

Outer Rim Territories
Jomark system
Godless Matron Chute Town

As Selika pushed her way through the masses that dominated the dark allies of Chute Town she mused to herself how things were always fluid. Until just under a year ago, the *Matron* was hers, and those aboard her would part before her like the sea before a ship. But, those days had passed since she returned to the throne of Plagueis and left the halls of power that comprised the Dark Council behind. But, the change did have its benefits. Now, instead of lording over the grit and grime of her corner of the galactic fringe she could rule over a world, a system, more directly. Instead of smugglers and lowlifes, slaves and armies stood at her beck and call. A more traditional sort of power that better fit her sensibilities and desire.

All that aside, the problems that she now faced had driven her back to a familiar place. The denizens of the *Matron* did provide their own benefits after all. Additionally, the ability to move silently amongst them, clad in a hooded cloak and shielded from view, offered the kind of anonymity that would have been hard to find and even harder to justify to a security detail that felt the need to oversee her every move. Not having to go ten rounds with a Royal Guardsman about personal safety was also a benefit of her new reality.

What had brought her here, back to her former flagship, was the threat that had begun to permeate the Brotherhood since the conflict on Dandoran. The infighting between the Tenixir Revenants and the Severian Principate had subsided, but the forces loyal to the self proclaimed Seer had been unlike any the Brotherhood had faced before. Their crystal-driven abominations had appeared as if from nowhere, or better yet as if they had leapt fully formed from the nightmares of the Sith. Nothing was known about them, and it had stymied the intelligence apparatus of both the Brotherhood and the Ascendant Clan. Or, at least if the Dark Council knew more they had chosen not to share. And so, here she was. Called back to the dirty, stench filled streets of the *Matron* to gather information from her own, personal sources.

Pushing past the last of the crowd, she ducked into a doorway and entered a dimly lit spice den. Seated around the periphery on various seats and cushions were sentients of all shape and size, most puffing on their hookahs and filling the room with a smoke that left Selika slightly light headed. Banishing the mind altering vapors from her with the Force, Selika pulled down her hood and spoke to the manager, a rough faced Klatooinian by the name of Uris.

"He's expecting me," she said quietly, not disturbing the others around the room. Even still, the words seemed to cut the silence like a blade.

Nodding, the manager ushered her through a series of rooms. Each was dominated by stronger and stronger spice smoke, until they finally reached a blast door that was part of the ship's structure itself. The "back room" had originally been an ammunition storage locker off the Trade Federation ship's hangar, and now it housed something much more lethal.

"Kranion," Selika said as she stepped through the rapidly opening doorway into a brightly lit, impeccably clean office.

Tren Kranion, information broker, had made his home on the *Matron* for several years. Within his vaults was information that could destabilize markets and even shake governments. And all of it could be had, if you could meet his prices.

"Master Roh, how nice to see you again," Kranion said, rising from a desk surrounded by holo monitors. "I believe I have something you want, if you have my payment."

Selika nodded. "The initial portion is already in your account."

"Excellent, excellent," Kranion responded jovially, then held up a data disk. "Everything I have on the Children of Mortis."