

38 ABY
The Dune Sea
Tatooine

Heat. Was he near a fire? No, this was different. It was familiar, but only like a distant memory.

Sand. It was everywhere. In his mouth. Caked around his eyes. It had even worked its way up into-

A heavy, wet object dragging against his cheek suddenly drew Karran out of his fog. Humid breath blew into his face and filled his nostrils with the scent of old grain. His eyes opened to see a massive furry head with long curved horns staring at him. A bantha. He had not seen one of these in what felt like a lifetime.

The Zabrak sat up, shrugging off the sand that had half-buried him, and checked himself for injuries. For a moment he panicked when he could not feel his left arm, but quickly remembered his war wound. Once he was satisfied that he had not taken any serious injuries, he surveyed the area. Immediately, he saw the skeletal remains of the ship he had arrived on. Beyond the durasteel bones was a sea of sand and desert as far as he could see.

"Ancestors be with me. I have a bad feeling about this." Finally, Karran looked up at the sky, shielding his eyes as he saw one, then a second sun. "Tatooine, of course..."

The Sith stretched his shoulders and finished brushing off the sand with his one hand before looking back to the remains of his ship. If he had crashed on his homeworld, that meant that Jawas had likely "salvaged" whatever they could carry from the site and moved on. His attention returned to the bantha that had awakened him. Now that he took a closer look at it, he noticed the bit, bridle, and tack. This bantha was domesticated, and this far out into the desert likely meant- *Oh no.*

An alarm sounded in the back of Karran's mind moments before he heard the crack of a slugthrower in the distance behind him. The Zabrak twisted his body and pivoted on his right foot, dragging his left in the sand. The slug *zipped* through the air where his torso had been moments before and buried itself in the sand.

The sudden noise startled the bantha. It ran toward the wreckage of the ship, followed closely by the Zabrak. The bantha was a sacred animal to the Tusken Raiders and it was unlikely that they would risk hitting this one. As he sprinted behind the frightened creature, no further shots came. He picked up his speed to run alongside the bantha's left side. He scanned the wreckage for a suitable spot to take cover. With a quick motion of his right hand, Karran snatched the reins and gave it a firm tug. As he had expected, the domesticated beast obeyed and followed.

The shelter Karran had found was the remains of an engine. The Jawas had taken all of the inner workings and components, but left the shell half-buried in the sand. Between a seven-foot tall Zabrak and a four-ton beast, the large engine casing quickly became very cramped. Luckily, if the Tusken behaved as he expected them to, he wouldn't have to wait long. In their eyes, he had now taken their sacred animal hostage. They likely wouldn't wait to move in.

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Chieftain Ur'uruk lowered the cycler rifle as the outsider and his bantha disappeared behind a piece of the fallen sky machine.

"Move! The outsider has tainted our sands with his ignorant footsteps and taken what is mine!"

The rest of his tribe raised their weapons and called their war cries to the spirits of the desert to bless their attack. All except for the chieftain mounted onto their own banthas and began the journey down to the crash site. Ur'uruk unslung his gaderffii stick and began a silent prayer upon the weapon. The outsider would die, and his water would be taken to serve the tribe.

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Karran leaned against the durasteel shell of the engine casing and pet the bantha. As it turned out, the beast enjoyed being scratched behind the ears. He closed his eyes and reached out through the Force as his hand idly dug into the creature's thick fur. As he expected, he detected the presence of over a dozen Tusken.

"I am sorry for what I am about to do. Believe me when I say I mean you no harm." Karran gave the bantha one last good scratch and stood before clicking to order the creature to follow him into the open.

His hand went down to where his lightsaber hung on his belt. It had been a small miracle that the Jawas hadn't taken that as well, but they must have been worried he would awaken and react violently, and he would have been justified to do so. The Zabrak removed his boots and left them where he had been sitting before walking out into the open. The sand burned his feet, but if the rumors he had heard about the Tusken when he was a child were correct, the blisters would pay off.

The hunting party halted when they saw the Sith and sounded their grunting howls from the backs of the banthas. One of them, the only one on foot, was dressed in darker, more decorated robes. Karran's mind flashed back to when he was a child. Warning posters and informational flyers about the raiders had been posted around the settlement. One of them had depicted what the chieftain of a tribe typically looked like.

He had accidentally kidnapped the chieftain's bantha.

Karran sighed internally. This conflict would likely only be resolved through bloodshed. A shame, really.

The chieftain approached the Zabrak and pointed the ornate gaderffii stick at him. The Sith unclipped his lightsaber and ignited it and returned the gesture before quickly moving it to just below the throat of the bantha. The group of Tusken erupted in howls.

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Ur'uruk howled and kicked sand at the outsider. Surely the one-armed demon would not dare to harm such a sacred creature with its flaming sword. The chieftain took his gaderffii and slammed the hammer end into the sand before pounding his chest with a fist. The trespasser must accept his challenge or be killed.

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Karran's gambit had worked. The chieftain seemed to be challenging him to combat. He removed the crimson blade from the throat of the bantha and lowered it to his side as he approached the Tusken leader. The tip of the plasma blade traced a line on the sand, instantly flash-burning the gritty material into black glass.

The chieftain acknowledged the acceptance of the challenge and charged with his gaderffii stick raised high before bringing it down in a wide overhand strike on Karran's head. The Zabrak ducked to the side and swept his lightsaber up to intercept the attack. His blade arced through the shaft of the gaderffii. The hammer end fell down to the sand as the Sith followed up with a counterattack that cleanly bisected the chieftain.

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3 days later

Karran sat astride the bantha he had earned as a spoil of combat. After slaying the chieftain, the rest of the Tusken had taken him back to their camp where they had put him through a strange ceremony while he sat on a strange throne. It seemed he had blundered into becoming the new chief.

It was not easy. Between the language and cultural barriers, it was difficult to communicate his intentions, however, a different hunting party had returned with a protocol Droid that could communicate with the Tusken. Shortly after this, Karran discovered that the Tusken had a vendetta against the same Jawas. It was then that a plan began to form.

The Tusken scouts had learned the Jawas' normal route, which allowed the tribe to set an ambush in a canyon. The Zabrak dismounted and settled in to wait.

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Karran heard echoing howls as the lookouts spotted the Jawa sandcrawler entering the canyon. Before long, Karran spotted it as well. The dust cloud it kicked up was massive. The Zabrak checked his chieftain garb to ensure it was fitted properly, channeled the Force into his legs, and jumped.

He soared through the air for what felt like minutes before slamming onto the roof of the sandcrawler. In a flash, his lightsaber was out and cutting through the durasteel plates.

Once he was inside, the panicked screams of Jawas filled the air, only to be quickly cut short by the crimson blade. From the outside, explosions could be heard. The sandcrawler shuddered and pitched to one side. A hellish grinding noise could be heard. The side of the vehicle had impacted the canyon wall. The sandcrawler screeched to a halt. From the lower levels, Tusken war cries and Jawa's screams echoed through the durasteel halls.

Karran's war band made quick work of the thieving vermin.

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The Tuskens bowed before the desert demon that had fallen from the sky. For some reason, he had taken a fast vessel from the sandcrawler, and it seemed his time with them was done. However, he had promised to return, but made sure to instate a successor, a mighty warrior named Kag'rokel.

They would never forget the one-armed demon named Karran, nor the great raid he had led them on.