Haunted Past
By Tuuka Vurr

Vandor
Ancient Citadel
Holocron Reliquary

Tuuka stood before the statue, it was a depiction of an ancient god or ruler of a bygone era, the Mandalorian wasn't sure which. It sat upon a likewise stone throne with an outstretched arm, in its palm was the holocron Korvis had sent him to find. It seemed to glitter across its pyramidal, ornate edges, as if to be yearning and calling out to be found. The Aedile reached a gloved hand out to secure it but was stopped when a ghostly apparition clamped its spectral hand around his bracer.

"Don't," The spirit said as it gestured to the corpses around the room, "they'll tear you apart."

Looking around the room he finally noticed them, a handful of people left in various positions. Some laying, some sitting against the stone walls, all of them torn apart and left with the mask of sheer terror left on their faces. After a few moments his gaze finally settled back upon the ghost, it was the visage of his long departed mother.

"Hello ad'ika."

"Buir? How are you here?" Tuuka removed his T-visor helmet from his head and held it on his hip, tears welling up in his eyes.

"I've been following you ever since. Guiding you along your path. Whether you knew it or not," She said with a smile.

Tears began to dribble from his eyes. He was doing everything he could to keep the emotional flood gate closed. "But why now? After all this time?"

"This place allows me to manifest myself where I couldn't otherwise. I've come to warn you, there are two others following you. They're out for blood."

"Who? Why? Wh-"

"I love you, ad'ika," she said with a solemn smile as she reached out to caress his cheek.

"I love-" he blinked in the middle of his sentence and she was gone, "you too, mom."

Tuuka wiped his nose on the elbow of his flight suit and donned his helmet again. As it clipped back into place a gruff voice came from behind him, from the statue.

"Tuuka, Tuuka, Tuuka." The voice said as it clicked its tongue three times.

He spun around to face the statue and found his fallen comrade, Simir Tenn, sitting at its base in full beskar'gam, helmet beside him.

"Al'orad! It's been a long time!" The apparition said as it stood up to approach him.

"It has," Tuuka replied. His posture stiffened as Simir stood face to face with him.

"When was the last time? Ah, I remember, when you had me killed!" He roared as he hit Tuuka with a right cross that drove him to one knee.

"You know I didn't-" A boot caught Tuuka under the chin that sent him sprawling onto his back.

"Stop lying!" Simir roared again as some force picked Tuuka up and hurled him against the wall like a rag doll.

Tuuka groaned as he dragged himself to his feet. "You're right," he said. "I did give the order. And it was the wrong one." He stood up straight to address his comrade. "And every order since then, I've been at the front of it to make sure it doesn't happen again. Ni ceta. I'm sorry."

Simir smirked. "I just wanted to see you grovel, vod. I've already accepted it. Jate'kara."

As if a strong wind had passed through the reliquary, Simir dissolved into it without a trace leaving the Mandalorian to dust himself off. With the second ghost come and gone, Tuuka knew a third would be on its way, he just didn't know when. As the thought crossed his mind the distinct *snap-hiss* of a lightsaber ignited behind him.

He didn't wait, drawing the beskad from behind his back and whirling around in an overhead strike aimed at the source of the humming plasma blade. It was caught in an overhead block that began to heat the beskar blade. Tuuka retreated a step back in an effort to keep the integrity of his blade and to address his aggressor.

It was the ghost of a Jedi, an enemy in a former life, well, more of a mark by the Mandalorian's standards. With his sword in the guard position, he addressed the Human with the green lightsaber.

"Ty Rann. Still looking as pretty as ever," Tuuka said, referring to the burn marks on the left side of his face and robes, courtesy of his gauntlet flamethrower from their last encounter.

"You're the reason I'm dead," he snarled back.

"Ty, doesn't anger lead to hate, or some nonsense?" Tuuka quipped.

"Oh, It does. And I do," he barked back

The duo proceeded to exchange a series of slashes, parries and ripostes, each scoring a hit. Tuuka's score passed harmlessly through the specter while the lightsaber rang off his thigh guard. They withdrew again in an attempt to size the other up.

An idea came to Tuuka as he dropped his guard and put one hand behind his back. He advanced forward, holding out the hand that was just behind his back, in his palm was a blinking electromagnetic pulse grenade.

"Piss off, ghost." He hissed as it exploded into a blossom of electrical discharge that shredded the wraith's manifestation. Luckily for Tuuka, he had installed energy sinks into his armor, allowing it to be unaffected by the blast.

Unsure if his trick would work, he waited for a few moments for the phantom to reappear and begin the duel once more. The Mandalorian waited on bated breath for the fight to continue but it never came. Satisfied from the silence, he sheathed his beskad and approached the statue for his prize. He knew that Korvis would be extremely pleased upon his return.

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