

“Goblin, would you please stop screaming at me?” Komilia said to the green astromech droid plugged into the navigational controls of her father’s Ghtroc 720 transport. “I know what I’m doing.” The droid swiveled its head around to look at her giving off another burst of disgruntled beeps.

“Ugh, how did my Dad ever deal with you all these years? You’re impossible!” Komilia shook her head at the droid and went back to watching the countdown on the hyperdrive. Goblin, not to be ignored, extended his electrical probe and gave her a zap in the thigh. Komilia jumped out of her seat with a yelp. Despite the protection of her beskar armor she could still feel that shock, making her wonder what enhancements her father had put into the droid over the years.

“Fine. Fine, I’ll listen. What is it?” Komilia said, taking off her helmet and placing it on the cockpit dash to show the droid she was giving him her full attention. The droid whistled and then launched into a myriad of different beeps and tones. Komilia, for her part, nodded along while sideways glancing at the translator on the console. Once Goblin was done she gave an elongated pause to make sure there was nothing else.

“I appreciate your concern and that you told my Dad you’d take care of me. But, Dad told me to hunt down these rumors about *The Children of Mortis*. So I did and those rumors are leading us to Mandalore.”

Goblin began to rock and warble at Komilia. Lunging forwards she grabbed onto the dome of the R2 unit and held it gently in her hands. “It’s alright, I know all about Mandalore and what happened during the Galactic Civil War. I assure you we aren’t going near any of those areas. It’ll be alright, trust me,” she said, gently stroking the droid’s polished chrome dome and green accents. Komilia didn’t know if the droid had just given up or was enjoying being stroked but he settled down and returned to monitoring their course.

Hopefully that’s the only excitement we have on this trip, she thought to herself. A proximity alarm sounded. They had actually exited hyperspace further out than normal to be prepared but nothing prepared her for the sight in front of her. It looked like any other ringed planet until you realized the ring was the accumulated remains of a massive space battle. Mandalorian, Imperial, and assorted other factions’ lifeless hulks collided with each other. A gasp escaped her lips before she could compose herself.

“Let’s bring her in slowly below the debris field and land at these coordinates,” Komilia said, punching in a series of coordinates. Goblin let out a low moaning sound as the ship accelerated towards the planet.

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“Dag, another round. On my tab,” Kamjin shouted over the crowd in his favorite bar. It was hard to escape as an Emperor these days but a week or so of not shaving, a hood, and going out with Thran and Sykes tended to ensure no one assumed he was the leader of Scholae Palatinae.

“Koonah wamma do tab this tee-tocky,” Dag said, in Huttese from the other side of the bar.

“I keep telling you I don’t speak Huttese, Dag,” Kamjin said, shaking his mug at the Dug. Looking at Sykes and Thran they both shrugged not knowing what the Dug said either. Dad

rolled his eyes and he hopped to another bar stool to start filling new mugs of ale for the three Sith. As Dag slid the mugs over Hibbity Jibbity, the Mon Calamari companion who would adventure with Dag and crew, came out from behind the bar with a crate of bottles to restock the bar.

"He said, are you actually going to pay your bar tab," Hibbity said, sitting the crate onto the bar as he ducked under. As he began placing the bottles into one of the coolers, he continued, "You didn't actually endear yourself to him after that little issue on Dandoran."

Kamjin, sputtering as he took a gulp of his ale. "Now that wasn't my fault that girl took a liking to Slyth. You can't hold that against me," he said, wiping the ale from his mouth. "By the way, where is Slyth?"

"He's in the back, regrowing his legs. That girl really went to town on him when she found us here," Hibbity said, offering a bar rag and pointing towards the spots on the bar top. Kamjin took the rag and mopped up the mess he had made.

"What happened to the girl?" Kamjin asked, slightly concerned about the answer. But, before he could answer, a purple skinned Twi'lek dressed in a simple, yet comfortable, top and shorts came out from the backroom. Her lone lekku swayed gracefully as she walked. Both Thran and Sykes sat up at the bar, bowing and issuing pleasantries that were ignored.

"Dag, sugar honey, do you have some ice for Slyth? He's got some aches where his new legs are growing in?" Dag nodded and hopped around behind the bar sliding open a chest and filling a bag of ice. Kamjin's eyes went wide as he pointed at the Twi'lek to Hibbity.

"How's Slyth doing Lyn?" Hibbity asked the Twi'lek.

"The big baby is just grumbly," she replied.

Kamjin cleared his throat. "The big baby?" He'd heard the Trandoshan referred to by many names over the decades but never as a baby. Lyn turned to size up the human at the bar that she did not know. Dag grumbled something in Huttese as he tossed the bag of ice to Lyn.

"Oh, I...Hi, I'm Lyn. I didn't know you were old friends of Slyth's and the gang," Lyn said, offering a hand in greeting to Kamjin. Kamjin took it and gave a polite shake.

"Nice to meet you. Yes, we go back a few decades at this point," Kamjin offered by way of explaining how he knew them.

"I'm Thran, and this is Sykes, we're really glad to meet you as well," Thran interjected. Lyn gave him a look that could best be described as disgusted annoyance before turning back to Kamjin.

"If you'll excuse me, I need to take care of my adorable little Trandoboo." She turned, deliberately in such a way as to avoid looking at Thran and Sykes and returned to the backroom. Sykes and Thran just stared at Kamjin in disgust.

"What? I just met her," he said, acting hurt and taking another drink of his ale.

"Whatever," Sykes said.

"As always, seems suspicious. Speaking of suspicious, how was it that you were able to sneak out with us? I thought your daughter was keeping a tight watch on you these days," Thran asked.

"I gave her a mission," Kamjin said, matter of fact. Sykes and Thran looked at each other, doubtful of what they'd just heard.

"A mission?" Sykes asked. "Just what sort of mission did you send your sixteen year old, Mandalorian fan-girl daughter off on?"

Kamjin looked around the bar and judging by the general volume level and mixture of sentients drinking and entertaining themselves that he was safe to share more, leaned closer to his companions. "It's related to what happened on Dandoran."

Sykes and Thran leaned in closer remembering the absolute disaster that was Dandoran. "The Dark Council has finally started to share information about what happened. It appears this 'Seer' that's been causing Evant so much trouble is a member of the *Children of Mortis*," Kamjin looked around to make sure no one was listening. "No one really knows much about them so the Council has asked each of the Consuls to start looking into it. So, I sent Komilia to check out one of the leads."

"Konchee did she bolla," Dag asked, hopping back up onto one of the numerous stools he had stationed around the bar.

"Sithspit, Dag, don't surprise me like that. This is supposed to be a secret," Kamjin said, this time not spilling any of his ale. The Dug gave him a knowing look that seemed to say '*I know what happens in my bar*'. "Fine," Kamjin figured he could trust the Dug. "I had our Intelligence Agency look into it and they found an obscure reference. Very old, before the High Republic era. I figured Komilia will go, spend some time in an old temple or hunting down books in a library and I'll get to relax."

Dag stared at Kamjin, and mimicking out with his feet, asked again *Where did she go?*

"Oh, I gotcha," Kamjin said, finally figuring it out. "She's going to Mandalore." Thran and Sykes both spit out their ale at the same time yelling 'Mandalore'. Kamjin whipped around on them and motioned for them to keep their voices down. "What is wrong with you both? Didn't I just tell you this is supposed to be a secret?"

"Kamjin, you moron," Sykes started.

"Don't you know the state Mandalore is in?" Thran finished.

"Ya, I know all about what the Empire did to it. It's one of the reasons I felt safe sending her."

"Dank farrik, Kamjin, there's still people down there," Sykes said, drowning his beer and starting to stand up.

"Where do you think you're going?"

"To get your daughter out of there."

"I am not going to trust you around my daughter," Kamjin said half seriously, half joking. At this time Hibbity exited the backroom with his trench coat and hood up and his sniper rifle slung on his back. Somewhere fluttering around him Kamjin saw Tiny, the little Jawa who had taken a shine to the Mon Cal so long ago. "Geez, what are you doing?" Kamjin asked.

"Well, if you can't let them go after her then I am. Besides, Tiny was getting worried. She heard everything while fixing the lines to the kegs under the bar," Hibbity replied. Kamjin looked at the Jawa, at the Dug giving a shit eating grin about knowing what happens in his place, and the mortified looks of his fellow clansmen.

"Fine, but I won't be responsible if she doesn't remember you, gets spooked, and throws a grenade at you."

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“Goblin, I told you already. You don’t need to follow me,” Komilia pouted as she walked down the ramp of the freighter. She was thankful for the sealed armor that her Father had gifted her. Her mismatched Mandalorian armor was back in Caelestis City and this new suit fit perfectly. She loved the purple and pink accented suit and the fact that the former male Beskar plates had been reforged to fit her. She knew it was expensive but, she was a Duchess, naturally the Emperor would see fit to outfit her properly. She was still getting used to all the bells and whistles but was thankful that it was at least somewhere temperature controlled and kept the dust out.

The planet had clearly seen better days and that’s with acknowledging that those better days still meant it had been a dust ball. They had landed near what used to have been a moderate sized village centered around what looked like a shrine. What remained of the dome that covered the village was in disrepair and large chunks had fallen in, crushing the boxy architecture of the buildings within.

Komilia pulled down the sensor pod on her helmet and activated the built-in light. A pale beam gave ghostly illumination through the shadows of the decrepit remains. She unclipped her MK assassin rifle from it’s magnetic clip on her back. Priming the weapon, she carried it across her chest, ready to fire at a moment’s notice. Various rodents scurried amongst the ruins searching for food. A shiver went down her spine.

“Goblin, there aren’t any people here. Are there?”

The droid gave a low warbled sound in response.

“What do you mean you can’t tell? You’re supposed to be some fancy droid my Dad flew with back in the day. You’re telling me he didn’t put a sensor package in you?”

Goblin got defensive and launched into a string of beeps that ran the gamut from annoyed to sarcastic.

“What do you mean, what about my sensor package? I just have eyes you malfunctioning hunk of junk. I told Daddy we should have gotten a BB unit,” Komilia responded with a huff.

And so they continued their back and forth, slowly growing to appreciate each other’s sarcasm. Komilia occasionally checking the information that had been given to her navigated the streets unmolested to the central shrine. It was different from the surrounding architecture. Even Komilia, who was by no means a scholar, could tell since it was rounded versus the straight line styling of the rest of Mandalore. Gentle arches and swoops in the building gave a sense of flowing water. It was calming whereas the rest of the buildings gave the sense of rigid simplicity. Mandalorians were a warrior race and for centuries had been nomadic. Those deep rooted cultural aspects had contributed to a design style of ease of transport and connectedness. This was something that stood apart.

“What do you think, Goblin? Something that was here before the Mandalorians came? Perhaps they just built their community around it?”

A beam of light extended from Goblin as he scanned in the environment. Unlike the smooth steps that existed elsewhere, a smooth, gently curving walk path lead the two explorers up to the top of the shrine. Komilia hooted. “This is the spot, look here’s the symbol,” she said, giddy with excitement. She brushed off the dust on a wooden archway that held aloft what looked like rolling waves. Faded in the paint was the shadowy outline of a circle, with a dot on the top, an inverted triangle, and three triangles at the bottom of the circle.

Komilia stared at it for a while. The light of her sensor pod danced over the symbol making it appear to move as her head bobbed from side to side. She was mesmerized and slowly reached out her gloved hand to run it over the symbol. "Goblin, maybe it's the light but...this looks like a mother giving birth."

The sound that came from Goblin could best be described as laughter. "Oh shut up, it does." As the droid rocked back and forth laughing, Komilia stopped her foot and then kicked the droid in the backside. If Goblin could double over from laughing he would have as Komilia hobbled away nursing an injured toe.

On top of the shrine's mound there was a small hut, nothing particularly fancy. It was made of the same pale white sand that most of Mandalore used in its construction. There was no door to speak of and the entrance was smaller than Komilia, which gave her a belief it was used by a species who were perhaps native to the planet and smaller than the usual humanoid. Goblin, still chuckling to himself, decided not to follow Komilia and went off investigating the various shrines that were erected around the area.

Komilia muttered something under her breath about the droid as her eyes adjusted to the darkened shrine. As her light flickered across the walls she could barely make out the faded remains of frescoes. *Here's that symbol again*, she thought, recognizing easily the symbol that had been outside. It appeared to tell some sort of a story of pilgrims following a casket. While faded over time there appeared to be something red within the casket being worshiped.

Taking out her scanner she began to take snapshots of the walls. As she made her way to the back she heard a high pitched wail. Spinning around she caught sight of the projectile seconds before it would impact. Diving to the ground, she turned her back as it impacted into the wall of the shrine. The weakened earthen structure exploded into a fine powder while chunks rained down upon Komilia. The beskar took most of the punishment. Crawling her way out of the ruins her visor scanned for the attacker. Staying low she pulled out her rifle, checked it quickly, and peered through the sight.

Goblin was screeching out to Komilia. "Yes, I see him. I see him," she screamed back trying to get a bead. The attacker, whomever it was, had started to hop from rooftop to rooftop. Komilia tried to center herself and took the shot. The crimson bolt of energy whizzed out but struck behind the escaping attacker.

Sithspit, she thought to herself. Racing to line up for another shot she squeezed off two shots in rapid succession. The first led the target, who slid under the smoking blast mark moments before the second shot landed where he had been. Komilia was growing frustrated. She switched over to rapid fire and started painting the rooftops with blaster bolts. The attacker skidded across the rooftops, avoiding the haphazard warzone Komilia had unleashed.

Goblin beeped at her. "Can it, droid, I know what I'm doing," Komilia barked back. She dropped the rifle on the ground and stood up. She punched in a series of commands to her vambrace as the targeting reticle lined up within her HUD. As the circle settled over her attacker she let the missile on her jetpack fly. As it rocketed over the buildings it exploded into the superstructure on the rooftop by the attacker.

Komilia triggered her jetpack and sailed through the sky. For all her failing at shooting she did have a certain grace in the air. Taking sight of her attack she landed with a hard kick into his torso as he tried to recover. Using the stored energy she kicked off and flipped over landing squarely on the rooftop. Pulling out her Westar-35 she lined him up in her sights.

“Alright, who the frak are you and why are you shooting at me?” she asked. The figure stayed silent, it’s armor hiding any reaction. “You can’t put me through all of this and not talk. Was I getting too close to knowing the truth? Damnit, take off that helmet and answer me,” Komilia screamed. The figure slowly removed it’s helmet revealing the blooded face of an elderly woman.

Blood ran thickly through her matted hair as she squinted up at Komilia. Coughing, the woman remained defiantly silent. “What was so important about that shrine? You have to answer me,” Komilia said hysterically. The woman, with slow achingly painful movements, sat herself up.

“Are you working for the Father?” Komilia finally, desperate to get some information from her captive. At this the woman chuckled.

“There’s not always a Father, youngling,” the woman said, before chopping hard on her tooth. As she foamed at the mouth as the poison spread through her body Komilia lunged at her. Her fumbling hands struggling to fight a lost battle. She shook the woman violently. “You can’t die! What does that mean?” But it was too late.

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Heartbroken, Komilia rejoined Goblin. In a small sign of empathy, the droid remained quiet as they walked back to their ship. As they approached they saw another ship had landed next to them. As the ramp descended, Hibbity and Tiny came rushing out. Hibbity with his rifle at the ready for a fight appeared first while Tiny came shuffling after, her arms over laden with grenades.

“You’re too late Hibbity. I’m fine, tell my Dad not to worry,” Komilia said, without breaking her stride as she boarded her ship.

“I...umm, you’re okay?” Hibbity said, flustered by the sudden exchange and the very real look that Komilia was not fine.

“M'gasha,” Tiny said, offering the grenades to Hibbity as he turned around.

“Yes, too much. Especially if she’s leaving. I guess there really was nothing to worry about,” Hibbity said, as Komilia lifted off.