

COMING HOME

A **Star Wars** Story
by
Nihlus Vexrii (#9056) of **Clan Taldryan**

Following the events of Great Jedi War XIII: Discord...
Somewhere In the outer reaches of the Lyra-3k-a System...

With a hydrospanner in one hand, the Umbaran loosened screws and removed of pieces from the old droid on the bench in front of him. Sitting beside him on a small stand was his datapad, with a small datadisk that read **NIHLUS' HANDY-DANDY SITH DESIGN DATABASE** on a piece of tape plugged into the external port. Displayed across the pad's screen was a freakish-concoction of an astromech droid, featuring design cues from the BT-1 Assassin Droid model. Picked up on some junkyard planet during his recent travels, the former Ektrosis Quaestor intended for the R2-series unit on the table to serve alongside him as a new companion under his will once personal modifications were completed.

Vexrii continued to remove components, a KX-series Security Droid that Nihlus had dubbed "Arbiter-KX" entered through the door of the Sith sculptor's makeshift shop. Without turning to look at the arrival, the sentient continued his work on the R2-series in front of him.

"Master Nihlus," stated the droid, awaiting acknowledgement - or permission, as Arbiter-KX saw it - from his master before continuing. A small nod came from the head armored head facing away from him, and he continued, "There is a coded transmission waiting for you upstairs. It is from a sender you have not listed in my databanks."

Stopping for a moment, Nihlus turned his helmeted head to the left a few inches. Very few people outside the Taldryan Summit or Inquisitorius had a way of contacting him, and this had piqued his interest.

Though Nihlus did not speak, Arbiter-KX knew he wished for the droid to tell him who the sender was. "It is listed from a Seraine "Erinyes" Ténama."

"Are you certain?" the armored Umbaran queried in the robotic and monotone voice produced by his mask's vocoder as he set down the hydrospanner and component in his hands.

"Yes, master," came the similarly robotic reply from the KX-series droid.

Nihlus stepped forward, passing by the Arbiter-KX and moving for the ship's miniature turbolift to ascend to the bridge. As he stepped aboard the small cylindrical platform it began to rise into the upper reaches of the ship, leaving the KX unit standing in the doorway to the small workspace.

"Alright then, I guess I'll go do something else," the droid snarkily muttered.

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"Verification code?" asked the holo-table on the bridge as Nihlus stepped towards it.

"Verification code Victor-Zullu-Five-Niner-X-Ray," muttered the Force Disciple. A moment later the holo-table beeped, and the shrouded visage of a woman's features filled the red projector in front of him.

"Nihlus Vexrii," an unfamiliar female voice that moved with the projection stated matter-of-factly, "We require your services back in the Caelus System." The cyborg-Umbaran just stared coldly into the holo-projection from behind the onyx viewplate of his helmet.

"Seraine Ténama, I presume. It has been a long time since you graced Taldryan with your presence," the former Sith's robotic voice replied, taking a moment for a mechanical breath, "What services are you referring to, and why would you think you can ask this of me?"

"Because *I am your Proconsul*," came a stern reply. Nihlus remained silent for a moment, crossing his arms as if in expectancy of more information. Vodo had failed to alert his apprentice both Ténama's return *and* ascension to the Clan Summit. Maybe the old Twi'lek was finally dead - it had been some time since he had heard anything from him.

"We have captured sensitive technology from the Severian Principate, and require your... *special* engineering knowledge to examine and re-engineer an item of interest," the Sith lured him in.

"As you wish, Proconsul," declared Nihlus, cutting the transmission without another word and making his way to the pilot's seat in the forefront of the small circular bridge. After plotting a course to the Ektrosian and Sphere of Research and Intelligence homeworld of Iosan, he returned to the R2 astromech below.

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Corridor T-12, Restricted Hangar Level
SRI Headquarters
Iosan, Caelus System

Nihlus had landed back at the headquarters of his home within Taldryan with little fanfare, having been granted access to land by the planets defense forces near instantaneously. To his surprise, Seraine had met the Equite in the main landing bay and escorted him personally through the retrofitted factory, underscoring to Vexrii the importance of whatever was being asked of him.

On their journey the two had little discussion, but both were aware they were being studied by the other. As the two figures approached a large blast door several meters in width and height, Seraine turned her head towards the armored man at her side.

"This stays between us," she voiced, waving her hand at the keypad on the wall. The red light above it flickered for a moment, before changing to green. The blast door slowly creaked for a moment, before sliding open to reveal a medium-sized hangar bay with no lighting save for the ray shield protecting it from the smoggy environment outside. Inside the bay, Nihlus could make out the silhouette of a TIE-shaped starfighter.

As the two stepped forward, the hangar's interior lighting activated and revealed its contents. Inside were several workbenches littered with technology and tools, from lathes to saws to a large robotic welder. In the center of it all lay the real prize, a damaged - but mostly intact - Severian Phalanx Interceptor.

"Go nuts," the Adept said.

If he could smile - lack of a lower jaw preventing so - Nihlus would have. Raising both hands towards the tools at his disposal and mustering his abilities with telekinesis, the engineer stepped forward towards the fighter and began tearing it apart.