

PLA/CSP/TAL Probowl
[Week 1] Fiction

An artifact for an artifact
(by Rian Taldrya, #10701)

"Reaching Erised in about one minutes" K8-S3Y stated, walking over to Rian Taldrya who seated in *StormCloud's* command seat in the middle of the ships modified cockpit.

Nodding, the Taldryan Consul opened a channel to the ship escorting his vessel. "Alright ladies, I had to turn in quite a lot favors from the Syndicate in order to learn about the location of this place. That for we are going to do this by the book, we get in, do our thing and get out again, easy peasy."

"Copy that Rian, but are you really sure they got what you are looking for?" Came the sweet voice of his fiance from the modified Theta-class shuttle that served as the personal escort of the Taldryan Consul.

Seconds later Jaeger and *StormCloud* broke from hyperspace almost in unison with the latter immediately taking a lead role in their formation before speeding towards the asteroid belt surrounding the system's lone planet.

"Master they are hailing us." The droid called from the console in front of him.

"Put them through."

"The system you have entered is restricted, leave at once or prepare to be destroyed."

"Scanners are picking up various signatures on an intercept course." The droid warned.

"There is no need for such action." The Consul tried to sooth the situation. "I am in search of a valuable object, one I got told it could be found here in the Vault of Erised.

For a moment there was silence but then the voice said: "You sound very confident of this and because of this I assume you know that there is a price to pay for those who want enter the vault."

"Yes, I am." Rian said.

"Very well then, you may proceed to the following coordinates, the Vault is yours to enter but only yours, those who accompany may stay right where they are until you are done with what you have come for." The communique was cut without further notice.

"Am I the only one feeling this sticks of rancor poo." came the Voice of the other ship's pilot over the comm.

"Don't worry it will all be good." Rian stated, not only assuring the rest of his team but himself as well."

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Several minutes later, the *StormCloud* had landed in a highly secured hangar bay on a platform located in the icy atmosphere of Erised.

Looking past the ship's viewport, Rian could make out a group entering the hangar and walking toward his ship. "Looks like the welcoming party is about to arrive. Kasey, prepare the package, I will make the first contact."

Rian, clad in his black colored flightsuit rather than in the robes of Force-user and only armed with his Bo-rifle stood in the *StormCloud's* airlock, awaiting the party to arrive.

The group was led by a Sephi male with a considerably wrinkled face and large, pointy ears. Once they reached the end of the boarding ramp, Rian casually walked it down to meet them, bowing his head slightly.

"May I introduce myself," The Sephi spoke up. "I am Areviin Falora, the Collector and Archivist of this Vault."

Rian made a step forward, reaching out with his hand to greet the Sephi but stopped immediately when the rest of the group trained the business ends of their blaster rifles at him. "I'm sorry."

"No need to apologize, but as stated earlier, to walk this halls requires a prize to pay."

"Of course Master Falora." Rian replied, indicating up the ramp behind him. "An artifact for an artifact."

With the words spoken, Kasey appeared in the airlock, carrying a small chest in his hands.

Once the droid had walked down the ramp, Rian unlocked the chest and made way to Falora to inspect the item brought before him.

"The lightsaber of a Jedi." Rian described the item within embed on a pillow. "The former owner claimed all its materials have been forged on a planet that is no longer alive."

Though his ears twitched the Sephi seemed casually uninterested in the artfully crafted item bearing Rian's Clan crest cast from aurodium on its hilt. "I already have several lightsabers in my possession, formerly owned by both Jedi and Sith, so why should I be interested in this particular one as well?"

The Sephi attempted to turn from the Consul but Rian wasn't up for giving up yet. "Well the original owner claimed it to be special since not only the materials came from a planet that has been devastated but the Kyber-crystal to power it does so as well and it produces a purple blade."

Falora stopped in his tracks, his ears again twitching in anticipation. He turned and gave the weapon a closer inspection. "And what did you say how it came into your possession? Of course we will need to make a couple tests to prove its authenticity."

"I didn't steal it nor did I kill the owner if that is what you meant." Rian said a hint of anger in his voice. "It is true though that the original owner is no more, but if you aren't interested."

With a nod he gestured to the droid to close the chest and turn toward the ship.

"No, no there is no need for that. However, I need to prove what you have said and that may take a while."

"How long?" Rian inquired.

"Several hours at least." The Sephi said in a sweet voice while his hands reached out for the chest but stopped as he realized the droid making a step backward. Of course you are free to look for what you came here for?"

"Thank you, I assume we we have a deal then?"

Falora grinned, he hadn't met such a persisting business partner in years. "We have, but remember there is a prize for betrayal as well. You are free to explore the vault, there are droids in every room that can guide you."

Rian nodded. "Kasey, give him the chest."

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"Master do you still believe it to be the right decision to give him your Clan lightsaber?" The droid asked once the Sephi was out of earshot.

"It hurts," Rian admitted. "but like I said, the Knight who once was awarded with it is no longer, Taldryan is more than the place it lived on, it is the people and as such I can always build a new Clan saber as we can rebuild a new home."

"And what about Falora?"

"Well, I don't trust him and thus we should better be prepare for when he proved the authenticity of my lightsaber. Until then I will take a look at what this vault has to offer." Rian said, grabbing his lightsaber and attached it to its holster on his back.

The vault was a vast collection of halls lined with shelves that were further roamed with display cases.

For a moment Rian considered asking for the way but he didn't need to, his unique connection to the Force was all he needed for guidance.

Almost an hour Rian wandered the hall after hall until he finally found what he had been looking for. *The heart of Kaelas* as it was named by the artisan that had once worked the crystal to fit into an amulet in honor of the upcoming marriage of a local king and some hundred years ago. The crystal was said to be forged from the core of a dying star and that if it was touched by the right person, it would start to pulsate from within as if the star was still alive.

Long story told short, the king discarded the amulet as a gift after nothing happened when he touched it. The nameless artisan was killed and over the next centuries the crystal would find itself being chased after by countless mercenaries and thieves.

It was only a coincidence that Rian stumbled over the tale of the crystal when he studied a tome he recently collected from the rescued Taldryan archives aboard the *Paragon*. Now that he was standing in front of it made his heart jump as he could sense the powers within the crystal.

"Ah it seems you found what you were looking for." Falora said, coming up on Rian from behind.

"And you? Were you able to authenticite the origin of the Lightsaber?" Rian asked not taking his eyes from the amulet.

"Yes, yes," The Sephi replied. "it is indeed an interesting piece and I can assure you there are individuals in the known galaxy that would be willing to pay a considerable fortune for it.

"So we are good that in return I will receive that amulet?" Rian asked turning to Falora.

The Sephi grinned evilly. "You know that lightsaber might be worth a lot, but that amulet..."

"And you Falora should know that certain people you deal with are far more powerful than you expect." The Consul said. "That amulet will leave this vault with me, no matter if you give it to me or not.

With that being said, an invisible hand clenched around the Sephi's. "Or do I need to remind you on your own statement that there is a price for betrayal?"

"No, no need for that." The Sephi gasped. "I was just kidding, you can have it.

"Great, thank you." Rian said before releasing the Sephi and grabbing the amulet from its stand. "Kasey, you'd better have the *StormCloud* ready by now."

"As you have ordered master, I assume you have negotiated a deal with Master Falora then?"

"Yes I did. I am on my way back now."

Falora stood to his word and Rian safely reached the airlock of the *StormCloud*, once he was aboard, the ship's engines roared up and Kasey steered her out of the hangar.

It was only when they had jumped into hyperspace when Rian allowed himself to break the crystal from the amulet and feeling it in his hand. Sensation crushed over on him as the history of the crystal flared up as images before his mind and a faint light within the crystal began to pulsate.

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