



BUSINESS WITH HONEST MEN

A Star Wars Story

By

Grand Master Declan Roark and Reaver Kalan Amak

The Widowmaker's Cockpit

Hyperspace

Near Lyra 3k-a System

The blue hue of hyperspace travel illuminated the cockpit of the *Widowmaker*. While she was old, the Lambda Class shuttle was well maintained and the only sound she made was the slight hum of the engines as the vessel hurtled through the void of space. The shuttle's two occupants were staring at a screen in front of them, displaying a list of names and details of a mission.

"An extraction?" Kalan Amak said to the man on his right. "You'd think we'd be going after something with a bit more—flair."

The co-pilot chair swiveled and Declan Roark, Consul of Clan Vizsla leaned forward and gestured to the names and images on the screen.

"It's not just any extraction, Mr. Amak. These are high-level Principate leaders that are seeking asylum on Arx. This is the highest paying contract we have ever received."

Credits were all that mattered to the Mandalorians and mercenaries of Clan Vizsla. An upstart new addition to the Brotherhood, Clan Vizsla was already making a name for itself in the conflict between the Collective and the Severian Principate of the Lyra-3k-a system.

"Still, boss. It seems like a waste to send the two of us on some-kind-of-fetch quest. Will we be serving drinks to these stuffed-shirts while we serve as a taxi service?"

"Oh. There's more to the deal than moving some rich people to Arx. There's an encrypted message associated with this contract. It comes from the Dark Council itself."

Declan flipped a switch below the screen, and a hologram sputtered into life between the two Mandalorians. A hooded figure, with its voice digitally modified to keep the sender's identity secret, spoke to cockpit.

"The Grand Master wishes you to acquire an artifact carried by the asylum seekers. It is with an artifact of great power and importance. A crystal. You will acquire this crystal by any means necessary. Do this, and you shall be well rewarded for your efforts. Fail, and face the wrath of the Brotherhood."

Declan played the message over again two more times.

"So, we're after a crystal." Kalan said after the hologram fizzled and vanished. "Seems simple."

"Nothing is simple where the Grand Master is concerned," Declan grumbled. "But I think we are staring at a solid payday. We get the asylum seekers to safety, we take the crystal from them, and we get paid twice over." Kalan was certain he could see credit symbols reflected in Declan's eyes.

"Bring us out of hyperspace. Set course for the moon of Thillon. Let's go pick up our passengers."

Moon of Thillon
Lyra 3k-a System
Three Hours Later

"Welcome aboard! Watch your step sirs and madams." Kalan hated pretending to like these rich, high-society types. He helped move the Principate team up the *Widowmaker's* ramp, and then started slinging bags and boxes into the cargo hold. He looked over at Declan, who was in conversation with the apparent leader of the asylum seekers. The man was carrying what looked like a solid black box and was constantly shaking his head in a negative manner. Clearly, he wasn't willing to turn over the box. At last, Declan clapped him on the shoulder and gestured to the shuttle ramp. The man gave a curt nod and moved up the ramp.

Kalan loaded the last of the baggage into the hold and moved over to Declan.

"So. That the crystal he was carrying?"

"I believe so. He is very unwilling to part with that case. We'll have to figure out a way to get it away from him. How long until we can depart?"

Kalan looked at his datapad. "Shuttle should be fueled and ready in the next five minutes. After that we can depart—"Kalan was cut off by the sound of an alarm Klaxon emanating from the landing pad.

Without warning, blaster fire erupted from all sides. Collective forces swarmed the docking bay in a full assault on the shuttle. The Collective wanted the artifact just as much as the Brotherhood did.

" GET INTO THE SHUTTLE AND LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!" Roark shouted over the explosions and blaster fire.

Kalan moved from cover to cover, firing shots at Collective troopers from his Westar pistol. The Collective was well trained, but they were no match for the precision accuracy of two Mandalorian mercenaries.

Kalan took up a position and motioned for Declan to make a break for the shuttle. Kalan placed two well aimed shots at a tibanna gas tank, causing a massive explosion that disoriented the attacking Collective forces.

Roark ran up the ramp, and Kalan followed. As he turned and punched the button to raise the shuttle ramp, a blaster bolt ripped through his left shoulder. Turning, he responded in kind and put a bolt in chest of the trooper that fired at him. The man fell dead just as the ramp closed with a hiss.

Kalan moved to the cockpit and began firing up the engines. Roark was already punching coordinates into the Nav computer.

"This crystal better be worth it," Kalan said as the engines blasted to life. Kalan punched the ignition and the shuttle rose into the air. He punched the throttle to maximum power and hurtled away from the docking platforms and towards the upper atmosphere.

"Where to now, boss?" Kalan asked.

The Widowmaker's Cockpit
Hyperspace
Near Hutt Space
Six Hours Later

The lead Principate agent was polished and well-manicured. He was a Temnos Excavations executive who had overseen several archaeological digs on the Moon of Thillon. The man was calm despite negotiating his safe passage and the future of those on the shuttle.

"I need to know if any of the passengers are carrying weapons. No blasters, no vibro-shivs, no nothing."

"We have obeyed your previous instructions despite our tumultuous situation," the executive said over the hum of the *Widowmaker's* hyperdrive. "We even made the diversion call to the Shikari Huntresses as requested."

"Good, our interests run a similar path here. You need to make a new life outside of the wars to come and I need what is in your case."

"Yes, although I would prefer to hold on to *the artifact* until we have reached our destination," the man said while his hand patted the case reassuringly.

"I have your word; the case is ours when we land?"

"Yes, of course Mr. Roark," the executive said without a trace of deception.

"Shake on it?"

The executive's hand reached enthusiastically forward, his body leaning towards the Mandalorian. Roark's own hand slipped past the executive's open palm and grasped his wrist. The man startled as he was yanked forward, Roark's other hand bringing the muzzle of his blaster directly into the man's abdomen. Two muffled blaster shots burned through the executive's custom-tailored suit and ended his life instantaneously.

Roark picked the black case off the floor and glanced at his fellow Mandalorian.

"Boss," Kalan asked inquisitively as the Vizsla Consul set the case in the co-pilot's chair and strapped it down.

"Change of plans."

"No one ever said you were an easy man to do business with," Kalan offered matter-of-factly.

"Maintain course, I'll take care of the rest."

The Widowmaker's Hold

Hyperspace

Near Hutt Space

Six Hours Later

Six men, three women, and two children. They were a mix of Severian Principate high society who had sensed a conflict was coming. The men and the women wore an unusually large amount of jewelry and several maintained a firm hand on pouches that undoubtedly housed their hard currency. They fled whatever life they had, with whatever goods they had, as fast as they could.

"Where is Director Jonaz," a balding man in a Lyra-Sec jacket asked.

"Dead."

"Dead, what do you mean dead. How?"

"I shot him."

An audible gasp escaped the mouth of the former Lyra-Sec officer. Shock and horror washed over the faces of the remaining passengers as they realized their bargaining chip for safe passage was no longer in play.

They were scared. Roark did not need to brandish his weapon or say anything. It did not take much to scare captives on the run.

"Everybody to the exit ramp."

No one moved.

"Look, I can shoot one or five of you, but either way, you need to move to the ramp."

The click-click of safety harnesses signaled the first Principate passengers to begin moving. One after another the entire group began to get up from their seats. None of them had weapons, just as the executive had said.

"You can leave your belongings on the chairs."

A child, no older than seven, looked at Roark. She was confused and showed signs of being intimidated by the Mandalorian.

"Hurry up. To the ramp. This won't take long."

Six men, three women, and two children shuffled into the cramped confines of the *Widowmaker's* exit ramp.

"Mr. Amak, electromagnetic shielding between the interior passenger compartment and the stern exit."

A blue shimmer appeared between Roark and the members of the Severian Principate.

"My god, no." a woman whispered.

"Mr. Amak, please drop the cargo ramp."

The *Widowmaker* shook violently as its aerodynamics shifted in hyperspace. The eleven members of the Principate vanished as the exit ramp released them into the vacuum of space. Roark was unable to register their release as the blur of hyperspace caused his T-Visor to protectively dim his viewfield.

"You can raise the ramp Kalan," Roark said as he turned without a second glance at the place where the members of the Principate had just stood.

Eos City

Arx

Arx System

Declan Roark and Kalan Amak walked down a long hallway within the central skyscraper in Eos City. A black case, connected from its handle to Roark's wrist, hung between the two men as they casually discussed the financial standing of Antei Armaments. It had been a long time since either man had been on Arx, but neither had particularly missed the Brotherhood's throne world.

"Halt," a team of four Iron Legion Special Forces soldiers had slid from their hidden guard posts while the two men were talking and blocked the Mandalorians' progress.

"Easy boys," Roark said as the non-case carrying hand flashed an access badge.

"That can't be accurate," a stunned Iron Legion soldier muttered as he looked at the badge.

"They don't make mistakes with these," Roark said coolly.

In unison, the guards cleared a path, their boot heels clicking at attention.

"What was that about," Kalan asked.

"Another life, drop it."

Amak, let the discussion drop as the hallway's lone door slid open upon their approach. The two Mandalorians stepped into a modern apartment, Eos's red skyline visible through floor-to-ceiling windows. The Justicar stood with his back to the men, ignoring their presence, while he conversed with the Regent of the Brotherhood.

"We have your case."

"Excellent," a cool voice called out from the other side of the room. The unseen speaker stepped from the shadows and into the red light of Eos's sky.