

Cause and Effect

Doran System

Tipool City, Dandoran.

39 ABY

Crouching on a partially destroyed roof, cloaked in the Force and hidden from sight, Xendar watched and waited.

He and several other Revenants had volunteered to act as a rearguard detail By ambushing and delaying the advancing Principate troops, which would allow the other Revenants to retreat deeper into the city and hide.

As he looked about the ruins of the city in front of him, his mind recalled the last words of a long-dead general from ancient times

For once more unto the breach, my dark warriors! For here we stand, as the need for spilled blood is nigh insatiable. And as the enemy draws closer, the anthem of battle beings again. For the opening notes of the song of war have just been struck!

A chirping in his ear brought his train of thought to a halt. Reaching up, he tapped the earpiece on his headset.

"I read you, Tors. What's up?" Xendar asked.

"Nothing good. I just received a distress signal from base. We need to haul it back to the Depot now. As it stands, the Principate forces have Yadar, Hawee, and several other Revenants pinned down in one of the buildings. One of the comms officers put out the call. One of the other Revenants commanders is trying to put together a rescue team to go in and get them out of there," Tors said.

"It sounds like we have our work cut out for us," Xendar replied.

"Yeah, and as bad as that is, that's not even the worst part," Tors stated.

"If half of what I'm hearing is true, the whole planet has gone to the Darkside in a handbasket.

Apparently, you have some competition in the fear and dread persona. They're being called The Freak and The Blur. Real nice sorts, just the kind you want to take home and meet your family," Tors added in a sarcastic tone.

"Perhaps I should be flattered," Xendar said as he jumped off the building and started heading toward the rendezvous point.

"Don't be." Tors fired back. "To call them animals would be an insult to animals."

"Indeed," Xendar distractedly replied.

Something was out there. Xendar could sense it through the Force. Whatever it was, its strength was incredible.

"Hey Xendar, you there?" Tors asked.

"Yeah, I'm here. I'll meet you at the convoy," Xendar replied.

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"Out of the way! Edgend and Shi'Anna yelled as they helped a wounded Revenant soldier onto awaiting transports.

"I need to go back and help Uncle Tors!" The young Togruta female shouted as she struggled to stay on her feet.

"Teja, do you think that your uncle would want you fighting in your condition?" Shi'Anna asked. "If I know that stubborn Iridonian, he would put you on this transport himself and order you out."

"I would not worry about Tors. He's one incredibly resilient person. I have seen him take some pretty nasty wounds, and he was on his feet within a few hours," Edgend said as he and Shi'Anna laid Teja down on the last empty Med Unit beds in the transport.

"Okay, you are fully loaded!" Edgend shouted to the driver as he and Shi'Anna got out of the transport. "Get this thing out here!"

The driver turned in their seat and gave Edgend a thumbs up before closing the entry ramp and racing off as fast as safely possible.

"How bad are we hurt?" A familiar voice called out.

Edgend and Shi'anna both turned toward the sound of the voice. They found Tors walking up to them.

"Not good. About a quarter of the unit sustained casualties. Another voice stated.

"Brayj," Tors said as the older-looking Zabrak walked toward him.

"Sir," Brayj said as he came to attention. "*Blaiditch's Brigands* may have taken some hits, but we are still ready to fight!"

"Blaiditch's Brigands?" Tors asked in an incredulous tone.

"Yes, sir. When we joined the Revenants, we renamed the unit in your honor," Brayj stated. "All able-bodied personnel have been loaded into the transports and are ready to move out.

"That might happen sooner than you think. Because if you don't, the only thing that is going to be left here is corpses." A recognizable eerie voice stated.

"Nightmare," Shi'Anna said as the familiar black-cloaked and armored figure walked over to them.

"What do you mean?" Tors asked.

"Ensign Teja Prelse was kind enough to lend me a comlink tuned into the Principate frequencies. And those com channels have been full of panicked voices and screaming troops. They were going on nonstop about something ripping apart the Principate troop like they're nothing. The last message I heard before everything went silent was that it was heading our way."

"What?!" Brayj stated incredulously.

"One of the soldiers was screaming something about a convoy that had some special high-value items that the thing would want and went on to tell the thing our location before they were ripped apart, " Nightmare stated.

"How would the Principate know where we are?" Edgend asked.

"I can answer that. Come with me," Brayj said as he started walking toward a clump of trees. Sitting beneath the trees were ten Principate soldiers with their hands on their heads.

"Say hello to our informant," Brayj said, reaching down and hoisting one of the soldiers into the air by their collar.

"Alright, Serc. Start talking." Brayj ordered.

Serc just looked at Brayj with a look of smug arrogance. "Go ahead. I know your types. You may talk tough, but when it comes down to it. You haven't got what it takes."

"Brayj, could you put him down, please?" Nightmare asked.

Brayj reluctantly set Serc down.

"What are you? A reject for the local Hutt freak show? That mask you are wearing is pathetic! Serc fired off with a sneer.

Nightmare did not say a word. Turning toward Serc, he let his gaze fall on Serc.

At first, Serc defiantly stared back at Nightmare. But as the seconds dragged on, Serc seemed to change. His eyes shot open, and his breath began to quicken. "Wha...What are you going to me? Serc said in a quavering voice as a feeling of terror set in.

"I find your lack of conviction of your own superiority to be quite amusing." Nightmare stated as he watched Serc start whimpering and curl up into a ball.

"Make it stop! I'll tell you what you want to know! Just make it stop!" Serc pleaded.

As sudden as it came on, the feelings of terror had seemingly vanished with a whispering sigh.

Serc told them everything, from how the Principate had placed him into Revenants to his last transmission to the Principate, stating his progress into the convoy for the crystals hidden in one of the vehicles.

"There are crystals hidden in one of the vehicles of the convoy," Edgend stated incredulously.

"And that thing, I believe it is the one they are calling Blur, wants those crystals. And it is on its way here," Tors stated.

"Which means you need to leave and rendezvous with the other Revenants," Nightmare stated.

Then turning toward the prisoners. "Get up." Nightmare ordered.

The prisoners slowly got to their feet.

"You prisoners have been a drain on our people and resources, But I will not condemn you to die a death at the hands of that thing. So, run," Xendar said as he turned away.

"So you want us to take our chances with the wildlife with no weapons," a haughty voice stated.

Turning around slowly, Xendar started to walk back toward the prisoners when Tors stopped him.

"I'll handle this one," he said as he walked up to the prisoner who had spoken.

"Jergin Rekdriiss," Tors said as he hit Jergin with a vicious right cross that dropped Jegin to the ground.

"You should consider yourself fortunate, Rekdriiss," Tors stated matter-of-factly. "If it were up to me, you would be dead. Now get your worthless skin out here!"

The prisoners needed any further prodding. They took off at a full run, not once stopping to look back.

"The rest of you need to leave as well. That thing could be here any minute." Nightmare stated.

Tors caught something in Xendar's voice. "You not planning on taking that thing down alone, are you?"

He asked

"Xendar gave a single nod.

"I would say that you are crazy, But I have a feeling that you can pull it off. Tors said as he extended his hand to Xendar.

Xendar clasped Tors hand with his own in a gesture of friendship.

Xendar watched the convoy as it drifted out of sight. Then opening himself to the Force, Xendar drew it around himself to conceal himself in the Force and vanish from sight.

The Crystal Ascendant rushed through the forest at breakneck speeds, heedless to damage that he was causing to anything that got in his path.

Find more crystals. I need more crystals. The words of the Seer echoed in his head.

Bursting into a forest clearing, the Ascendant found it to be empty.

Looking at the ground, he could see in several places that there cuts in the earth.

Crouching down, the Ascendant closed his eyes and began to concentrate. He could see two people loading wounded individuals aboard it and the vehicle speeding off in the direction of the Imperial Depot. As he was concentrating, he felt something hit him in the back of the head.

Shooting to his feet, the Ascendant whipped around, trying to find who threw the item at him.

To his left, by a clump of trees, a figure became visible. The Ascendant could not see them so well as the sun was in his eyes.

The Ascendant then let loose a blast of Force Lightning at the figure, who seemingly disappeared again. The Ascendant gave off a snarl of disgust. He knew the figure was out there. But could not sense where. The Ascendant scanned the treeline. He thought he saw some movement high up in one of the trees. Rushing forward, the Ascendant let loose another torrent of Force Lightning as he came closer to the tree.

Seemingly out of nowhere, the back of the figure's fist smashed into the face of the Ascendant. The sound of broken bones blasted through the Ascendant's head.

The Ascendant staggered back a step. The figure had caught him off guard. And before his eyes could even clear, the Ascendant let loose a scream of pain as something sharp rented deep long runnels in his stomach and chest. Then came another burst of pain and light as the figure's boot smashed into the Ascendant's face with the power of a wrecking ball.

The Ascendant glad to feel the pain lessen as the Biochip began to administer the coagulants and pain killers.

"Are you afraid to face me?" The Ascendant asked, his tone dripping with sarcasm as he walked about uncaring about the wounds he had sustained, knowing in time that they would heal.

"Are that much of a coward that you refuse to fight me? The Ascendant said in a mocking tone. "If you come out now, I make sure that your death is a quick one."

A blast of force lightning shot past the Ascendant, barely missing him. The figure had reappeared out in the forest clearing.

Its face was nothing but a black void of darkness that even the brightest light could not dispel. Its cloak was of the darkest black, and as the wind fluttered around it, revealing the dark armor beneath it. Its hands seemed to be its favored weapons, as each finger ended with a bird-like sharp talon and another set of long blood-red claws that seemed to appear from around its knuckles.

"Cute costume," the Ascendant derisively spat out, As he watched the figure come at him in a full run. As once again tried to blast the figure with Force Lighting. And once again, the figure disappeared.

The next thing that the Ascendant knew, that he was knocked off his feet and to his back. And a heavy weight began to crush his chest as the figure appeared over the top of him. The figure drove both sets of his talons into the throat of the Ascendant, nearly decapitating him.

"So will your death be as well. And now, may you be at peace," Xendar solemnly said as he stood up. His mind went over the extra information he received about the Ascendant as he waited for it to show up.

Closing his eyes, Xendar reached out with the Force to clear away all of the blood on his cloak and armor.

And then he used the Force to pick the corpse of the Ascendant and began to walk back toward the clump of trees where the Ascendant had first seen him.

Clearing away some brush from behind one of the trees, Xendar started to uncover a speeder bike he had hidden there.

Xendar took off his cloak and folded it up. He then stowed it in the storage compartment as he took a black Biker Scout helmet out of it and put it on. The last thing that he did before getting on the speeder. Was to secure the Ascendant's corpse to the speeder.

"Scout Two, to Convoy Lead. Do you read me?"

"This is Convoy Lead. I read you five by five, Scout Two," a voice replied.

"Acknowledged Convoy Lead. Scout Two needs to rendezvous with the convoy. What is your position?" Xendar asked.

"Understood, Scout Two. Sending coordinates now." The voice replied.

"Also Convoy Lead, a Med Bed is needed upon arrival," Xendar stated

"Understood, Scout Two. Are you injured?" The voice asked.

"Negative. But I am transporting something that will require a stasis field." Acknowledged Scout Two, it sounds like something Zyft Yadar will be most interested in seeing."

Xendar caught something in the Convoy lead's voice.

"Is something gone wrong with the rescue operation?" He asked.

"It hasn't gone well. The rescue team has been pinned down and hasn't been able to move forward. And there has been a call for more units to assist. "

" Understood Convoy Leader, I am on my way."