

Who in The World, Are the Children?

Small Mining Hub
Jinella

The mining compound was quiet. It was early evening and the sun was setting on the barren planet. This was just one of several facilities across the surface, though there were hundreds of miles between them, roughly surrounding a small populated hub with warehouses, shops, bars and a small spaceport. There was none of that here though, just a huddle of one story prefabricated buildings surrounded by a two metre high panel wall. Lights had been attached to the panels and some of the buildings, shining across the open area in between the buildings and a gap leading to the hole in the rock surface behind them, which lead up flat side of the hill beyond. Droids could be seen moving in and out of the hole, and guards in rough clothing stood here and there near the gate or at vaguely strategic positions. Compared with some of the larger corporate mines elsewhere on the planet this looked like a rough amateur setup.

The guards at the gate looked up as they saw a figure walking towards them, a fairly tall well built man wrapped in a cloak and hood. He was moving at a steady pace and showing no signs of subterfuge. "Stop right there," one of the guards ordered, "and raise your hands."

The man raise his hands slowly, his head facing straight ahead.

"What do you want?" the other guard asked.

There was a pause, and then a deep voice said, "I came here looking for work."

The guards looked at each other. "Why here?"

There was another pause. "I tried in the hub, and the big mines. There was nothing. The corporations said they weren't hiring directly, only at their headquarters. I heard this place was new. And all I could find at the hub was dish washing or cleaning."

"And?" the first guard asked.

"I enjoy neither," the man replied, "but I know how to fight."

The guards exchanged a look. "Loose the cloak."

The man slowly and carefully moved his hands to the clasp of the cloak, opening it, and then pulled his cloak back. Underneath he was wearing a simple jacket, trousers and boots, with a slugthrower pistol holstered at the waist and a scattergun strapped to his back. However their attention was drawn to the head of the man. His pale skin was burned and scarred, his ears and mouth were ripped and there was a jagged hole in his face where his nose should be. He also had a pair of black lenses covering his eyes, which blinked open and shut in the light. As the guards studied him he raised his hands once more.

"What the hell happened to you?"

"An accident," the man replied without looking at them, "it was a long time ago."

"Keep still." While one guard covered the man, the other lowered his own weapon and then approached the man cautiously, first pulling the pistol from the holster, then the scattergun off his back and then finally patting him down. The man did not react and continued to look towards the gate. Satisfied the guard stepped back, holding his own weapons and the visitors in his hands.

"Lower your hands and step inside. Nice and slowly."

The man picked up his cloak and then followed inside the compound, where more of the guards and a few other workers watched him with interest. The guard who had searched him put the scattergun and pistol on a nearby bench, then raised his own rifle again. "Garrick!"

"What?" a voice shouted through the open doorway of a building.

"Got someone here," the guard shouted back, "says he's looking for work."

There was a pause, and then a large man left the hut, wearing dark grey Mandalorian armour and a large sword strapped to his belt. He had short clipped hair and several scars on his face. He studied the man, taking in his ravaged facial features and then looked him up and down. "Yeah? What are you? Miner? Engineer?"

"Neither," the man replied with a shrug.

"What use to me are you then?" Garrick asked. He glanced at the guard.

"We could use a bit more security boss," the guard replied, "and he says he can handle himself. He brought those." he indicated the weapons on the bench.

"Really?" Garrick asked, "what's your name?"

The man looked back at him. "Jagos Var. And before you ask it was an accident a long time ago."

The boss grunted. "You can use those?" he asked, pointing towards the weapons on the bench.

"I can," the man replied.

"You ex military?" Garrick asked with another glance at the man.

The man nodded. "I am. Twenty years service."

"I won't ask which," Garrick replied. "alright I can use you." He indicated the guard. "Kravis will show you where you can sleep. We have a couple of spare beds. You'll get paid at the end of the week, but until then there's three meals a day and a share of the drink so long as you're not stupid with it."

"Understood."

"Come on," Kravis said with a final glance at Garrick, "pick up your stuff."

Malisane slung his scattergun back over his shoulder and holstered his pistol. He followed Kravis into the prefab hut, where four bunks were against one wall, and some shelves on the other side.

The guard indicated which bunk was free and the Warlord nodded. "I am grateful for your help."

"I was being honest," Kravis replied, "we do need more security. There's gangs out there who would raid this place just to see what we had. Also you look like you needed a break."

Malisane nodded. "I did. How long have you been here?"

"Four weeks," Kravis replied, "most of us were hired for this job via an advert in the Hub. They just hired anyone who had their own weapons and knew how to use them. Twelve of us, not including Garrick. Most of us don't have armour."

Malisane nodded. "Cheap setup then?"

"No," Kravis replied, his face becoming thoughtful, "that's the funny thing. When we got here the equipment was already in place. And it doesn't look cheap. Some sort of laser drill, processing equipment, and the droids that do most of the work look state of the art."

Malisane considered this, "Almost like they're trying to look basic then? To not attract attention?"

"Maybe, maybe," Kravis replied with a shrug, "anyway we don't ask questions. The pay is pretty good, the food is alright and Garrick is okay if you do your job and don't get drunk. It's mostly just hanging around in case raiders come. Easiest money I've earned."

"Suits me then," Malisane agreed.

"Anyway, supper is in about half an hour, the toilets and showers are the hut opposite this one, and after that I'd see Garrick for your work assignment. Hopefully he won't put you on duty on your first night. If not I'll see you later. I'd better get back to the gate."

The Warlord nodded. "I will speak to you later."

Supper was outside on folding chairs by a fire in the middle of the compound. Malisane had spent the last half an hour looking around. The guards in front of the hole to the mine had told him not to go inside so he had avoided that for the time being. On the other side of the compound from the sleeping huts was a small warehouse where the droids carried whatever it was they were digging up from the mine. Again he had been told not to go inside. The other building was a small office, with its shutters closed and the door locked and a satellite transmitter on the roof. His earlier suspicion about the contradiction between the outward cheapness of the operation and the interior sophistication seemed true.

He looked up as Kravis approached, accompanied by the other guard from earlier, both carrying metal tins and cups, though Kravis had two. Kravis smiled. "You remember Diermot?"

"Hi again," Diermot greeted him as they sat down.

Malisane nodded at him. "Hello."

Kravis passed Malisane the spare tin and Diermot passed him a cup of some sort of spirit. "You won't be getting waiter service every meal," Kravis said with a grin.

Malisane did not smile back. It tended to unsettle people when he did. He looked down at the tin. It was some sort of hot meat stew with a spoon stuck in it. He scooped some up and blew on it, then tasted it. As Kravis had said it was alright and he had simple tastes. He had spent four years living in a cave by the sea on an island, and disliking fish he caught small animals and cooked them up with whatever edible roots he could find. This was more than satisfactory to him.

"Glad that's us done for the day," Kravis said as he ate his food and sipped his drink, "it might not be backbreaking work but its a long time on your feet."

"Ask Garrick for a chair tomorrow," Diermot replied after a mouthful, He seemed quieter and older than his enthusiastic friend.

Kravis laughed. "I might do," he replied taking a swig of the spirit, "so did you have chance to find your way around?"

"I did," Malisane replied, "except the office and the mine."

"You don't go near them," Diermot said quickly, with a glance across the fire where the armoured Garrick was sat eating alone.

Kravis glanced at Malisane's full cup. "You not drinking?"

"I don't drink alcohol any more," he replied, "not since my accident."

"Your loss, pass it over then," Kravis asked eagerly, and he used it to fill up his and Diermot's cup.

Malisane took another mouthful, "So what are they digging up? And why the secrecy?"

Diermot glanced again at Garrick but a merrier Kravis replied, "The droids bring out sealed containers and carry them to the warehouse. We don't usually see what's inside but one day a droid passed me and dropped a container, and it wasn't sealed properly. Some sort of crystals. Rough looking but colourful."

"Crystals?" Malisane repeated, "valuable?"

"Must be, as I said the droids and the equipment aren't cheap. The ship they send for them isn't either."

"Ship?"

"A shuttle comes once a week," Diermot replied quietly, "the droids load it up and unload our supplies. The lady usually comes out of her office and speaks to the people onboard. Then they go."

"The lady?"

"Ah yeah, her," Kravis replied, "Garrick is charge of us, but she is in charge of him and the droids. Hardly comes out of her office, she sleeps in there as well. Doesn't speak to us unless we happen to get in her way. Pretty enough in a cold sort of a way but like the mine you don't go there."

"Really?" Malisane asked.

Diermot gave another nervous glance at their boss. "She's unsettling," he said quietly, "there's something about her. We don't feel right when she's near us and when she looks at you, you feel nervous without knowing why."

"Tell me about it," Kravis said as he finished his drink, "definatley something not right with her. Stay clear, don't look at her and don't talk unless she talks to you."

"I understand."

"Good," Kravis said as stood up, holding his empty cup and food tin, "I'm off to my bunk. I'm back on at six in the morning."

"Yeah and me," Diermot added.

Malisane stood up to follow and was surprised to see Garrick stood straight in front of him. He had

not seen the man move from the other side of the fire.

“You ask a lot of questions Var,” the boss commented.

“I was just curious,” Malisane replied, “I am going to be working here.”

“Too many questions can get you in trouble, just do your job.”

Malisane nodded. “Very well.”

Garrick gave a slightly cold smile. “As you seem wide awake how about you do the night shift?”

The Warlord shrugged. “If you like.”

“Good man, then you're on until six. As you're new just stand by the shower block and keep your eyes open. You don't need to do anything unless one of the perimeter guards raises the alarm.”

“I understand.”

“Good soldier,” Garrick replied, “you've got a fifteen minute break after three, but wait until the others have had theirs. Use the toilet, rest your feet, have a warm drink. You might need one even with your cloak . It gets cold.”

Malisane nodded and Garrick turned and made his way towards the sleeping huts.

A short while later Malisane stood near the shower building, his cloak wrapped around him and his scattergun held in his hands. So far everything he had been lead to believe was true about this place, the setup as an independent mining operation, the sophisticated equipment within, and his tipsy companions story about this mysterious lady. Everything they said made her sound like a force user. The problem was he did not know much about her, even if she was one of these Children of Mortis. Making people feel uneasy with the force even passively was not exactly hard to do, though he preferred the more physical approach he could turn the simple minded into gibbering wrecks should he choose to do so. However was that the force or something else? He remembered the crystal mutants from that Severian planet. They had given off a strange aura.

His gaze passed across the compound, to the mine entrance where one of the other three guards were stood, and the nearby warehouse, and then the office where his prey presumably lived. He needed two or three things. At a minimum he needed to know what they were digging up, or growing and get a sample, and he needed to know where it was going. Ideally he wanted this force user as well, to take back to Orian. Alive preferably.

After few hours the guard by the mine approached him, a twilek female in her early thirties. “Hey, Jagos isn't it?”

“It is,” Malisane replied.

“I'm Melis,” she told him, “I'm off for my break. I'll be fifteen minutes, maybe twenty. Can you keep an eye on the entrance to the mine? You can go when I get back.”

Malisane nodded. “Of course.”

Melis smiled. “Thanks.”

Malisane watched her head towards a bench where instant hot drinks were kept, and then he gaze moved towards the mine. Slowly and casually he made his way towards it, and looked inside. It did not look too deep, with one cut out tunnel leading to a wider area where the sound of drilling could be heard. He could not see any of the droids, but could hear their feet clanking on the rock. Slowly he made his way inside, gripping his scattergun. He was glad he had chosen the Shadow Syndicate gear they'd sent him last year and he'd shoved in the spare wardrobe, the boots were like velvet and made no sound on the rock and nothing on him jangled or rattled. Stealth was not exactly the heavy Maurader's strong suit but he managed to reach the chamber without making a noticeable noise. He ducked down and peered into the room. The drill was slowly carving a hole in the rock, though for what purpose he did not know. There were six droids in total, tall and black. Four of them appeared to be removing or tending some crystal formations on the wall, while others were working at two processing machines. This made no sense to the Sith, were they mining them from the rock, or were they growing them? He could not tell.

Suddenly one of the processing droids head snapped around to stare directly at the crouching,

hidden Warlord. It quickly made its way towards him, its feet clacking on the rock floor and red eyes focused on him. He gripped his scattergun, and then he stopped and studied him. "You should not be in here *sir*," it told him, the last word sounding less polite and more firm, "please leave immediately."

Malisane had a brief moment of thought. He could probably stand his ground, the droids were presumably just mining droids not combat ones, but he did not want to raise the alarm or suspicion before he had time to complete his mission. Besides, he had seen all he could for the time being.

"I am sorry," he replied, "I thought I heard a strange noise."

The droid focused on him. "Only we are here sir, and the only noise is us. Please leave immediately." The repeated instruction sounded even firmer now.

"Very well," he said, and made his way back up the tunnel, feeling the droids eyes on his back.

He stopped outside the mine and resumed his watch. After a short while the twilek guard returned, holding her rifle loosely in one hand and a steaming cup in the other. "Okay your turn," Melis told him, "you know where everything is?"

"I do, thank you."

"Have a good one then," she told him.

For appearance sakes he walked across to the bench, put his weapon down and took a sealed can from a selection of flavours. After a seconds examination he pressed the bottom in, and waited a thirty seconds while heat from the chemicals sealed in the base mixed and warmed the liquid, and then removed the top. He took a sip, and leaned against a hut. Then he slipped his hand down his right leg and opened a hidden pocket in his trousers, the lining padded to pass a basic search. He felt for the communicator inside and without needing to look clicked four buttons in sequence. Then he looked toward the gate. There was a lone guard in front of it, looking out into the darkness.

He made his way forward, walking casually holding his weapon in one hand and drink in the other like the twilek had. As he approached the guard turned around, pointing his rifle, then stopped.

"Yeah?"

"It is a cold night," Malisane said casually.

"Tell me about it," the guard replied sourly, "worse duty this in the night, at least you can walk around or go near the fire for a bit."

"Yes," Malisane replied, "have you had your break?"

"Yeah," the guard replied, "however it doesn't take long to get cold again."

Malisane glanced back inside the compound, and then back at the guard. "There are only two and a half hours left," he pointed out, trying to sound casual, "if you want to change places that would be acceptable."

The guards face brightened. "You sure?"

"I am."

"Thanks," the guard replied, and quickly made his way inside towards the fire. When he was out of sight Malisane looked back into the darkness. He threw the half full drink can away and gripped his weapon.

A quiet deep tone sounded from the darkness, and after a second Malisane coughed softly. There was another tone. Then there was a scrapping noise of wheel son the hard ground, and after a few seconds something small and black appeared, a few blinking red lights the only thing visible. After a few more seconds the astromech emerged into the light. Zero stopped in front of its owner and made a louder tone.

"Quiet!" Malisane hissed, "get inside! Keep out of sight. Make your way subtly to the right from the gate towards a larger building. Get between it and the wall and wait for further orders.

The droids head swivelled to the right, and then back at the Warlord. A couple of lights flashed on its terminal in response and then went dark. It powered inside, turning and heading off into the shadows.

Malisane watched it go, and then leaned against the side of the gate and waited.

When morning came he made his way back inside, glancing at the mine and the dark office building. He could not further investigate either for the time being. Perhaps the following night with the droid on hand he would have more chance. He made his way across to the sleeping huts, where people were already leaving and heading for the showers, or some containers which one guard was piling on a bench, presumably breakfast. Malisane was not hungry, not did he particularly desire a sleep, but for appearance sake he would have to seem to do one or the other. As he approached the hut with his bunk, Kravis left the hut and smiled when he saw the Warlord.

“Hey, how was your night?”

“It was fine,” Malisane replied.

“Good stuff,” the young guard replied, “so you eating or sleeping?”

“I am not hungry,” the Warlord replied, “I will sleep.”

“Okay, well lunch is in about seven hours so have a good sleep and it will be waiting for you. I'm on duty until then so I'll see you.”

“Good,” Malisane replied and began to walk into the hut. Then he heard the roar of engines from nearby and he turned. A shuttle was descending into the compound centre. It looked newish but lightly armed and armoured. A glance around revealed that the guards were surprised by its appearance and were watching it suspiciously.

“Is there a problem?” Malisane asked.

Kravis glanced back over his shoulder. “They're three days early, and they come in the afternoon.” Malisane continued to watch as the shuttle made its final approach. “Perhaps they needed whatever they are digging earlier than expected, or had a good yield from the mine.”

“Maybe,” the young guard replied.

Malisane glanced around again and saw Garrick leaning against a wall watching the shuttle, his arms folded. He was wearing his sword strapped to his waist still, and a Mandalorian helmet lay on a bench next to him. He alone did not seem surprised by the early arrival. Malisane felt a surge of suspicion wash over him. As the shuttle landed he noted movement from behind it, and the door of the office building opened. Out stepped a tall and imperious looking woman, wearing a simple grey outfit consisting of a vest and trousers, with a long sleeveless robe hanging down to her ankles. She had dark hair pulled back in a severe bun and pale skin. She strode towards the shuttle, paying little interest in the watching guards. As she reached the shuttle its ramp lowered, and a figure stepped out in armour similar to Garrick's. Then a glance left and right revealed that Garrick was walking across the compound casually, holding his helmet under one arm and a blaster rifle in the other. At the same time the droids were leaving the mine, the first two carrying a stack of metal containers, and other four pushing the laser and processors.

“Looks like they're leaving,” Kravis said suspiciously, as other guards turned to look at him.

“It would seem that way,” Malisane replied.

“Does that mean we get our final pay?” a female voice asked. It was Melis the twilek.

“Hope so,” Kravis replied as he watched the droids push the equipment up the ramp.

From the other side Diernot the older guard stepped forward, “Hey Garrick, what's happening?”

The man in the mandolorian armour looked at Diernot, and then he whispered something to the woman as the pilot walked back inside. A second later the black droids descended the ramp again and stood in a line. Slowly, sensing what was about to happen, Malisane backed off, holding his scatter gun in one hand. Quickly he felt for the communicator in the hidden pocket, and felt for the biggest button at the bottom and pressed it. He looked at the woman, who gave a final cold smile at the assembled guards. The six droids raised their right hands in one smooth synchronised motion. Standing near the front, Diernot was the first to die, as a laser bolt hit him in the chest. Three more of the guards fell quickly after as the droids laser bolts found them as Kravis, Melis and the remaining guards ran for cover, raising their weapons and returning fire.

Malisane raised his scattergun and fired towards the now helmeted Garrick and the woman, and she raised a hand, a barrier appearing in front of them. As the scattergun shot hit the barrier it disintegrated as the kinetic energy ripped it apart, and the woman snarled as Garrick moved quickly to the left, his rifle in his hands as he returned fire. A second later Malisane saw Zero speeding toward the shuttle from behind, panels on its body opening and weapons emerging, a rifle pointing from its chest and blaster cannon on a compressed beam unfolding over its back to end up over its right side. There was a pause as a projectile fired from a hatch in its dome, arching high over the shuttle. Malisane raised a hand and pulled with the force, as Zero began to open fire.

Malisane caught the saber hilt in his right hand as he dropped the scattergun. The guards around him were firing at the droids, who were taking the laser fire on their armoured shells without any obvious effect. Their shots however were more deadly as one by one the guards fell twitching to the floor. One of the droids exploded as an armour piecing shot from the assassin droid hit it, spraying debris on the other droids. Caught in a crossfire the woman had run for cover behind her office, as Garrick turned and fired on the droid with his blaster rifle. As Zero returned fire with his blaster cannon, several of the droids turned to attack it causing the astromech to back off slightly but continue to fire with a loud angry tone from its vocal emitters. A second droid exploded from a second of the droids shot. As the droids attention became split between the dwindling guards and the astromech, Malisane focused on the force, and as strength burned through him he leapt from cover, saber igniting in his hand.

With a move he had practised many times in both the training room and battle, the Warlord landed amongst the droids who spun to attack him, and without pausing he made a thrusting gesture at the ground. As the droids stumbled back as the telekinetic energy rocked the ground, Malisane swept his saber back and forth, slicing through metal and deflecting shots against him, including one from behind from a guard. When the last droid had fallen he sensed a sudden movement to his left and swung his saber around as a furious Garrick attacked him.

As his beskad met the lightsaber there was a shower of sparks, and the mandalorian tried another attack. Then Malisane was on him. Fueled by rage and the force he hacked at the armoured opponent, any sense of style gone as he focused only on the death of his opponent. He broke the defence several times, his azure saber scoring down the sides of the beskar armour but Garrick was unharmed. Then there was a sudden roar of engines as the remaining man on board the shuttle lifted it up in the sky. Now it was Garrick's turn to roar in fury as he sensed betrayal. Sensing his opponent distracted, Malisane swept his glowing blade round and found the gap in the beskar between chestplate and helmet. As Garrick's head tumbled off to roll away, his body collapsed onto the floor.

Malisane looked up as the shuttle continued to lift into the sky, as the few remaining guards fired at it, to be joined by Zero as the droid targeted the shuttle. The crafts shields flicked as the blaster fire and explosive rounds hit it. A small blaster cannon emerged from its base, rotating and returning fire at the guards and the droid who was moving back and forth avoiding the shots and firing back. Then there was a louder roar of engines as from behind the hill next to the compound a black Lancer Patrol Craft emerged, targeting the shuttle as its upgraded front laser cannons hit the shuttle, which was still trying to manoeuvre under fire to gain height. As it moved away its engines burst into flames and the shuttle dropped from the sky, hitting the rocky ground hard near the compound and bouncing onto its roof, flames circling it. The Lancer Patrol craft flew over it, and then banked hard and flew back towards the compound gate, coming into land.

It was quiet now. The droids were destroyed, except Zero. The guards were dead or dying, and smoke filled the area. Malisane walked across the compound towards the office and warehouse. He was weary, feeling the usual comedown from enhancing himself with the force. Then he stopped as he heard a tone of alarm from the astromech, and a figure emerged from behind the office building.

The woman walked towards him, her hair unbound and tussled now, and her previously imperious features furious. Malisane gripped his saber as he walked towards her. To the left Zero was aiming all weapons at the enemy. From the right his pilot Captain Dagen emerged through the gate, heavy blaster pistol in hand. Behind her walked Needle, the unarmed Collegium droid watching but staying out of range.

“I want her alive!” Malisane shouted, the order mostly aimed at the kill hungry assassin droid.

The woman focused on him. “You do, do you?”

“Surrender,” Malisane ordered, “or die.”

“Surrender?” she repeated, “no, I do not think the Father would like that.”

“Who?” he demanded.

“The Father. And he thinks you are nothing. And so do I.”

Malisane snarled, and then summoning the force once more he leapt forward, lightsaber gripped, and then suddenly found himself stuck in the air, and then being propelled backwards at speed. He hit the side of the shower block and then the ground heavily. As he raised his head he heard a blast and saw Zero had instinctively opened fire with his heavy blaster cannon. The woman's robes sizzled, and blackened, and she snarled in annoyance and raise a hand towards the droid. Lightning burst from it, crackling round the astromech and he became still, before toppling backwards. Then there was a second shot as Cerys Dagen began running across the right hand side of the compound, firing her DL-44 at the enemy who raised her left hand, and another barrier shimmered between her and the Miraluka, flickering as the shots hit it. Cerys leapt forward and rolled, landing behind the office block where she ducked down, blaster in hand and breathing heavily.

Malisane got to his feet. He was winded but in one piece. He looked around and saw his discarded scattergun. He quickly made a rush for it, glancing at the enemy who was turning towards where Cerys was hiding. He grabbed it and began running, aiming the weapon at the enemy and firing. She rocked as the shots hit her, crashing against the office wall. More rips appeared in armour, and as he got closer Malisane could make out what he had expected to see, crystals embedded in her chest and sides, glowing faintly. As the scattergun clicked empty he dropped it again and she turned to him furiously. Summoning the last of his strength he focused on her, trying to use his own force power to smother hers. She snarled at him and he felt her struggle against him. Then she broke free and he felt another invisible blow that drove him stumbling backwards to land heavily once more. The enemy's face burst into a dark smile, as she began to advance on him. “I have you now. The Father will be pleased.”

Then there was a burst of movement and Cerys leapt down from on top of the office, sith sword in hand as she drove it down, slicing down at the back of the woman. The alchemically sharpened steel scraped down the crystals in her back, and then found a gap and drove in, causing the woman to gasp as it pierced her back. The woman staggered, and then turned, dragging the blade from Cerys' grip as she prepared to attack, still somehow able to continue as the Miraluka looked through her force vision at the abomination in horror. And then there was a sudden movement the enemy as a white mechanical figure moved forward, jabbing a sharp object into the woman's neck. Needle waited patiently as she stiffened, and then collapsed on the floor.

Malisane looked up wearily as the Collegium droid studied the still living body of the woman in calm fascination. “What did you give her?”

“A very strong sedative Master. It would have killed most sentients. However it and her wounds are not fatal.”

“Good, you may want to give her another dose in a while.” He looked round as Cerys made her way across to the astromech droid and examined it, then pulled it upright and held her fingers on two buttons for ten seconds. Then the lights flashed across Zero's front panel and his head revolved several times as he emitted loud tones.

“Successful reboot,” Cerys announced, “he will be fine.

“Good,” Malisane said. “Zero, break into the office and see what data you can recover. Needle, go into the mine and take samples of whatever they were mining out of or growing on the wall. Cerys go to that shuttle wreck and see if you can recover any of those crystal crates I will carry our friend here back to the Deathshead. I want to be out of here in an hour before anyone else comes.”

As he picked up the heavy woman over his shoulder and began to carry her back to his ship, he glanced to the left where he saw the corpses of Kravis and Diermot. Normally he did not care about anyone outside his Clan, but the guards had helped him and the Warlord usually returned loyalty. There was nothing to be done here though. He sighed and continued walking as his team began their duties.