**To The… Rescue?**

D’hak was gently massaging the scaly neck of his pet tauntaun, Tupik, when suddenly his Inquisitorius scanner began beeping out the following notes: EACHAEDB. Recognising that ‘an owl had brought him a most important letter’, D’hak quickly flipped open the scanner to see a recording from the Grand Master, Telaris Cantor. “We are being invaded!” D’hak exclaimed as the illusionary sound of trumpets echoed in the background. “I must get to the Shadow Academy immediately!”

With a mighty leap, D’hak vaulted on to his saddle and raised one of his lightsabers into the air, igniting the violet blade in a grand sweeping gesture. “Away, my noble steed! We must ride… to VICTORY!”

Tupik the tauntaun quietly munched on some grass, completely oblivious to the situation.

D’hak stared down at his mount and sighed before putting away his lightsaber. “You are *really* killing this mood.” He slid down and circled to the front of the beast, who raised its head with a nuzzle. D’hak snatched its head and cradled its face in his hands, locking eyes with his faithful mount. “I have a long way to go, and I really need you to start galloping now.” The tauntaun bleated out a protest. “Dammit I don’t speak sea otter!” D’hak snapped.

He glanced over his shoulder, to the west, where the Shadow Academy was. In the distance, he could see a small hovering orb – no doubt, this was the *Nesolat* platform’s core that the message had warned him about. His eyes fell upon the Shadow Academy itself, away in the distance, with the sun setting behind it.

“There is only one way that I can make that distance without you,” D’hak sighed as he slid one arm comfortingly around his tauntaun’s neck. The sounds of seagulls squawking in the background blended perfectly with the salty sea air from the island of Uskil. “I must go west, to where the air is free… I need…” he said, with a grand sweeping motion of his other arm, “…a montage!”

The security forces guarding the entrance to the Shadow Academy stormed inside and began taking defensive positions, joined by a variety of Dark Jedi, loyalists and mercenaries under the employ of the Dark Brotherhood. All except for Roger, who had elected to stay behind with a small team of men just in case an assault came from outside. It had been a wonderfully pleasant day in Uskil, aside from the massive space invasion. There was even a random person riding a tauntaun earlier, though why someone would bring a tauntaun to Arx was a complete mystery.

Now, however, that person was coming towards them, taking nearly four minutes to cross the 50-meter distance between them. The jogger frequently stopped to stretch, pant, hydrate and shower himself from a water bottle; and he regularly alternated between tired jogging, high intensity sprinting and bopping up and down to a song only he could hear. The rest of his security team gave Roger a confused look, and he quietly indicated to set their blasters for stun.

Suddenly, one of the guards burst into song, alternating with D’hak. “Life is peaceful there!”

“Go West!”

“In the open air!” Two more of the guards had joined in.

“Go West!”

“Baby, you and me!” Other guards began shaking their hips.

“Go West!”

“This is our destiny!” Roger looked around in surprise and alarm, before raising his rifle.

“HALT!” By now, all the guards had snapped out of whatever had affected them and following Roger’s lead, they quickly shoved their rifles in D’hak’s direction, with only one of them still swaying slightly underneath his embarrassment and confusion.

“But I still have another minute,” D’hak lamented. “Fine, we were nearly done anyway…”

“Who are you and what are you doing to my soldiers?!” Roger demanded.

“I’m your reinforcements!” Several of the soldiers, Roger included, gave each other confused and dubious glances. “I have been sent here on a very important mission to reinforce the Shadow Aca-”

“OPEN FIRE!”

The sludgy, slimy and enjoyably warm sensation of a tauntaun’s tongue scraping against his cheeks woke D’hak. Opening his eyes, the former Krath let out a shout of surprise, before clambering to his feet. “How did *you* get here so fast?” D’hak demanded of his noble and mighty steed who continually let him down. Surveying the immediate area, D’hak noticed that this entrance of the Shadow Academy was no longer guarded, and that the sun had well and truly set by now.

“Never mind. How long have I been unconscious?” he asked of no one in particular. “I could have been here a lot sooner if it wasn’t for you,” he chastised his tauntaun, who was busy trying to nuzzle him. “You’re lucky the nights here aren’t cold.” D’hak turned his back on Tupik with a dramatic flair. D’hak imagined that he had just devastated the sensitive feelings of his mount, who returned to uncaringly eating grass, and cautiously climbed the steps leading to the Shadow Academy.

 The corridors of the Shadow Academy were dark and shadowed and, in some places, they were littered with bodies. Clearly a great battle had taken place while he had been stunned into unconsciousness. Fondling one of his blasters a little too friendly-like, D’hak carefully stalked his way through the corridors until he found a working security terminal. Alarms had been sounded, and a flashing red icon let him know that the intruders had gathered in one area near the elevators to the Dark Ascent access tunnels. While D’hak knew better than to trust strange flashing symbols, he considered the flashing to be relatively harmless and concluded that the terminal knew what it was visually displaying about.

The mission was complex, and the objective difficult: The Collective had decided to rid the galaxy of the Dark Brotherhood, wiping out all traces of the powerful Force-users from the galaxy. Destroying them would be challenging, and removing the threat they posed, almost impossible; the oppressed would always rise to challenge those in power, no matter who the players were. Evant Taelyan was no stranger to such situations, where the impossible would need to be achieved. The war between the Collective and the Dark Brotherhood was intense, and sooner or later, one side or the other would have to fold.

Backed by an impressive force of Collective soldiers and the newly perfected Hive Mind Marines, Evant watched as the freight elevator indicator lights slowly ticked down. He had come for one purpose and one purpose only, and in order to achieve what he needed, he would need to storm and seize the access tunnels between the Shadow Academy and the Dark Ascent, that towering bastion of power and dominance that ruled over the planet Arx. A symbol of exactly what the Collective hoped to challenge, Evant knew that everything in this war, everything in each of these battles, would be decided by the events that would transpire once he had seized that spiring mountain that was draped in the blood of the innocent.

*Too many innocents had fallen today.*

The freight elevator came to a halt with a quiet ding, and the doors to the elevator slid open to reveal a final hint of resistance: a dark-skinned man clad in Chief Inquisitor armor.

“Ground floor. Gifts and cosmetics.” A slightly puzzled Evant watched as the defiant individual seized on the moment of weakness, raising a pair of blasters and quickly headshotting four of Evant’s soldiers. Two others copped shots to the chest as the individual turned and dived out of harm’s way, while the rest of the Marines began to respond. Marching out in unison, they swept the surrounding area, but to no avail; clearly, the coward had retreated from view.

Stuck in between the freight elevator and the outer edges of the cargo room, D’hak wondered how he had managed to fit in the tiny gap so easily. He watched helplessly as the Hive Mind Marines started poking around, until they were called to attention by the Deputy Grand Master, whom they followed absolutely. Evant led them towards the tunnels while D’hak struggled to free himself. His objective was difficult, but D’hak knew that if he did not achieve the impossible, the Brotherhood would fold.

D’hak squeezed out of the gap he had taken refuge in and assessed his situation. His plans to ambush the invading force had failed, but more importantly, he knew the size of the force that remained. A security point had been set up connecting the Shadow Academy side of the access tunnels to the Dark Ascent, a bridge of sorts that would serve as a natural chokepoint. This represented his best chance to intercept the advancing forces. With the aid of the Force, D’hak was able to scale up to a ventilation system and quickly made his way forward, his hopes foolishly dwelling on the future.

 And there he was. Standing in the middle of the access bridge that connected the two sections of tunnel, D’hak stood his ground, a lightsaber and blaster at the ready. Evant almost smiled at his opponent as he indicated that the Hive Marines should hold their fire. “We meet again, little Equite,” Evant announced as he stepped forward. D’hak winked his way as he eyed the Collective forces ahead of him. “You have no choice but to surrender. What are you even trying to do here?”

 “Resist futilely and try not to be assimilated,” D’hak replied as he considered his options. The durasteel bridge had been constructed above a small pit, and there was very little maneuverability available to him; while this made it perfect as a chokepoint, it was only now that he realized he could have used more men to enforce this position. “You are a traitor to our Brotherhood, and you will be defeated.”

 “I do not think you realize the gravity of what I am trying to do here,” Evant replied as he stepped forward, extending his arms out to encompass the entire room. “What I am doing here, is far greater than either of us could achieve alone.” D’hak slowly lowered his lightsaber as the Deputy Grand Master came closer. “Together, we can achieve a result that would ensure the security and prosperity of the galaxy!”

“There is no possible way that I can stop you,” D’hak admitted as he sheathed his lightsaber. Evant nodded reassuringly as D’hak scratched his head, his fingers secretly undoing the top of his backpack. The room slowly darkened as a faintly ominous soundtrack played in the background. “There is only one power in the entire galaxy that is strong enough to save us now.” A little worried by the sudden change in environment, Evant’s eyebrow raised slightly as D’hak continued. “The power of cat.”

With a lightning fast movement, D’hak yanked his pet felinx out of his backpack and threw the very-suddenly-no-longer-sleeping-comfortably animal in Evant’s face. Yowling and screeching, the surprised felinx and the equally surprised Master engaged in an epic struggle of sharp claws, shed fur, and many, many curse words. The Hive Mind Marines waited patiently for their orders, unsure of how to respond while Evant desperately tried to grab onto and remove the offending felinx from his face and hair.

Finally yanking it by the nape, he flicked the felinx back over his shoulders. “Oh my gosh it’s in my teeth!” he muttered to himself as he spluttered and picked away at the shed fur in his mouth. “It’s in my mouth!” he whimpered as he wiped his face on the sleeve of his formerly beautiful but now fur-stained robes. Patting himself down in irritation, Evant’s attention soon turned to his tangled and messed up hair. “What the frell was that?!”

“Your hairstyle has been RUINED!” D’hak exclaimed victoriously at the top of his voice. “I warn you, Taelyan, this is just the beginning!” Evant continued to brush himself down, trying in vain to remove as much felinx hair as possible. “You will not make it past here unharmed.” D’hak reignited and raised his lightsaber, then held it high in the air before slamming it down into the durasteel bridge. “YOU SHALL NOT PASS!!”

In stunned and almost mildly impressed confusion, Evant looked the idiot Jedi up and down before turning to his soldiers. “Kill him!” he ordered.

“Oh dosh,” D’hak replied as he tried to roll over the railings, copping a blaster shot to the shoulder before falling out of sight. He bounced off the walls, slid and skid, and roughly landed with a thud and a crack on the floor of the cavern beneath them.

“Hunt him down!” Evant commanded two of the Hive Mind Marines. They casually jumped to their doom, breaking their legs with the full force of the fall that D’hak had just rolled down. Shattered and broken, they were easy pickings for the blasters of the badly bruised and battered Jedi. As he watched Evant and his troops march onwards, he croaked out a “Yeah, you’d better run,” before deciding that now was a good time to be concentrating on healing his injuries. Some of them would not heal easily, but as he cradled his ribs, he knew that he would have to press on, sneak ahead, and catch Evant unawares one more time before he was done.

Still frustrated at the amount of fur that was clinging to his robes, Evant slammed his fingers into the controls of the last blast door that secured the access tunnels between the Shadow Academy and the Dark Ascent. There was a realistic possibility that he would never be clean again, but he had to focus now. His mission was nearing its completion, and soon, he would bring this conflict to an end – one way or the other. Marching through the tunnels proper, however, Evant could not help but feel at unease.

 And the reason for his unease became quickly apparent: the Dark Lord of the Sith, Grand Master Telaris Cantor, now blocked the final stretch of the passage. His lightsaber ignited, its baleful and hateful orange-red light illuminating the corridor as far as the eye could see. Igniting his own blood red lightsaber, Evant stepped forward and offered a salute. “Master,” Evant spat sarcastically.

“Welcome, my apprentice, to the end of this war.” Mav took in the forces before him with a powerful and deliberate glare. “You and your Collective have done well, to fight past our defences so well. However, now it must come to an end.”

“You are not prepared to face the might of the Collective!” Evant declared. The Hive Mind Marines waited patiently for their commands, gripping their weapons tightly.

“In actual fact, our preparations are now complete,” Mav retorted. “Every move we need to make to crush your pitiful army has been executed. All except one.”

Evant narrowed his eyes at his master, before giving a slight nod. Suddenly lunging into his own forces, Evant cut down three of the Hive Mind Marines before any of them knew what was happening. Surging forward, Mav waded into the battle, carving and dominating the enemy forces that had followed his loyal apprentice into their trap. In short order, the two most powerful members of the Brotherhood had cut down the force that had come with Evant. Facing each other off briefly, they quickly sheathed their lightsabers with a grin. It was then that the Brotherhood’s greatest hope struck.

Jumping out of the shadows, D’hak grappled with Evant, knocking him to the ground and holding him at bay with a glowing lightsaber. “Evant Taelyan, I demand your surrender!” D’hak would have no quarter here. Evant had betrayed the Brotherhood, and he would be brought to justice! Wishing his tauntaun was here for another awe-inspiring gesture, D’hak denied Evant the chance to rise to his feet with a solid kick to the ribs. “Grand Master Cantor,” D’hak nodded towards the Dark Lord of the Sith, “I have come to your rescue!”

Grand Master Telaris Cantor rolled his eyes skywards.

“Let him go, you fool, he is on our side!”

“Impossible,” D’hak replied. “You said that I was your only hope!”

“Our only what?”

Suddenly, everything went pitch black, and an R2 droid appeared in the foreground, projecting an illusion of Mav dressed in a flattering white dress. “Help me, only one D’hak, you’re my only hope,” he begged.

“See?” D’hak asked. “It’s an illusion inside an illusion. It has to be worth something.”

“That never happened!” Mav declared. “What are you even doing here? The distress call was hours ago!”

“I came to save the Brotherhood.”

“We already have.”

“Well… he’s still evil, I’m sure of it!” D’hak grappled Evant once again. The two jostled around with each other, before D’hak finally put Evant into a chokehold. Mav took a very deep sigh before yanking D’hak off his apprentice.

“We do not have time for this. There is a weapon within the Iron Throne that will incinerate the entire enemy fleet, but we have to move quickly.” D’hak glared as Evant struggled to get his breath back under control. “I need Evant’s access codes to trigger the final detonation of our weapon so that we can wipe out the entire Collective fleet in one stroke. Now come on, you fool, we have to hurry!”

D’hak reluctantly helped Evant to his feet before following the two Sith Lords through the last of the tunnel. “I am so sorry. I could have sworn you were evil!”

“It was the only way to really stop them,” Evant muttered, clearly angry at the day’s events.

“But the fiction prompt was so clear!” Evant gave him a confused look before dismissing him entirely, focusing again on dusting the fur off his robes. “Sorry about the cat.”

“Well you should be! These are the finest made robes in the galaxy!”

“Again, evil. Honest mistake.” The two glared at each other one more time before Mav opened a secret elevator that would lead directly to the throne room.

“There was a cat?” Telaris asked, his curiosity mildly piqued as D’hak and Evant shouldered each other into the door.

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<https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/non_player_characters/125/snapshots/2871/5059>