

Qormus' first interaction with the Dark Jedi Brotherhood was a complete accident, at least for him. He had been out with some other children on the remote world of Aliso when he was approached by a cloaked figure.

"Qormus." The stranger said to him, not as a question, but a statement. The cloaked figure was very tall. But when you're only 10 years of age, everyone looks tall. Qormus could only tell that this was a woman speaking to him only by the voice. The cloak obscured any other hints of the person's gender.

Qormus looked up at the woman and after a moment, nodded.

"Come with me." She instructed and without waiting, turned and strode off down the street.

Qormus whole life changed that day for this was his first interaction with the Brotherhood, and the cloaked woman was a member of Clan Plagueis.

But in an alternate timeline, he decided not to go out this particular day. He had been hustling people on the street the day before for money and had a better than expected day, so his belly was full of the food he had been able to buy and decided that he didn't need to go out again today.

Fast forward 29 years and Qormus is the captain of a small freighter, the Chance. He wasn't a smuggler; he was a simple goods trader. He made a lot of credits by having an innate sense of what trade routes would yield the most profit and he used those credits to buy the Chance and to slowly enhance its capabilities over the years. Now, at 39 years of age, Qormus was beginning to wonder what was next. He had achieved everything he had set out to do after leaving Aliso at the age of 11 by hiding aboard the vessel of a trader that had visited the planet trying to sell some sort of smelly food.

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The engines of the heavily modified CR90 Corvette began to whir with more intensity as it eased off the landing pad. Once the vessel had cleared the surface, its bow angled toward space and accelerated.

On the vessel's bridge, Qormus, and his co-pilot and business partner Keev were sitting at the controls.

"So, what's next, Qor?" Keev asked, his eyes focused on his data padd.

Qormus gazed out of the viewport centrally located at the front of the small bridge and said nothing for a moment.

Keev tore his attention away from the data padd, letting it sit on his lap and turned to face Qormus.

Seeing the movement out of the corner of his eye, Qormus turned to face Keev, knowing that he couldn't avoid the question any longer.

"I really don't know Keev. I ..." A green light flashed on the panel above his head. He clicked a button to dismiss it and play the message that had just been received.

"Qormus," A voice said through the Bridge's speaker, "I don't know if you remember me, but we were friends as children. My name is Kurst."

Qormus' face lit up with recognition of that name. Kurst had been one of his closest friends as teenagers before Qormus had set off on a life of adventure. He had tried to keep in contact, but he was busy, and they had eventually lost touch over the years.

"I know we haven't spoken for some time, but I've heard that you have done well for yourself and well ... I need your help. I am sorry to call out of the blue like this, but I didn't know who else to turn to." The voice quavered under the obvious emotion of the speaker.

"I don't need money, but I had hoped that perhaps you could help me. I live on Corellia with my wife and daughter. They went back to the old stomping ground on Aliso for a holiday, but they are missing, and I have no means of going there to look for them. I had hoped that perhaps you would be able to take me to Aliso and help me find them." Kurst's voice cracked under the strain.

Qormus tapped a button, pausing the message playback. As Keev silently watched on in curiosity, Qormus ran the numbers through the computer.

"Sixteen hours to Corellia, and then another fourteen to Aliso." He turned to face Keev, "Are you up for an adventure?" He asked.

Keev owed Qormus everything he had and there was no way he would not help his friend. He nodded, "Of course, let's go help your friend."

Qormus smiled and after a moment, the ship jumped into hyperspace. He pressed the button to hear the rest of the message that only contained their itinerary for while they were on Aliso. He tapped another button and began to speak.

"Hold on Kurst, we are on our way. Be at the Coronet Spaceport and we'll pick you up. We should arrive at about 5:45am local time, about sixteen hours from now." He clicked a button to end the record and transmit the message.

"I will organise our entry for both Corellia and Aliso," Keev said.

Qormus smiled and nodded, "Thanks Keev."

He fumbled for the data padd that was attached to his hip and began tapping on it. He had not stepped foot on Aliso for almost 30 years and wanted to spend some time refamiliarising himself with it.

"Clan Plagueis?" He muttered to himself in confusion, "Who the kriff are they?"

Keev looked over and gave him a quizzical look.

He turned to answer Keev's unasked question, "Aliso is a planet in the unknown regions nominally aligned with the Confederacy of Independent Systems, but in reality largely ignored by everyone. The citizens of the planet avoided contact with outsiders as much as possible, but freighters pilots and smugglers would occasionally visit, often by mistake. The planet was governed by a council of officials who looked after the planet's regions. Now, it appears that the planet is being governed by something that calls itself Clan Plagueis. I have no idea who that is, do you?"

Keev shook his head, "Never heard of 'em."

"Neither have I, and any further information is pretty limited."

"I wonder if your friend Kurst knows anything about them."

Qormus shrugged, "I guess we'll find out soon enough." He said looking down at the display slowly counting down to their expected arrival at Corellia.

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A few hours later, an insistent beep grabbed Qormus' attention. The ship was nearing its destination. The ship automatically decelerated from hyperspace at the appointed time and the planet of Corellia, its deep blue oceans sparkling from reflected sunlight.

"Corellia Space Control, this is the freighter Chance, we have an entry visa to land at Coronet City to pick up a passenger," Keev announced into the microphone.

After a moment of silence, a voice replied, "Acknowledged, Chance. Please land at landing bay 566-A."

"Understood, thank you Corellia Space Control." Keev clicked a button to close the channel and angled the ship down towards the terminator. Below, the bright lights of the planet's capital city of Coronet were just beginning to emerge into daylight.

Keev followed the beacon into his assigned landing space and deftly brought the ship down. Just as the Chance settled on the landing pad, the entrance door slid open, and a tired-looking dishevelled looking man emerged. Qormus lowered the ramp and stood.

Looking at Keev, he said, "As soon as we are back aboard, take us to Aliso."

Keev nodded and Qormus headed aft out of the bridge and towards the airlock to bring Kurst aboard.

Qormus walked down the ramp and shivered as a cool stiff breeze washed over him. He waited at the base of the ramp for Kurst to close the gap. Putting an arm around his shoulder, he ushered him up the ramp and through the airlock. Securing it, he felt the ramp begin to rise and the ship's engines prepare for launch.

Kurst didn't say much as Qormus directed him to the bridge. He just kept muttering thanks, over and over again.

Entering the bridge, Qormus could see that they were already in hyperspace. He was silently thankful to have such a good friend in Keev and promised himself that he would make it up to him.

He sat Kurst down at an empty chair and knelt beside him, "Kurst, are you ok?" He asked him.

Kurst looked down at Qormus, a haunted look in his grey eyes, "Not really." He took a deep breath and straightened his back as he struggled to compose himself, "Thank you Qormus, I am so sorry I had to ask."

Qormus shook his head emphatically, "Think nothing of it Kurst, I am glad that I was in a position to help. We should get to Aliso in about fourteen hours."

He looked over his old friend critically. Kurst's eyes were sunken with deep black circles around them, the sallow skin of his face almost grey as death, "When was the last time you slept or ate, Kurst?" He asked.

Kurst looked at him and shrugged, "Yesterday maybe, the day before? I honestly don't remember."

Qormus thought as much. He told Kurst to sit tight and headed to the ship's galley. He prepared a simple meal and brought it along with a hot cup of caf balanced precariously for each of them. Keev stood to grab his cup and also took Qormus'. Qormus smiled in thanks and took the plate and remaining cup over to Kurst.

He looked at it for a moment, a confused look on his face. He suddenly realised that this was food. For him. He took them and looked up at Qormus, his face a little brighter, "Thanks." He said. He put the cup down on the console next to him and obviously discovering that he was in fact quite hungry, ate everything on the plate.

Once he finished, Qormus asked if he wanted more, but Kurst declined. Qormus grabbed his cup of caf and sat down again next to Kurst who had also grabbed his cup.

They sat in silence for several minutes. Qormus wanted to give Kurst a few minutes for the food to settle and for him to compose himself. His patience was rewarded a few minutes later as Kurst outlined what he knew of his family's disappearance.

His friend looked haggard, and with still several hours until they were due to arrive, he ushered Kurst to one of the guest quarters so that he could sleep, or at least rest for a while. Kurst, at peace now that he was finally on his way to find his family, fell asleep as soon as his head hit the pillow.

After Qormus returned to the bridge, he sat down at his station next to Keev who turned to face him.

"Not much to go on there, Qormus. A vague itinerary with little real information ... I don't think it is going to be easy to find them."

Qormus nodded gravely, "I think you might be right Keev, but we will do what we can."

He turned to look back at his console and tried to keep busy while he waited for the ship to arrive.

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In contrast to the hustle and bustle in orbit of Corellia, Aliso was a quiet and unassuming world. A beautiful blue marble, as many habitable planets were, there were no other ships in orbit, no orbital defence platforms.

The modified CR90 corvette appeared out of hyperspace in orbit of the planet. It hung there for a moment as its occupants sought landing clearance. Upon receiving it, the vessel headed towards the surface of Aliso. There were no beacons to guide them in here, they received a map from space control which showed them where to go.

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The landing bay was only barely large enough for the Chance. The walls surrounding the bay were not quite high enough and through the bridge viewport, they could see the rest of the city going off into the distance. From their vantage point, they could see nothing but a small section of the landing bay's inner wall.

Qormus stood and looked at Keev, "Think you can stay here and be ready to leave in a hurry just in case?"

Keev chuckled quietly and nodded, "Expecting trouble?"

Qormus smiled and shook his head, "No, but best be prepared just in case."

Keev nodded.

Qormus turned to face Kurst, "Are you ready, Kurst?" He asked.

He nodded in reply and stood before heading aft towards the exit, Qormus following.

They arrived at the airlock. Qormus stood in front of the control panel located next to the door and initiated the ramp lowering sequence. A light on the panel changed from red to green indicating that it was complete. He then tapped another button on the panel causing the airlock door to slide open in response.

As the door slid open, Qormus tensed as a cloaked figure stood at the base of the ramp. It looked like a woman, though he wasn't 100% sure. The Chance's bulk obscured most of the sunlight from reaching the floor of the landing bay. They made no threatening moves, so after looking at Kurst who shrugged in return, walked down the ramp towards the figure.

"Dad!" A voice cried from beside them. Kurst whirled around, "Prilla!" He cried in joy as a young girl no older than seven or eight came running towards him. She jumped into his arms, and he held her close to his chest. After several moments, he let her go, "Where is your mother?" He asked, looking around the landing bay for her.

Before Prilla could respond, the cloaked figure spoke up, the voice definitely belonging to an older woman.

"Your wife is fine, Kurst. She was in an accident while exploring a system of caves just outside of the city. Your daughter walked for hours to get help for her. She is recovering in hospital now."

Kurst pushed Prilla away from him so he could look her over, "Are you hurt?" He asked.

Prilla shook her head, "No, I'm fine, dad. Mum slipped and fell. She was hurt so I went for help."

He beamed at his daughter, proud of how she handled this situation, "You did good, kid." He said to her and kissed her on the forehead. He hugged her again and reluctantly let her go so he could stand and face the woman.

She had removed the hood from her cloak at some point. She was indeed an older woman of around 55 or 60 years of age. She looked at Kurst and Prilla and smiled, "If you follow my associate here," She said indicating to a younger man standing over near the entrance to the landing bay, "He will take you to see your wife at the local clinic."

He nodded, "Thank you. Thank you for looking after my wife and child." She smiled in return and inclined her head in acknowledgement.

Before leaving, he turned to Qormus, the look of tense despair now entirely gone from his face. Not letting go of his daughter's hand, he hugged Qormus, whispering thanks into his ear.

Qormus returned the embrace, happy that this had resolved so easily. They separated, "Kurst, we will hang around until your wife is well and take you back to Corellia if you would like." He turned to the woman to make sure that was ok. She nodded in an affirmative.

Kurst smiled brightly, "I would really appreciate that Qormus, thank you." He turned toward the associate and with Prilla in tow, walked off out of the landing bay.

Qormus watched his friend and his daughter leave and then turned to the woman, "Thank you for what you did for my friend and his family."

She shook her head, "Think nothing of it. We were happy to help. His daughter is a remarkable young woman."

Qormus nodded in return and thought that this would be the end of the conversation. She assumed she would leave now, but she didn't, and he gave her a slightly quizzical look.

Sensing his confusion, she smiled, "You may not believe this, but we have met before Qormus. When you were a young child, I would see you on the streets of the capital. I kept an eye on you, but before I could introduce myself, you disappeared. I thought you were dead, but apparently not." She shrugged.

Qormus examined the face of the woman but did not recognise her at all. She was rather plain, not someone that you would necessarily remember.

She laughed, "I don't think you would recognise me, either now or then."

Qormus nodded, "Ok, but why would you have wanted to introduce yourself to me?" He asked her.

"Well, that is a larger and more complicated story. I will tell it to you in full, but for now, suffice it to say that I am a member of Clan Plagueis. At the time, we were scoping for a world after some ... issues, that the clan had been facing. Soon after you departed the planet, we came, and the council handed control over to us."

"Ok, but that doesn't answer my question." He said in reply.

She smiled, "I know. I am getting there if you will allow me."

Qormus nodded and waited in silence.

"There is something about you, Qormus. I am sure you have noticed yourself. You tend to always make correct decisions. You're also probably a very good pilot, able to make moves that most people could never. I was watching you because I wanted to confirm for myself what I thought you were before approaching you."

He gave her an incredulous look, "And what exactly do you think I am?" He asked.

"Why, force-sensitive of course." She replied.

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You cannot escape your destiny. In the case of Qormus, whether it was at the age of 10, or 39, he was always destined to meet the cloaked figure who would recruit him into the Brotherhood.