Set of “The Betrayal of Illsta Senn”

Day 212 of Principal Filming

Ralltiir, Darpa Sector

Filming had been a grueling process since day one. Long days, early calls to set, and forty-five on location shoots were just a few of the factors contributing to the tension that had been occupying the shoot for the last three weeks. One last scene and principal filming was complete. Upon completion, the baton of hard labor and long hours would be passed over to the editors and armies of post-production workers. Just a few more shots and they could call it wrapped, the champagne would flow and almost everyone could breathe easy. But they weren’t there yet.

Lady Sooni Crezz had built a reputation as a film maker. She was known for big budget productions, scale and story larger than anything that had come before. Since the fall of the Empire, the wide market of galactic consumption had narrowed. The people, it seemed, didn’t want art anymore. The grandeur of an impassioned love amid a world of chaos felt too real, she figured. Too struck by similarity to their own lives, what was being sold to the public in ticket booths at holocinemas around the galaxy now was mindless drivel. Fast action, explosions, regurgitated plots used over and over again appeared to be the core of the zeitgeist. They were quick and soul-less films.

She didn’t believe that her long illustrious career would wither away pressure put on by the studios, she was going out with a fight. Her approach was perhaps cruel, she saved the most emotionally taxing scenes for the last shot. Sooni, among others in the old school holofilm game, believed that the exhaustion of excruciatingly long shoots brought out real emotion in the actors. Actors, she thought, were people so fake you could have a meal with and not have an idea who they actually were, even after dessert. Most of them were divas, in some way or another. She’d dealt with her fair share of primadonnas, but none had earned that label as thoroughly as her lead-man, Derc Kast.

He had talent, there was no doubt. Yet, he had earned himself a reputation of being so difficult to work with, no one had offered him a role in nearly Eight years. He was practically spoiled blue milk. She was trying to save her own career with this film, and for some reason she felt compelled to save his. He was not making that easy for her.

“CUT!” her gravely voice echoed through the megaphone. “Everyone take five!”

In a wave across the room, actors’ shoulders slumped and boom operating droids stood at silent attention. The two stars of the picture, Derc Kast and Sydney Estwin paced back and forth in the center of the framed shot. She rolled her eyes at him.”

“You’re off your game, Derc. You’re not hitting your lines.” The dark-skinned woman said.

“The lines are shit. Sooni needs to let me ad-lib this. It’ll be more raw.” He replied, emerald eyes flashing with psychotic intensity.

The megaphone chirped again. “I said take five, Syd – my darling babydoll.”

Sydney nodded to the Theelin director and picked up the hem of her dress and began to exist stage. Derc , too, spun on his heels to leave set and take the five that had been issued.

The echoing ping of the megaphone stopping him. “Not you, Asshole. You don’t get to leave until you can explain why you keep freckin’ up this scene.”

Sooni had never made a spectacle of her direction for the leading man before, but she’d grown just as irritable as the rest of the cast and crew.

“You can’t talk to me like that!” he replied.

“I can do whatever the shit I want, this is my film, kid.” She replied., behind the click of the megaphone.

Derc stormed her like an enraged nerf, snuffing and snorting. He was practically foaming at the mouth when he reached the cloth chair the Octogenarian sat in. The human man breathed in a deep breath, as if he was going to spit fire. He was stopped instantly.

“Oooh, big bad pretty boy has himself a temper. Whatcha gonna do, stud? Hit an old bat? That’ll really resurrect your dead ass career.” she spoke directly into the megaphone.

The tinny sound of her voice at this distance from the bell of the megaphone was deafening. He covered his ears and winced in pain. He thought that would be enough from her, but the old bag was just getting started.

“Listen up everyone!” She said, turning to the lingering crowd. “I know you’re all very very tired, I know, lord I know, I’ve been tired for forty years. Most of you have worked very very hard, some of ya have just held a boom mic for ten hours, but who am I to judge. Not to belittle your work or nothing, it’s very important. Some of you are in the union, so you’re just thirty standard minutes from wrapping for today and bringing us all back here tomorrow to try this disaster again. I don’t wanna do that, you don’t wanna do that. Mr. Kast here, seems to be the only one that does want that. Since he can’t seem to get through his lines...you can all than Derc personally for dragging this schlop out.”

The ingenue Kast was horrified. He’d had a good relationship with most of the cast, they seemed to like him. She was turning them on him. They groaned and glared at him.

“The lines are bad. I can do them better than what those writers came up with.” The Bakuran said defensively.

“Wooooah! You hear that crew? You hear that, writers? Big bad Derc Kast is now giving himself a writing credit. Don’t flatter yourself toots, you look like you can barely read. Wait, is that it...You can read, can’t you?” She said, pivoting back to the crowd. “Hold on gang, I think we have a break through. Someone get be the Aurek Besh Cresh book I have in my trailer, I’m gonna teach this green-eyed ding-dong how to read. It’ll be faster than getting a good take from dumbnuts over here doing his own thing.” The winkled pink skin of the Theelin woman as flushed to near magenta.

“I can...” He replied.

Derc was a tall man, for an actor, but in this moment he felt tiny. He felt like a child again, back on Bakura. He felt like he was in school being bullied by the boys who had Fathers, who had normal home lives, who hadn’t seen the things he had. He went to speak again, but instead of the weight of rage carrying his voice, a squeaky voice floated out like a sick butterfly unable to remain stable in flight.

“I...can..read.” he said, almost physically shrinking as the words laid flat.

“I can’t hear you, hollow dome.” Dame Crezz chirped.

Many actors lead secret double lives, but perhaps none were as sinister as the secrets Derc Kast held. He could tear her apart and leave her lifeless corpse twitching with dark electric energies. He could, but he wouldn’t. She held the power here. There were too many witnesses. His natural defenses had been stripped from him.

“I can read.” He said, mustering up some measure of fortitude in his voice.

“Oh, you can! Nevermind, don’t send the P-A for the book. He can read. Hear that everyone he CAN read. So, you glass-gazing huff-snuff, are ya gonna read the lines? Or are you gonna freck up these fine peoples’ day?” The elderly woman said, still speaking through the megaphone.

“I’ll read the line.” He said, hanging his head.

“GOOD. PLACES EVERYONE! AND YOU READ THE FRECKIN LINES!” She ordered.

All the crew and cast moved to their spots like pieces in a game of blaster bolt dejarik, speedily and to their set places. Boom operator droids whirred into motion, lighting operators ensured the set was lit as before, the dolly-grip readied the repulsor camera trolley for the big closing shot. The actors took their places.

Sydney Estwin, the beautiful lead actress looked him in the eyes. For a moment, she thought she could see the broken little boy behind them. Her heart swelled and she was ready for the tears that were set to come after his line.

“QUIET ON SET. ROLL IT. AND ACTION.” Sooni Crezz said, leaning back into the cloth chair she sat upon.

The Holocameras clitter-clackered and started the process of recording again.

*“No, I can’t let you go Illsta.” He said, grabbing her by the wrist.*

*“Why?” she said, behind pursed lips and welling eyes.*

*“I...” he stammered and shrunk.*

*“Why?” she asked again.*

*“Because...I love you. I have always loved you. I love you more than the Republic or the Jedi. I love you more than the Empire or the Sith. I love you more than all of this. I love you more than all the love in all the galaxy. I can’t let you go because letting you go is letting go of love. I can’t do that. Not now, not ever.” He said, with a single tear rolling down his cheek.*

*“Shut up...” she replied, tears pouring from her eyes.*

*“I had to tell you.” He said, closing his brilliant green eyes. “I am nothing without you. You are my everything.”*

*“Shut up...Shut up... Shut up and kiss me!” she replied, launching herself at him.*

Their lips met. Water from the rain generators began to fall. They held each other locked in a lover’s kiss as the camera zoomed in. It held on them for nearly thirty seconds. The camera panned upwards. One last click came over the megaphone.

“Cut.” Sooni’s voice was quiet, all the rage she had shown moments ago faded. “That’s a wrap.” She concluded.

There was a roar of applause as cast and crew alike cheered the end of what had felt like a Sisyphean task. The shoot was over. Each member of the team lingered in the studio set for a while, shaking hands and hugging each other, all save one. Kast had snuck off during the initial celebration. He’d bypassed the soundstage security and passed freely into the makeshift village of trailers that made up the crews home away from home. But he had not escaped the watchful eye of the Director, Sooni Crezz. She let him go, she knew he needed the alone time.

The Bakuran stepped into his dressing room, lifting a microfiber towel from the reclining lounge to his head. He hung the towel over his head and sat at the small table in the mobile readyroom. He sat in silence and solitude for hours staring at an empty table dissecting how a tiny old woman had reduced him to a pile of sand. Night had come and the wrap party was in full swing when a knock came to his door.

“Enter.” He said, as the magnetic releases unbolted and the door slid open.

“Derc, sugarbuns. Are you ok?” came a soft gravelly voice.

“What do you want?” he said, defeated.

“You did great out there, babe. That was the one. It’ll make the whole picture.” Sooni replied.

“Why did you do that?” he said, holding back a mix of rage and overwhelming embarrassment.

Dame Crezz lugged a bottle of champagne to the table, grabbing it firmly by the neck of the bottle as if it might get away is she showed an ounce of looseness in her grip. She plopped down in the chair beside him and pulled out a silver case. The case flicked open. It was full of her tabac cigarettes. She drew the long filter out of a small clutch and stuffed in the end of the cigarette. She pushed the tin over to him.

He fumbled for one and lifted it to his lips. She flicked the switch on a small ignitor and the end of the tabac roll lit up. The room began to fill with smoke. She lit her own and took a long pull in.

“Listen, sweatheart. I told ya before, you have talent. It’s my job to bring that talent out. You’re such a big presence, you just draw all focus. That scene, you were looking at it all wrong. You weren’t the focus. It was both of you, it was love that was the focus. Love isn’t big all the time, you know. We tried the subtle direction, I had to get more direct. I needed Eban to feel small, to feel vulnerable. You don’t exactly do small and vulnerable, do ya kid?” she said.

“No, I guess not.” He replied, taking a drag off his own rolled tabac cigarette.

“You see, weakness isn’t always a bad thing, honey. When you know where your target is weak, you know how to get them where you want them.” She said.

“Are you sure you aren’t Sith, Sooni?” he said, tapping the bit of ash off the end.

“Never said I wasn’t, did I?” she said with a smirk. “Kid, I’m sorry I had to do ya like that. You know I love ya, I just needed it to be done this way. The scene called for some humility. You’re lacking a bit there, so I had to help you out.”

“Doesn’t feel like helping me out, Soo.” He said.

“You’re right, sugar. It doesn’t...Yet. One day, you’ll be faced with another challenge that requires humility...Probably at the end of a lightsaber, if I were to bet on it. Maybe then you’ll remember this lesson and turn that weakness over on your other Sithy friends.” She said, pushing back from the table.

He took a deep breath in. She put a hand on his shoulder.

“You done good, kid. I’m proud of you. I’ll leave this here for you.” She motioned to the bottle. “Syd is looking for ya, too. Don’t worry, I won’t narc to your missus. When you’re done pouting, come join the wrap party. There’s an ice luge...Shit ‘s gonna get weird tonight.” The Theelin said, propping up his chin for a moment. “That scene...It’s gonna melt peoples freckin’ minds. Bet ya wish we could use your own name on the posters, don’t cha? G’night kid. I’m outta here.”

“Night, Soo. I’ll see you later.” Derc said, pulling the wrapping away from the mouth of the bottle.

Warlord Thran Occasus-Palpatine (Sith) / P:RGT / [House Caliburnus](https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/units/caliburnus-878d2ed5-e2e7-42cc-9a9f-089ab075a004) of [Clan Scholae Palatinae](https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/units/scholae-palatinae) [SA: VII] [SYN: IV] [GMRG: VIII] [INQ: X]

SBx2 / GCx4 / SCx5 / ACx4 / DCx7 / GNx6 / SNx5 / BNx5 / Cr:8D-8R-12A-18S-23E-10T-10Q / PoBx6 / CFx715 / CIx165 / CEx602 / CGx25 / SI / LSx10 / SoLx4 / S:5Al-3D-1Do-4Dk-7Rm-8P-17U-5B-18Dec-17Aff-3Cr-14En

{SA: MVF - MVH - MVHL - MVL - MVLD - MVLO - MVPH - DPCM - DPCP - DPE - SVHL}

[Legacy of Palpatine](https://wiki.darkjedibrotherhood.com/view/Legacy_of_Palpatine)