesh quickly filled the Nautolan's nostrils, turning the creature's stomach and forcing him to snarl.

"Well there goes our chance for an orgy..."

Blaster fire rained from the dual pistols of the Mandalorian, forcing the remaining trio of Huntresses to fall away from the group and take shelter behind the bend in the hallway. When all had disappeared from view, Idris was quick to scoff at the Nautolan's words.

"What are you talking about; there's still three of them?"

"Right?! But it takes at least 6 for an orgy!" The look Raiju gave the man was clear; he thought Idris was an idiot.

"What on Arx are you talking about?"

"It's a matter of mathematics..." The Nautolan was quick to start before deactivating one of his lightsabers so he could make a visual representation of the numbers with his hands. "One; masterbastion. Two, a couple. Three, threesome. Four, 2 couples swinging. Five, 2 couples swinging with a lookie-loo. Six, orgy - and you just killed number six..."

A heavy sigh came from the Mandalorian before he took several moments to ponder what the Nautolan had said. A snap of his fingers drew their attention back to the debate and he pointed one of his pistols at the group of cowering scientists.

"Could always sub one of them in?" A smile was quick to grow on each of men's faces as they both nodded in approval, yet this exchange was spotted by the first scientist to stand.

"You will not rape us!" The man proclaimed, his anger clearly growing throughout the sentence.

"Please, he couldn't rape anyone." Idris dismissed with a wave before throwing a thumb at the Nautolan. "He's a Jedi."

"Former..." Raiju was quick to correct under his breath before he forced a cough to clear his throat. "We aren't going to rape you, this is all just playful banter we use to deal with the stress of the situation. And it's clear we are all in this situation together."

"We won't give you the crystal." The scientist was quick to dismiss that possibility as he moved his way through his group of people and coached them each to stand. When Idris initially moved to confront the man, likely physically, Raiju raised a hand to ask for a moment.

“Fine, don’t give it to us. What’s more important to our mission is that the Collective doesn’t get it. How about we get you all out of here, with the crystal, on our ride?” The words were hardly out of the Nautolan’s mouth before he felt the need for the group to move, so as soon as the scientist nodded his agreement the Nautolan already had his lightsabers activated again and used his orange blade to direct the group back into the installation.

“Alright then, you’re at the front of the group with me and leading me where we need to go. Idris, keep them moving forward!” Immediately one of the Mandalorian’s blasters discharged and the brute roared as he turned to engage a helmet that peeked around the hallway in the opposite direction of the huntresses.

“We have more than huntresses to worry about, getting your asses moving! Riflemen spotted!”

It was at that moment that Raiju grabbed the scientist by the shoulder and began pushing them both towards the access point to the interior hallway. Blaster bolts soared around them as the scientist was pushed forward towards a terminal while the Nautolan directed his colleague to cover.

“Open all the doors from here to the crystal!” Raiju snarled. “Once you are through the open door, use the terminal on the other side to seal this hatch. We’ll take care of the rest.”

As the Nautolan finished his command, the hatch opened to the group and immediately the team of scientists spilled through - leaving only Idris and Raiju to defend the group. Sensing their leader run over to the opposite terminal and begin working, Raiju started back towards the opening, using his lightsabers to deflect anything on their path to the scientist. Yet, the Mandalorian wasn’t abandoning his position.

“Idris!” Raiju called, gritted his teeth, knowing that the scientist would soon have the door closed. “Idris, get over here!”

Several more bolts rained from the man’s blaster until a deafening click of an empty ammo clip was heard, along with the thuds of several bodies, and it was that moment that the Mandalorian finally turned and began sprinting towards the Nautolan. A look of shock must have been on the Nautolan’s face as the two collided, and immediately the creature felt the wind knocked out of him as the Mandalorian’s momentum threw the pair straight back through the hatch just before it had closed.

In the immediate aftermath, several quick beeps broke the silence and indicated that the hatch had been sealed. And right away, still holding the Nautolan on the ground, Idris was quick to chim in.

“You owe me half your take, I saved you.”

“Half?!” the Jedi exclaimed incredulously. The emergency lighting reflected off the sheen of Idris’ helmet as he nodded enthusiastically. Raiju briefly got distracted wondering how the Mandalorian managed to get this armor so shiny it reflected even the weak emergency only lighting right into Raiju’s eyes.

A bit annoyed at being unable to blink away from the light, Raiju continued, “And you didn’t even buy me dinner before throwing me to the ground. Call me an old fashioned squid-head but I like to be wooed.”

The scientists shuffled awkwardly in place, torn between the terror of their near death experience, and fascination at the banter the two mercenaries were providing amid the violence. They had never experienced anything remotely like the pair of them before. If they survived this day, they would have an incredibly story to tell their colleagues in the Principate.

It was a loud slamming noise against the now sealed hatch that shook everyone out of the moment. Without another word Idris pushed himself to his feet. He offered a hand down to Raiju and pulled him up as well. Seeing an opening the lead scientist interjected.

“Are you two for real? How have you lived this long?”

Both Idris and Raiju shrugged simultaneously.

“At least we are having fun, that guy is running around in piss-soaked pants,” Idris said, pointing at one of the scientists.

“We nearly died!” another one of the scientist said.

“Yes, and that would have been very unfortunate for you,” Raiju said.

Another loud slamming noise came from the hatch, followed by what sounded like energy bolt disappation on the other side.

“Right. So crystal. Lead the way oh-science-ones,” Raiju said waving his hand in the direction of the scientists.

Another loud slamming noise came from the hatch, followed by an unpleasant scraping noise.

“That isn’t going to hold them for long. Maybe they are rethinking that orgy. You take point, I’ll handle the rear,” Idris said to Raiju while examining the hatchway.

“*Yeah I bet you handle the rear,*” Raiju said just loud enough for Idris to hear. The Mandalorian snickered and changed out the clips in his blasters.

The emergency lighting flickered as the scientists directed them toward the crystal, the bulk of the illumination in the walkway came from the glow of Raiju's lightsabers. Their directions came in the form of quick motions with their arms, words failing them as they clung to the mercenaries protection.

They found themselves at a massive sealed door.

"I thought I said to open all the doors," Raiju hissed at the lead scientist. The man meekly stepped up to a panel next to the wall. He placed his hand on the panel, and leaned in close to the wall for a retinal scan.

"Dr. Salavzinco de Dellaphinto. ID Scan Confirmed," the automated computer response chimed out as the door slid open.

"That is quite a mouthful," Idris said, looking back over his shoulder before pushing the nearest scientist forward into the room.

The room they entered was not at all what the pair of mercenaries had expected. For starters, it was full lit, with its own internal dedicated power system. But what took the duo by surprise was the vastness of the room. Cables, wires, terminal stations, littered the room like a complex labyrinth. In the center, suspended in the air, was the crystal.

The group approached it quickly.

"This will take some time to get it out, we have very complex security measures in place to prevent it from being removed," Dr. de Dellaphinto said. Idris rolled his eyes, while Raiju gave the Nautolan equivalent to the scientist. Simultaneously, Idris began blasting at components housing the crystal, while Raiju made several quick slashes with his lightsabers. The power and containment system died nearly instantly. One of the other scientists dove to the ground, catching the crystal as it fell.

"...Well if anything, the pair of you are efficient at destruction." Salavzinco let out as he rubbed his face in annoyance.

"Make sure to tell your superiors after this is all over." Idris plugged before pulling the fallen scientist to their feet. "Clan Vizsla is open to contracts."

"So you *do* intend to get us out of here with you...?"

"So long as you have another way out for us, Sally." Raiju was quick to cut in and pointed over his shoulder, drawing everyone's attention back to the hallway they had come from. "I'm not a fan of escort missions, and we don't know how many troopers those *cuntresses* brought with them. So we need to find the quickest way out of this hellhole."

“Well, if you two hadn’t destroyed the containment systems; we could’ve ejected the installation core from here and waited for pick up from the Principate.”

“That would’ve made us sitting ducks for the Collective.” Raiju was quick to dismiss with a scoff but when he turned to Idris, the pair seemed to have a shared idea that was acknowledged by their nods. “But it still could be useful...”

“No, I’m telling you we can’t launch it from in here-”

“But it can be launched from elsewhere in the station?” Idris cut in.

“Well, yes, from the observation room there.” Salavzinco pointed at several window panellings that were sunk into the floor of the chamber, with a sole door leading to the room on the other side. Yet, the scientist still didn’t seem to understand why the pair were asking. “It’s a security measure in case the crystal ever became unstable, this chamber could be ejected from the installation.”

“Then let’s get you guys in that observation room and we will handle the rest.” Idris snapped with quick nod to the Jedi, but their fist bump was interrupted as Salavzinco pushed himself in between them.

“No! You don’t understand!” The scientist’s words were met with a pair of eyerolls. “When the chamber jetsons, the rest of the installation is left open to vacuum to avoid any spread of the contamination...unless you both are in there with us-”

“Oh this is going to be fun to watch.” It was Raiju’s turn to interject as he pushed the scientist aside and raised his hand for a high five from the other mercenary. “Not as fun as an orgy, but still...”

“Easiest credits I’ve ever made, makes up for it.” Idris nodded in approval, but everything went silent following piercing screech of twisting metal that sounded from the open hallway. “And that right there is our call to action, folks. Everyone into the observation room!”

“We can’t, you, you, you - morons!” Salavzinco struggled with articulating his next statement. “You, you - cut power! Door is, is, is not working.”

“Pull yourself together, Sally!” Raiju roared with a swift backhand to the man’s chin. “You and your friends know this station better than anyone else - use your heads and fix the problem! We will have you covered.”

Rubbing his face to dull the pain, Salavzinco stumbled away from the pair and joined his comrades who were already working on a plan to restore power to the door. As the group

worked away with their own internal squawking, Raiju stepped into the open door to the hallway and felt his body fall into a defensive stance with his lightsabers ignited. And it was in that moment the first of the Huntresses' troops rounded leapt through the opening they had made through the sealed door and began firing at the Nautolan.

"Only one way in and one way out, right?" Raiju cried over his shoulder before gritting his teeth and focusing on deflecting the blaster bolts headed his way.

It took Idris a few moments to confirm as the Mandalorian scanned the room behind them. Once the man was done, he took up a defensive position behind a terminal that had open view of the hallway and the dancing Nautolan. Immediately the Mandalorian began opening fire, but he found himself interrupting his assault everytime the Jedi moved an unpredictable way.

"Would you use a blaster, for sith's sake!" Idris roared in frustration at the Jedi. "I'm going to shoot you if you don't!"

For several more moments, the Jedi danced in the hallway as he twisted between bolt after bolt to deflect back at the advancing troopers. Finally, Idris had had enough of missing out on all the fun, and one of his blaster bolts found their way in between the Jedi's feet. Instantaneously, the Nautolan darted back from the opening, threw himself against the door frame, tucked his lightsabers, and drew his WLD-5 Peacekeeper blaster - resisting an urge to point it at the bucket-headed Mandalorian. Now facing back into the chamber, the Nautolan could see that Salavzinco was trying to grab the mercenaries attention but his soft voice couldn't be heard over the heavy exchange of fire.

Raiju moved quickly through the chamber towards the scientist but cursed everytime a blaster bolt passed over top of him. Everytime it happened, the Nautolan fondly wished he had his lightsabers out. Reaching the scientist, Raiju still had a hard time hearing the man but noticed that his fellow scientists were all now huddled together in the observation room.

"Fall back!" Raiju roared towards the Mandalorian's back, before he pushed Salavzinco by the face into the observation room. "We all good to go?"

"Yes, power won't last long tho-"

"Idris!" Raiju again roared, sticking his head out the observation room. When the Mandalorian failed to move again, the Nautolan unclipped an impact grenade from his belt, slammed the activation button with his thumb, and hurled it towards the hallway. Immediately upon impact with the hallway floor, the weapon detonated and ignited with a small burst in the midst of the advancing line of combatants. With the brief pause this caused in the enemy ranks, Idris turned towards the Nautolan and charged.

At the first sign of renewed fire from the enemy, Raiju raised his WLD-5 and began providing what covering fire he could but his weapon was made for small, powerful bursts rather than the rapid fire of the Mandalorian's WESTAR-35s. And soon the enemy's fire rained on the pair and Idris abandoned his withdraw; tucking into a small paneling two metres from the observation room's door.

"I told you that blaster was worthless!"

"Shut up and get in the door!" Raiju felt his eye brow roll. Yet, the Mandalorian still refused to move, and behind the Nautolan he heard one of the scientists pounding on the glass of the window panelling as they warned they would be soon out of power. Knowing Idris wasn't going to give up a good fight against the odds, Raiju knew he was going to have to intervene.

Focusing on the torso of the man, Raiju imagined himself squeezing the Mandalorian and hauling him back to the doorway. Yet, still metres away, something else picked the man up - slowly at first. Sweat started beading down the Nautolan's brow, and quickly turned into a river as the Mandalorian's toes clearly lifted from the ground and he soared across the flooring towards the Nautolan standing in the doorway. To Idris' credit, the man didn't even seem to notice and continued firing on the enemy until he collided with the Nautolan, who immediately grabbed the Mandalorian and fell backwards into the observation room - pulling them both inside at once before the door flew shut.

Even after the pair had settled on the flooring, the ground shook as something outside the room rumbled into action. As the rumble eventually died down, a whistling sound emerged but suddenly ended with a pop - prompting Idris to attempt to scramble to his feet but the Nautolan held the man firmly to the ground.

"Now I saved you, so we're even again." Raiju spat. After a brief pause for ponder by the Mandalorian, that ended with a nod of acceptance, the pair immediately stood in time for them to both catch a glimpse of one the Huntresses soaring through the hallway before being sucked out of where the chamber had once been and into the void of space they could now see below.

"Aw man..." Raiju started after the last of the bodies past their view. "I was hoping one of them would explode with the pressure of space."

"I know, right?" Idris said with a child-like wonder as he continued to watch for any more bodies.

"That's, that's, that's..." Salavzinco struggled to deal with what he has just heard. "That's a complete myth, you morons! Are all of your clan members this dumb?!"

"Well, you can find out when you meet them." Raiju said with a shrug, backing up from the window paneling. "Let's get out of this room and back to the ship so you can find out."

“What are you talking about?” Salavzinco continued to look at the Nautolan with disdain.

“What do you mean? Now that the installation is cleared, use your terminal to seal everything up again and let’s get out of this room.” Raiju said, sharing another shrug with Idris who looked confused as well

“I already told you!” Salavzinco was now screaming. “Once the core ejects, the whole station is vacuumed out to prevent containment. It requires a new core, we now have to wait for the Principate to come!”

“Ah shit...” Raiju started turning to Idris. “We missed that part.”

“I’d rather we comm for backup, who knows how long the Principate will be.” Idris said, slapping a hand over Salavzinco’s mouth to stop further commentary.

“Agreed.” Raiju said before his face began to pale. “But Declan’s gonna be pissed...”

A similar paleness swept over Idris’ face, but before the Mandalorian could bumble out an excuse for why he couldn’t be the one to call; Raiju lifted a chance cube from his pocket and presented it.

“Roll for it?”