

I Have a List of People

1815 Galactic Standard Time, The Streets of Nar Shaddaa

Kor Vaal skulked in the gloomy alleyway, his eyes fixed on the cantina, waiting impatiently for the moment to come and absentmindedly toying with the hem of his black robes. The Kel Dor wasn't very good at skulking, he never had been, far too arrogant and proud as he was to make a conscious effort to diminish himself in any way. Anyone looking at him would be well aware that his intentions were dishonest, that there was some deviancy or crime he was about to partake in. And it was the perfect disguise. This was Nar Shaddaa, the Smugglers Moon. Everyone here was up to something, and so the only way to blend in was to look suspicious, to look like just one more smuggler or common thief in the crowd. The locals passed by on the main thoroughfare; gangers, labourers, enforcers, the general riff raff of the bustling city, none of them spared him a second glance. Still, it would not pay to linger too long. He checked his chrono, then looked back at the cantina across the street. This had to happen soon, he knew there would be others with the same objective as him and he could not afford to fail the Inquisitorius. He needed to succeed, to rise through the ranks, to gain the power he knew with every shred of conviction was his to take. But first he needed the datacard hidden in the waitress droid in that cantina.

A movement in the corner of his eye caught his attention; a dashade, his massive bulk barley contained within the ragged overalls of a station dockworker, going almost undetected among the crowd. This one was not quite as capable at blending into the crowd as others of his species were. If he was, Kor Vaal doubted he would have spotted him. He was hurriedly making his way towards the right hand entrance to the cantina while two Humans, similarly dressed in crumpled overalls, were heading in through the left. All three gripped had their left arms tight against their chests, as if their hurrying might cause something to fall out of their overalls. Kor Vaal knew exactly what that something might be. His suspicions were vindicated when the three entered the Cantina and the crack of blaster discharge began, a stray shot shattering a window and causing a scarlet cascade of reflected light to explode out into the street. Within seconds all three were rushing out of the right hand door, the dashade lugging the cantina's slim waitress droid over one massive shoulder, and disappeared down a side street. Kor Vaal heard the sharp whine of speeder bike repulsors powering up, the strained engine sound instantly growing more distant as the group made good its escape into the night.

Everything was in motion now. Kor Vaal took a small silver ring from his robe, gripping it tight in his palm and focusing on its owner. He closed down his senses, reciting an ancient Sith incantation as the world started to fall away around him and hazy images began to fill his mind.

Greif for a loved one. Crushing loneliness. Blood. Blood on his hands, not his fault, should never have been there.

He shook his head, forcing the borrowed memories of the rings owner out and pulling the Force more fully through the item

A cityscape, rushing by at high speed. Dodging, can't get caught, got to get to the drop off...

That was it. He had them now, the connection in the Force was made. He could track them wherever they were. The plan was in motion. Kor Vaal headed off after the three, and the droid he needed.

5 Hours Earlier, The Voss'a La Games Room, Nar Shaddaa

"We just take part of the droid," the dashade, Nixxus, grunted, "Easier to carry, easier to get away."

"No," Kor Vaal reprimanded, "I want no risk to what the droid is carrying. Take it to a secure location, then dismantle it properly."

The four of them were huddled around the small table in the gambling den. It hadn't taken long for Kor Vaal to find suitable candidates for this job. Voss'a La's, a single circular room of concentric levels like some primitive fighting arena, always attracted a wide clientele of hired guns, pickpockets and general scum. They were never the best, usually those trying to make their mark before they caught the attention of the more prestigious slum lords and gang bosses, or petty pickpockets, burglars and data hackers looking to sell their most recent acquisitions to the Games Room's fences. Most of their money would end up behind the bar or frittered away in the rows of slot machines or at the sabacc tables. Plenty went on death sticks and other narcotics bought from twitchy dealers throughout the place, more still on the myriad dancers gyrating on podiums in the central pit. All of the dancers, from many different species, were emaciated and blurry eyed, their movements mostly sluggish from whatever intoxicants they could lay their hands on. But in the smoke filled dingy and grime, that seemed to matter little to the various patrons. They paid their money, the dancers reciprocated with their undivided attention for a moment, and the illusion was of beauty and attraction was maintained.

"What about Boss Kull," Denaine, the human female of the group muttered as she pushed her hand back through her short black hair, "That's in his territory, won't he be pretty rucked if we go shoot the place up? Why not just buy the droid from him?"

"My organization does not want to attract unwanted attention. We are fully able to recompense certain individuals after the fact, but initially we would like our involvement in this to be indirect."

"What organization? You still haven't told us that." Marus, the other human nervously chimed in. The man's sunken eyes constantly twitched around the room from under the shaggy mess of dirty blond hair which dangled down from his head. Kor Vaal's knuckles tightened. This line of questioning was becoming especially infuriating.

"You have been told already that this of no concern to you. Suffice to say that we have the resources to see you well rewarded for completing this task."

Marus shook his head. "I don't like this. I don't need to be getting mixed up in some crazy offworld ruck," He turned to Nixxus and Denaine, "I mean, this guy comes in, with no word who he's working for asking us to shoot up Kull's place, and what then? Are him and his *organization* gonna back us up when Kull comes looking for us? We owe enough to Shaka alone, one more slip with him and we've had it."

Vaal physically bristled now. He leaned in closer, the Kel Dor's voice rasping low and menacingly from his mask. "What makes you think you'll fair better if you refuse, now that I have divulged this information to you?"

Marus' eyes went wide, "See! This guy's gonna use us and leave us hangin--"

"Gor'vos na ka!" Nixxus hissed. Marus abruptly stopped talking and glanced worriedly at the glaring dashade. Kor Vaal didn't understand what was said, or even what language it was, but he could take a guess at what it meant. Nixxus turned back to him, "We take job. Not hard, money good. Enough to pay Shaka, more left to get best gear. Worth the risk."

Kor Vaal kept his stare fixed on Marus for a moment before settling back into his seat.

"How soon can it be done?"

"Around eighteen hundred," chimed in Denaine, "Just before the shift change for most of that area. Be quiet enough to get in and out, then we can get lost in the crowd."

"Good. Get the droid to a secure place and get the datacard out. I'll meet you there."

Nixxus looked at Kor Vaal quizzically, "How you find us?"

"I have my ways. That ring," he pointed to Marus' hand, "Simply give it to me and I will be able to find you."

"What?" Marus started, "No! You're not taking anything of mine, how would that even help?"

Nixxus growled at the human. Marus looked as though he was about to say something to the hulking dashade, but thought better of it. He reluctantly took the ring off and threw it onto the table. Vaal took the ring and placed it inside his robes.

"You find with that?" Asked Nixxus, "I work with Gand once, he find things well. You do like Gand?"

An amused smile creased Vaal's face, the expression hidden to all by the Kel Dor's mask.

"Yes," he replied, "I do like Gand."

1900 Galactic Standard Time, A Warehouse District on Nar Shaddaa

It took Kor Vaal longer than he would have liked to travel across the city. The group he had hired travelled far further than he had expected them too. Time was a crucial factor in this mission, he knew that the Jedi sympathisers would be sending their own agents to ascertain what happened to the datacard, and in the end he was forced to hire a civilian transport. Eventually, after brushing off the incessant small talk the duros driver forced upon him, Vaal was able to direct them to a group of crumbling warehouses. The gloom was oppressive. The city had grown well above this place, it's towers and walkways bearing down on them. This district seemed to have been all but forgotten about, like a weed at the base of a tree, starved of sunlight by the thick branches high above it.

"Don't know what you want to go here for friend," the driver said as Vaal got out of the vehicle, "But here's here. Long trip, that's one thirty-five local."

Kor Vaal walked round the vehicle to the driver's open window. A pistol emerged, the barrel levelled squarely at the Kel Dor's head.

"And no funny business," the duros remarked casually, a cocksure smile across his face, "Been driving these streets for a long time, not lost a fare yet. Hundred and thirty-five. Now."

Kor Vaal's anger flared up. He was a Sith, a Knight of the Brotherhood, and this creature dared to threaten him! As if the ridiculous prattling he'd been subjected to on the way here wasn't enough to sign the driver's death warrant. Kor Vaal felt the barely contained reflex in his hand that wanted to drag his fingers to his lightsaber and end the duros there, but he resisted. Subtlety was required. He focused on the driver, calling on the Force and pushing all of his outrage at the incident into his voice. He moved his hand as if to reach inside his robe for currency, but flexed his fingers as his hand crossed his body.

"I have already paid you for this journey." Vaal growled.

The barrel of the pistol began to sink down.

"You've already paid me for this journey." The driver obediently repeated, his eyes losing focus.

"You will take no other passengers tonight."

"I will take no other passengers tonight."

"You will drive home now. The long way."

The pistol disappeared, and the duros put his hands back to the wheel.

"I will drive home now, the long way round."

Kor Vaal let out a long, slow breath as the speeder's engine began to whine and the vehicle lazily started to move away. He paused a moment to watch the speeder leave, allowing his grip on the Force to loosen and feeling it gently ebb away from him. He didn't believe the suggestion implanted in the duros drivers mind would hold until he reached his home, but that didn't matter, he just needed time to complete this business and then he would be away. He took the ring out again and began to concentrate. The trio had come to one of these warehouses, but which one? As he concentrated, he began to feel the tendrils of connection snaking their way out from him, forming a path to its most recent owner. There was nothing he could 'see' in the truest sense of the word, there were no tendrils of light or darkness forming in the air in front him. What formed in his mind were whispers on the edge of sight, half formed shadows he could almost hear pulling him towards his target. The pull would have been unexplainable to an outsider, at best regarded as a delusion of the mind and at worst as the demented ravings of the mentally unstable. Not that Kor Vaal had ever tried to explain it. And why would he? Secrets such as these were the domain of the powerful, they were either experienced and known or they were not. The Force led away to the buildings to Vaal's left. Time had begun to diminish the rings connection to its owner, but it still left plenty for him to follow, and he began to make his way to his goal, mentally preparing himself for what lay ahead.

The Kel Dor stepped through the access way to the warehouse. The single door had been battered inwards some time ago, and now hung open on a single bent hinge. The rest of the building had fared little better. At some point in its past the place had seen a battle, evident enough from old blaster marks that peppered the walls, as well as the slight overhanging pall that encroached on his consciousness. Vague impressions brushed the edges of Vaal's mind; excitement, pain, victory and death had left their unmistakable tang in the air, but they were too far in the past to provide much concrete information. He moved through the ruins of what once appeared to be an office, it's grey walls streaked with damp and tables and chairs left overturned and shattered all around him, and went through a side door to

the warehouse proper. Chains hung from the ceiling, still and silent but for the faint drip of rusted water dripping from those in the far left corner. A mezzanine lined the walls in the upper section, it's railings bent outwards along certain sections of it, looming with the threat of falling over the floor below. The rest of the space was empty but for a few large crates scattered about the floor, most broken open, all old and pitted with age. In the centre of the dank space were his three associates. Nixxus sat on a crate, his massive reptilian form hunched over, his blaster resting in his hands. Denaine stood leaning against a support pillar, similarly armed, while Marus paced amid a pile of scrap metal that had once been the cantina's waitress droid. They all turned at Vaal's approach.

"You have it then?" the Knight asked.

"We got," Nixxus replied as he gestured toward Marus, who obediently held up the datacard for Vaal to see, "Easy job, no problems."

"Good. As agreed you will be paid half when I return to my ship, and the other half will be transferred once my organization has ensured the data has been uncorrupted by your extraction."

"Marus good, he know what he do," the dashade said as he rose from his makeshift seat, "But I wonder, what on card? Why all secrets? Why pay so good?"

"That is none of your concern," Vaal replied, trying to keep his tone level, "Give me the datacard. Now."

"Maybe I don't. Maybe I get better price from Shaka, or other boss," the blaster raised in Kor Vaal's direction, "Maybe you die here, I find ship and take anyway. How you stop me?"

"I already have." Vaal hissed. Nixxus had no time to react before the blaster rang out and the lumbering dashade fell forward and slammed down hard on the floor. Marus stood behind him, his blaster still raised, a look of disbelief plastered across his features.

6 Hours Earlier, The Voss'a La Games Room, Nar Shaddaa

"We need transport," Nixxus grunted as he stood to leave the table, "I know guy. He here somewhere. I find, make arrangement."

Kor Vaal was left alone with the two humans. Denaine seemed content to lose herself in her drink, while Marus shifted uncomfortably in his seat. That was good, it would take much less effort to coerce the twitchy human into the next stage of his plan. For a moment none of them said nothing, allowing Vaal to draw the Force into himself and letting it spill into Marus, pulling forth the human's worries and fears. There it was, the feeling of being trapped, of being stuck on this world with no options, of his debts creeping up to catch him in the end. Vaal could almost see the tiny spot of black terror growing in the man's mind. This wouldn't take much.

"I have a feeling that Nixxus cannot wholly be trusted." the Kel Dor said softly. Both humans exchanged a glance with each other.

"If you thought that, why did you take us on?" asked Denaine, leaning in closer.

"I need the job done, you three seem capable and time is of the essence, I am not able to trawl the city looking for others. Tell me, would the dashade honour this contract, or would he simply go along with it until he could sell the datacard for favour with some petty crime lord?"

"He..." she trailed off, glancing nervously around.

"As I thought. This is why I have another offer, one for the two of you alone. When Nixxus betrays me, and I have no doubt he will, you will eliminate him." Vaal let the statement hang in the air for a moment. Denaine and Marus exchanged nervous glances.

"What's in it for us?" Denaine asked, her gaze turned down.

"The monetary payment will remain the same, simply split two ways rather than three. My organization can also offer you passage off world, as well as new ident's, facial reconstruction and anything else you may need. The chance to start a new life, far away from this pit."

"You can do that?" Marus blurted, his voice quivering slightly, "you can get us away from here? Free and clear? This organization of yours has that power?"

A predatory smile once again surfaced behind Vaal's mask. He wondered whether he had needed the aid of the Force after all.

"Oh yes, we can ensure that no-one here will come for you again."

1910 Galactic Standard Time, A Disused Warehouse, Nar Shaddaa

Marus lowered his weapon slowly, but the look of shock remained carved into his face.

"Never thought you had it in you Mar," Denaine laughed as she approached the fallen dashade, "And I was so looking forward to squaring things with him myself. Maybe I'll just put a few more into him, to be sure."

"No!", the sudden burst of Force power shook the human, and Kor Vaal felt a slight fatigue settle onto him, "I do not want to attract undue attention. One shot was enough noise."

"So you...you can help us now?" Marus said, the pistol lowered and hanging heavy at his side, "You can get us out of here? Away from all this?"

Vaal looked over to the man, his face a picture of confusion. The human's pleading tone was practically offensive to Vaal. The sooner this was over with the better.

"Yes. Now, give me the card."

The Kel Dor stretched out his hand, and Marus hesitantly stepped towards the him. The flash of warning hit Kor Vaal as a blaster bolt took the human high in the chest, and the Knight spun to avoid the next shot which hit the floor beside him. Denaine barely had time to react before she was hit in the back. Vaal's saber ignited and he flicked it up, deflecting a shot which would have taken him through the eye.

"Give us the card Sith-scum."

The gruff voice, and the shots that been intended for him, came from the mezzanine floor above him. A figure was knelt there, clad in patchwork armour of dark greens and greys, a heavy blaster held pointed at Kor Vaal. He was human, his slab like features lined with age and criss-crossed with deep scars. His hair was blonde, cropped short to his head, but it was his eyes that caught the Kel Dor's attention. There was a deep hatred in those eyes.

"You think I will allow you to leave here with it?" Vaal let the Force wash out from him, sensing two others behind him, their intent clear, "Fools, I will see you all dead for daring to attack me."

A wolfish grin flashed along the man's face. "You have three blasters pointed at you, you'll forgive me if I seem unthreatened."

“You know what I am. Shoot me. Whether your death comes from my weapons blade or the shots it sends back to you matters little to me.” It was a bluff of course. Kor Vaal was skilled with a lightsaber, but his form was Djem So. He would be able to deflect the first few shots, but not accurately enough to kill his three attackers, and under sustained fire he knew his chances would be slim. But his deceit paid off. The armoured man hesitated for a moment before he swung his rifle over his shoulder and rose.

“Well then,” the man said, reaching behind him and producing a metre-long metal cylinder, “We’ll have to find some other way to overcome this little problem.”

He pressed a button and the cylinder extended, its ends springing up into a corona of light. Kor Vaal glanced behind him to see the other two armoured figures ignite shorter weapons of a similar nature. Shock weapons. They had come prepared. The man on the mezzanine leapt over the railing and Kor Vaal wasted no time, spinning and rushing at the attacker to his right. He brought his blade up and across in a two handed swing that split the man’s armour and chest from his waist to his helmet before he could react. He bent his knees and carried the swing over, deflecting a downward strike from the second attacker’s shock baton, sending sparks leaping away from the conflicting energies of the weapons strikes. The staff wielder was on him then, and the Kel Dor twisted and parried as the twin heads of the staff sought a way through his defence. He tried to stab out, but the warrior spun and deflected the blade, spinning with the momentum and swinging his staff at the Knight’s head. Vaal met the staff with his saber and closed in on the warrior, his elbow shooting out and taking the man in the face. He staggered back, but the second enemy rushed in again, hammering into the Kel Dor with rapid, heavy blows. The man was skilled, obviously trained for combat against a lightsaber wielding opponent, but he was no Force user. Vaal drew on his anger and hatred, forcing it into his arms as he parried an overhead strike. The force of the blow sent the weapon flying from his assailant’s hands and he stumbled backwards. Kor Vaal followed through with strike, spinning and sweeping his blade wide at his attacker’s neck, severing his head. The body hadn’t hit the floor before the staff wielder was on him again, raining down a frenzy of blows at the Sith. Kor Vaal began to feel his movements become sluggish, his use of the Force beginning to fatigue his body. His enemy sensed the weakness and pressed the advantage, his staff blurring with the unrelenting barrage he unleashed on the Kel Dor. A blaster shot suddenly rang out, and the staff wielder toppled forward, his weapon deactivating as it skittered away. Kor Vaal panted hard and looked over to the source of his survival. Nixxus was propped up on one elbow, a blaster in his other hand.

“Out longer than I thought,” the dashade grunted, “There more?”

6 Hours Earlier, The Voss’a La Games Room, Nar Shaddaa

“You have made the necessary arrangements?” Kor Vaal enquired as Nixxus returned to their table.

“Done,” the dashade replied as he took his seat, “Three speeder bikes, they out back.”

“Then all is prepared.”

Nixxus looked at the two humans. “You two, go talk to Haleck Rosin, he take you to bikes. I finish up with friend here.”

The humans nodded silently and left the table. Kor Vaal saw Marus nervously glance back at them once before he was swallowed up in the crowd.

The Knight turned to Nixxus.

"It is done."

"They agree? Which one gonna take the shot?"

"Likely Marus. Convincing him was easy. You are certain you can adjust their blasters to a non-lethal setting?"

"That no problem. Not take much, dashade hardy, we take hits well. How you know we get attacked?"

"I have my sources." Kor Vaal gave no more. He thought back to his vision aboard the ship on his way to the planet. That they would be attacked by Jedi sympathisers was no great revelation, but the glimpses the Kel Dor had seen had made him certain he would need help. What better ally than one your enemies thought was already dead?

1920 Galactic Standard Time, A Disused Warehouse, Nar Saddaa

Kor Vaal picked up the datacard from where it had landed next to Marus' corpse. He studied it carefully, and it seemed to him to be undamaged, which was a relief. To say he was afraid of retribution from the Inquisitorius for failing his mission would not be entirely true. Fear was for the weak, and it did not serve well to put too much stock in it. But he was very aware what the price of failure would be. The punishments of the Inquisitorius were not common knowledge in the Brotherhood, but he knew full well what the Grand Master was capable of, and he had no desire to incur the wrath or the imagination of the Dark Lord or the masters of the Inquisitorius. He turned to see Nixxus relieving the corpses of their weapons.

"Finished?" the Knight enquired, though none would have mistaken it for an actual question.

"Stupid to leave them here. Good weapons. We go when you ready."

"As we agreed, you'll receive your payment as soon as I am safely returned to my ship."

"I know, we get there easy," the dashade waved his hand dismissively, "Rest of our deal stand? You take me with, I join your group?"

"As promised."

The way was clear now. The sympathizers were unlikely to send more than one group after the datacard, they desired attention as little as the Inquisitorius did. The bodies would be discovered eventually, but what was there to find? Some deal gone wrong, or retribution for the attack on the cantina, ending in a shootout and corpses on both sides. Only one question remained in Kor Vaal's mind; when and where to kill the dashade?

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The End

**Knight Kor Vaal (Sith) / House Excidium of Clan Scholae Palatinae [SA: V] [ACC: Q]
[INQ: IV]
SCx2 / ACx4 / DCx4 / Cr:2R-3A-10S-3E-4T / CFx2 / CIX8 / DSSx3 / LSx2 / S:4AI
{SA: MVH - MVLO - DMPH - DPE - DPV}**