

The fool, the clown, and the Zappius

A co-op fiction written by Appius "Zappius" Wight and Aylin Sajark of the *Expansionists*.

Snapshots and PINS

Appius Wight - <https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/members/15685/snapshots/3770/6560>

Pin - 15685

Aylin Sajark - <https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/members/14505/snapshots/3679/6364>

Pin - 14505

Vrakit (Aylin's NPC) -

https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/non_player_characters/921/snapshots/3790/6575

The Lasat was simply beside himself, and under no circumstances could he frakk this up. Month after month of blood, sweat, and tears led to this. The final moment. This is where he would finally get his chance to shine, to prove once and for all to his idol that he learned from his lessons, that he could be taught, and lastly, that he could be Appius' *apprentice*.

The thought of it alone made Vrakit giddy with anticipation. Not even the ruckus of the overly wealthy that brushed past the giant Lasat, giving him disapprovingly obvious glances, could put a damper on his spirits.

I really hope I don't frakk this up. I really hope I don't frakk this up. Mother of everything, please don't let me frakk this up!

Vrakit paced himself back and forth, the Dandoran moonlight lighting up every step he took like he was back in the circus. The gardens outside the Garganta Galleria Casino Hotel were nothing if not extravagant, lush, perfectly maintained and prized possession of Py'zah the Hutt. A soft gentle breeze rolled past his face, which brought a gentle relief to the nerves that heated his face.

Please, please, PLEASE, Vrakit! Pull yourself together. You can do this, just treat him like any other guy and don't let it get to you. Just do what he says and everything will be fine.

Except this wasn't just any other guy. This was Appius, and the Mandalorian was Vrakit's hero.

"You ok there, Vrakit?"

The Lasat nearly leapt out of his boots and stumbled with the C1 comlink in his fingers.

"Yeah! I'm good! Thanks, Aylin. H-how are you?" Vrakit stumbled nervously.

"Fine, thanks. I noticed you pacing and thought I'd check in on you. Worried about Appius?"

Vrakit sighed at the question.

"Y-yeah."

"Don't be. I got eyes on both of you and I'll be supporting you as best I can from here. You got this!"

Somehow, Vrakit could see the familiar cheeky grin of their Nautolan comrade, which brought him a sense of comfort just in time for the loud footsteps of a Mandalorian to tap loudly towards him.

"Good to see you are here early, Vrakit," the heavily armored man praised, causing the Lasat to beam happily.

"Hi, Zappy!" Aylin greeted through Vrakit's comlink.

"For frakk's sake, Vrakit. Turn the volume down! Even the dead can hear that thing go off!" The Taldryan Proconsul scolded, causing the Lasat to fumble with the small device before doing as he was told. "Ok, Aylin. We need a sitrep."

"There's a Rodian inside the hotel by the name of Tsurk Krodo. He's one of Py'zah the Hutt's most trusted confidantes. Rumour has it he knows where the vault is that the crystal is being held in. You need to find him, and get that information from him, and get the crystal."

"Where will he be?" Appius inquired.

"I've hacked into the Hotel's security feed. Right now he's in the casino gambling his day's earnings away and drinking Jawa juice."

Both Appius and Vrakit glanced towards the hotel entrance where a small collection of heavily armed security guards were busy throwing out another wannabe thief as they were launched into one of the many fountains with a thunderous splash.

"How do we get in there without getting caught?" the Mandalorian mused to himself out loud. That was when a lightbulb went off in Vrakit's head and he realised this was his time to shine!

"Leave it to me!" the Mystic declared confidently as he carefully approached the hotel entrance, just out of sight so he wasn't seen. Vrakit stretched out with one large hand, closed his eyes, and tapped into the Force.

"Hey! What the hell do you think you are doing!?" One of the guards cried out.

"Are those... clowns?" Another guard questioned.

"Hey! Cut it out!" A third said as the group twitched like they were having something thrown at them. "After them!"

The security for the front entrance dashed after the invisible clowns with onlookers wondering what in all the galaxy was going on. Appius placed a gloved hand on Vrakit's shoulder and gave the Mystic an approving nod.

"Good job," the Proconsul praised. "Let's go before the illusion wears off."

The two Force users quickly ran into the hotel entrance now that there was no resistance to stop them.

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Once inside it didn't take the pair too long before they got overwhelmed by the music and smells of various beverages. The tall Lasat could easily look over the crowd of people and looked around to see if he could spot the Rhodian somewhere.

"Do you see anything?" Appius asked Vrakit who nodded in response.

"I see him, but he has quite a crowd around him."

"Hmm... we need to get the info from him without raising suspicion." The red Mandalorian mused much to himself than saying it out loud.

The Lasat glanced at him before looking further around the crowd. They were cheering for the Rhodian who seemed to be winning the game. He also saw two waitresses going about with drinks for him and got an idea.

Picking up the drinks from the waitress he walked over towards the Rhodian.

"Oh, aren't you the special kind of person," Vrakit started and held out a drink towards the Rhodian who looked curiously up at him, but took the drink anyway. "And so lucky too."

"Yessh... I always am," The Rhodian said in slurred Basic.

The Lasat ran his fingers slowly over the crest on the head of the Rhodian and whispered softly, "Show me more." As he tapped into the Force to create a slight illusion around him.

"I will... Show you how!" The Rhodian exclaimed and took a giant swig of his drink before telling the counter to deal more cards. This time though, the cards turned against him and he lost all his bets.

"Wha... no way. Foul play!" The Rhodian yelled.

The crowd was less than pleased with him and started to push him away. Vrakit took a step back and let his illusion run a bit wider until he motioned towards Appius, who was still trying to think up an idea to get the Rhodian away.

“Yo Apps, Vrakit needs you,” Aylin spoke through his comm, “Do your Zappy droid thing.”

“My... what?” Appius inquired.

“Play a droid, get him out of there. Vrakit is doing some weird stuff on them.”

“Oh... right,” Appius said and moved over towards Vrakit pretending to be a droid.

“Ah, good. My friend the Rhodian here needs some help getting out his little mess, care to help him?”

“Certainly,” the Mandalorian replied and grabbed the Rhodian by his arms, “Come with me.”

“But... my fans... my credits!”

“They will be fine after they cool down a bit,” Vrakit quickly replied as he still played his illusion.

The Rhodian finally conceded and followed them to one of the side exits. Once outside Vrakit dropped the act and Appius pushed the Rhodian against the wall.

“Ok, you little bugface. We only want to know one thing, where is the vault that holds the crystal? After that, you can return to your game and fanclub again.”

The Rhodian let out a little yelp, but kept his mouth shut.

“I wonder if they zap just like bugs,” Appius threatened as he held up his hand where electricity arced between his fingers.

“Ah!... No, I don’t want to be zapped!”

“Then better start talking.”

“I...I... it’s in the Hutt’s big vault behind his throne! No one gets past there.” The Rhodian squealed, “It’s in a strong box in another box... I don’t know how.”

Appius tilted his head slightly, “Anything else?”

The Rhodian quickly shook his head, “No... Please don’t hurt me.”

Appius stepped away from the Rhodian who let out a sigh of relief. The Lasat stepped close and grabbed his shoulders and whispered to the Rhodian. When the Lasat let go the Rhodian went back inside without a second thought or care on his mind.

Appius looked curiously after the Rhodian until he disappeared, "What did you do to him?"

"Oh, just a small trick," The Lasat said with a wink, "But also the last one for a while."

"Well, we got what we needed, now we need to prepare to get it."

Vrakit nodded, "That we do."

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Py'zah the Hutt was like most Hutts in the known galaxy. A notorious gangster, the slug-like being possessed far more wealth than he knew what to do with as a result of shady illegal dealings in the Outer Rim. These operations often involved drugs, slaves, and of course, gambling.

The Hutt was an entertainer and prided himself on that very fact. The lavishly built hotel complex was his pride and joy, and the very top level of the massive, sprawling entertainment centre he'd created was Py'zah's private domain. Once you entered under the elegant archway, guests were treated to a room that looked like it was made of gold. The walls shone with a brilliance that represented the Hutt's extravagant tastes. In the middle was a large, rectangular dancing hall made of the finest wood from wroshyr trees, whilst a DJ's setup was located in the far corner with a blue-skinned Ortolan at its helm. A bar served exquisite tasting bites and drinks, freshly imported from all corners of the Core Worlds finished the aesthetics of Py'zah's private entertainment space whilst the fat, slimey overlord slept upon a personally crafted bed with as many pillows as could be fluffed for his body. The Hutt was like a toddler with far too many toys to play with and demanded utter silence for his late-night nap. All the guests had been kicked out, save for the small handful of guards that kept Py'zah protected from would-be intruders.

As Appius and Vrakit approached the archway that led to Py'zah himself, they were stopped by two Trandoshan guards that brandished their large two-handed axes upon them, barring their entrance.

"Moova dee boonkee. Doneha doth koumahcat," one of the guards aggressively spoke in Hutttese as the electronics in Appius' helmet got to work on the translation.

Turn around. Entry is forbidden.

Appius gave his response when he raised his right arm to the Trandoshan that was bold enough to open his mouth. The reptilian dropped his weapon and clutched at his throat, gasping for air as he choked. The second recoiled slightly as their comrade choked. She was about to strike at Appius until the giant Lasat intervened. For someone over seven feet tall, Vrakit was unbelievably flexible and spun to connect a hard kick to the Trandoshan's jaw. The strike snapped against the reptilian bone as it collapsed to the ground. The Mandalorian finished with the male Trandoshan as the guards' eyes rolled into the back of his head, prompting Appius to launch him into the wall with a hard thud.

The Savant entered first alone, his heavy footsteps tapping loudly on the steps as he very quickly became swarmed by guards. They pointed their axes at Appius and dragged him towards the dance floor. Vrakit, seeing the distraction, used his training as a dancer to carefully sneak in behind the group without them noticing. Once Appius was in the middle of the room one of the Trandoshan's carefully approached the sleeping Hutt and pressed a hand gently against the Py'zah's tail.

The Hutt startled awake and stared upon the intruder with a hard glare that could send shivers into the spines of lesser beings.

"You! Mandalorian, what is the meaning of this disturbance? Do you not know it's my nap time!" Py'zah demanded an answer in a deep, surly voice whilst the guards kept Appius at arm's length with their weapons. A spotlight illuminated the dance floor, giving Appius' armor a brilliant shine.

Meanwhile, Vrakit carefully traversed the room, using his tiptoes and the lack of light in the room to sneak around behind the structure the Hutt lay upon. Once the Lasat was safely concealed, he carefully picked up his communicator and whispered into it.

"Aylin, are you there? I'm at the vault."

It didn't seem like anything too spectacular. A typical safe with a code that needed deciphering. The issue was that the Lasat knew, thanks to the Rodian earlier, there was a second box behind it with who knew what.

"Great, press the datapad up against it. I'll do the rest from here."

How Aylin could open the vault from her location was far from the Lasat's understanding. Regardless, Vrakit did as instructed, and within three seconds the first door clicked open, revealing a smaller box behind it. The Mystic repeated the process and even faster than before, the second vault opened, proving the Nautolan's skill as a slicer. A brilliant, silver crystal shone back into Vrakit's big beady eyes, and the Marauder was awesome struck by how gentle the crystal hummed back at him.

Remember the mission, Vrakit. Concentrate! The Mystic scolded himself, snatched the crystal, and leapt out into the open.

"Appius! I've got the crystal!" Vrakit yelled, turning everyone's attention to him.

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Not good. That was all he could think before the Force was yelling at him in full force. Nimbly he manoeuvred between the shots that were fired at him.

"Get that clown, he can't get away with the crystal!" people were yelling after him.

"Run you fool!" Appius yelled at the Lasat.

He tried his best to get towards the door, but the escape route was blocked off by two big Gamorean guards. Both of them squealed and held their weapons ready.

Vrakit hopped and skidded from side to side and then willed the Force to help him speed up in his movements just enough to evade the blades of the guards.

"Aylin, I'm out and got the crystal. How is the rest of the escape?"

"The hallway's traps are activated now. I'm trying to get them deactivated again," Aylin replied.

"Is Appius safe?"

"Ask him yourself," the Nautolan said with a chuckle.

Vrakit would have collided against Appius if he hadn't turn his attention back to running at the last second. In a reaction, Appius grabbed Vrakit and blasted himself across the hallway which exploded into a myriad of traps going off and resulting in a smoldering heap of goo.

"That was close..."

"Next time remember we aren't in a circus, okay?" Appius scolded him.

Vrakit blinked at the sternness, but he knew the Mandalorian was right. Not everything was a show and this action could have cost them their lives.

"Guys, you might want to keep moving, there is a huge force building up in the main entrance," Aylin warned them.

Both of them nodded at each other and started to run down the hallways that lead back outside. Without much resistance, they got to the large hallway at ground level where the crowd was now replaced by thugs and armed guards.

Looking around Vrakit took a few deep breaths to calm himself, "You need to run for both of us... don't mind the others."

"What are you going to do?"

"One final trick, the biggest escape ever," the Lasat said with a grin.

Appius frowned as Vrakit closed his eyes for a moment and concentrated deeply. He stretched out through the Force, touching the minds of those in the hallway. Some of them stiffened, others looked around wide-eyed, while others started to run and scream in fear. When it dawned on Appius what Vrakit was doing he started to run, pulling the Lasat after him who stumbled after him.

Vrakit did his best to maintain the illusion as long as possible on the large crowd, but it was quickly draining him and finally, he collapsed when they exited the building. The human felt a tug as Vrakit fell behind him.

"You did well, now it's my turn."

Appius grinned and held up his hands before willing his dark powers through him towards his fingers. He unleashed a large volley at the entrance, making large pieces collapse under his assault. When he was done he picked up Vrakit and escaped with him towards their speeder.

Vrakit blinked a few times and glanced around. He was no longer on the street, but in a spaceship.

"Welcome back," said Aylin cheerily when she noticed him wake up, "you survived the mission."

Slowly he sat up and rubbed his head. That last trick was apparently too much, but it did get them out in one piece.

"My head thinks otherwise."

"Because you pulled off a huge trick there. I'm impressed," the Human Mandalorian said.

The Lasat looked up and started to smile when he heard the praise of his big hero.

"And I have some other good news."

Vrakit's ears perked up, "Really?"

"Yes. I have decided to take you as my apprentice."

"Thank you!" Said Vrakit who flew out of his seat to hug his hero tightly, his headache all but forgotten.

"What? That is so cool!" Aylin cheered.

"Ack! Not so tight!" Appius panted as he tried to break free.

"Sorry, master," came a cheeky reply from Vrakit when he let him go.

