

Fanatical Publishing's

Weekly Review

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AND NOW, a word from the publisher:

Hello folks, Jochannon here; first let me say thank you for reading, and I hope you enjoy, and please feel free to share it with your friends, re-post it to your profile, spread it around; the more people who get to read it, the better!

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If you want to contribute, I'd love to see your work, send it to me at the aforementioned e-mail address with: 'category(prose, fanfic, poetry), STORY TITLE, Author's Name' in the subject line: please include the text of your story in the body of the email, and please include a cover letter about you, your work, or whatever; include any links you want, and cover art if you have any.

Do you have any questions or comments? If you do, I'd to hear them; write to me at the aforementioned e-mail address.

I'm bad at stopping these things, so I'll just say again: thank you for reading, and I hope you enjoy!

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ORIGINAL LITERATURE

LET'S PLAY DETECTIVE?

CHAPTER 2

FaerieBox
of <http://FaerieBox.deviantart.com>

Returns from flashback.

Well, you can guess what happened after we heard Anne screaming. To tell the truth, it all happened pretty more calmly than you can wonder. They didn't let us, other children – children? Such innocence... Ahm, I said, they didn't let us come into the library, of course. Uncle Henry, Daddy and uncle Jack went there, next calling the doctor, etc... till we are again on the beginning. That room, with the clock tic-taking the time into slices.

The doctor said that Grandpa was dead. We all knew it, but I think no one wanted to believe. Now, the knowledge really hit us, and hurt, like a slap on the face.

I saw it happening around me. The tsunami. Mom's beautiful face twisted in a strange grimace, while she covered her mouth, then she'd stood up and was sobbing in Dad's arms. He held her firmly, silently. Aunt Daisy's and uncle Jack's face had also changed. They appeared so astonished.

It was the first time I really saw that my auntie small eyes were blue. They were widened and her face was smooth, completely *plain*, from perplexity.

Uncle Henry closed his eyes and put a hand on his forehead, like if he had a headache. Maxwell was a little like his mother and uncle Jack: simply too shocked. Anne just kept weeping. But now her cry seemed somehow louder.

I hadn't noticed, but me and sister were now holding each other hands. And we were doing it so hard our fingers looked white. I could hear my own doubtful breathing.

How...? How did this happen today?

I turned to her. Her brown eyes were even more brilliant now, shining with tears which didn't roll down her cheeks. Imprisoned tears. I

couldn't cry either. My heart was sore, but... Oh, it's hard to explain...

The inspector would come soon. In the morning, maybe he would like to ask us some questions, just to fix things, Dr. Colins was saying. Aunt Daisy suddenly stood up.

"But..." she asked, and her lips were trembling slightly "How Daddy died? He... he hit his head on... the fireplace, or something like this, that happen to old people?"

Mom had another fit of sobbing. "Hit his head" and "fireplace" surely didn't go well together, to her.

"I'll have to make some tests before I can be sure, Mrs. Waterford." Doctor Colins evaded her question "But I assume that soon we'll know it better."

She fell again to the sofa.

"Oh. Thank you."

Uncle Henry stepped forward to talk to the doctor, taking control of the situation. I think no one else was able to do this on the present moment.

We were sent to our bedrooms, as Maxwell and Anne. Mom and Aunt led us upstairs, for this way we couldn't stay listening behind the door.

"What happened?" the two were still talking, in a very low tone, behind us. "He was so fine this evening..."

My eyes crossed with sister's for a second, while we were standing on the top of the stairs. I read something on her preoccupied face.

"No." my lips moved, without making sound. "No."

She also began to move her lips. I cut her off with a gesture.

We went to our room, and closed the door. Mom and Aunt went away, to wait for the inspector with the others. But sister was still gazing at me.

"You know it." she said. "I know you know it too."

"No!" I exclaimed, vehemently.

“Carrie...” she continued, slowly. “You know it. He was fine this evening.”

“No, no, no! Don't you-”

“What if it had been...”

“Alice!” I cried “Don't say that so soon!”

“...murder?”

The silence suddenly fell around us both. I stared at her, with big scared eyes. She stared back at me, with a seriousness that was not like her.

She'd said the word. Murder.

And, you know, only our family was there.

BEFORE YOUR EYES

CH3: BACK FROM THE STONE, GONE FROM THE SHOW

Kelsie Phillips

Things were so cold in the stone but at least I could still see however I could hear nothing, not the slightest sound and that terrified me. Voices were all I knew, all I identified truth and lie with, the way I knew everything was alight. Not being able to hear was terrifying. I was very much alive, I felt my heart beat, I could think, I knew my body was still working but I wasn't breathing. Everything was just so wrong and the worst part was I had no idea how to undo it.

In my line of sight I saw Liz peeking out from the curtain entrance the performers use, looking at me, letting me know everything was ok. I could see the Ringleader tame the basilisks, with a whip that left no marks but still clamed them. I could see him speak, read his words but not hear them, not feel them. "There is one way to fix this, get the unicorn." If I could have shuttered I would have, seeing words and not hearing them was awful! I couldn't move my eyes but luckily could see the spotlight shine on a different entrance where a unicorn was drug in. chains were all over it and people pulled it this way and that as it shook its black mane and stabbed with its black horn. The horn and hooves matched and stood out on its blood red fur.

I saw it speak, saw some of the people around me talk of how clever it was to dye a horse's fur and stick a horn on its head. Again I knew it was real and wild. I couldn't hear it but knew it had full trust in the Ringleader just like all the rest, and the Ringleader hated him. Suddenly it broke free of its chance and charged but the ringleader fought at it with the whip. I felt sick to my stomach as the whip really hit its hide, even if unicorns could heal themselves there was no need to hurt it like that. The worst thing was it did not mind, it was not natural for one so wild to be so tame, so part of some act.

The ringleader made the unicorn submit and even bow to him. He took him as his stead and rode him around proudly doing tricks before he went to the first person in the audience. The crimson unicorn lowered his head and put his horn gently on the kid turning him back to normal. Another unicorn came out, pure white and they moved around turning everyone back, inducing me.

The world came back in a rush of sound, cheers and celebration, it was almost overwhelming. "I give you the Beastly Basilisks, and the Unique Unicorns! Let's give them a hand before I

bring out our next star of the show, I need a child to help me out!” I heard the hate once more, bitter icy hate as he spoke of the ‘star’ and love for humans as he spoke of the ‘child’. My father put his hand on my shoulder and smiled to me. “I didn’t know you were part of the show! Being Liz’s friends get you a bit of showbiz?” He asked his mind wiped by the Cockatrice. I nodded. “Yeah, I’m going to go back stage and thank her...I’ll be back.” I said excusing myself.

As I did I saw a thunderbird enter the ring and the ringleader pull a child from the audience. I caught his last words that made anger rise up in me. “Now young one I will show you that these silly creatures are nothing more than our pets. I control them and you can too.” I rushed out trying to block out the words. It was time to try and figure out what was going on here, and if the cards were right find some way to stop it.

I made sure not to look too suspicious as I passed the booths, I figured they were a part of all of this. I wandered around looking like I was going to the bathroom, making sure I went the opposite way of the animal stand, no matter what I would not go back that way. I kept on walking in a circle as big as the show rings. Moving on I could see an empty spot in-between to stands, there was a door there that I’m sure lead to something important like a holding cell.

I summoned my courage and went to the door, passing the two stands that were full of animals, just like the one at the end. “Hey kid, you can’t go in there.” One of the shop owners said. I turned to see a gruff and muscular man in a white blood stained outfit, complete with apron. He looks like the poster of a butcher. “Yeah I can, I’m a new act. You know when people get petrified; it’s mostly just little kids right? Well I’m new here so they start me off on the bottom. I look at the Basilisk, get turned to stone and the Cockatrice wipes my Dad’s mind. It’s more realistic if they have teens getting petrified.” The gruff man nodded. “Oh I see, no one would know about the Cockatrice who wasn’t in the show. Go on.”

I nodded and went through the door, this was much easier than I thought. Once in I could see I was in a hallway, the walls looked removable though. They were blue walls covered in fabric that looked like the unruly fur of some animal. Mettle segments marked the end of each wall so they could be folded or made into rooms. I wanted to run my hand along it but was smarter than that, there could be people in the rooms and I was not in the mood to explain myself.

Looking around I didn’t see anything too obvious as to what way to go but I did hear faint voices to my left. I walked down the makeshift hall and could soon see a set of stairs. Looking up they were mostly open stairs, they seemed to go up for six floors meaning the building was much bigger than I thought. They zigzagged back and forth kind of like a fire escape, with the long flat part along each floor.

On their left were rooms; to the right was nothing but a big glass window. I figure this building must have once been used as an apartment complex or a hotel, it is what the thing resembles most.

My attention was brought back to the world as the voices spoke once more, the speaking voice was much like that of the Ringleaders, full of hate. "Alright, you all know why we're here right? This building is the biggest we have been in yet; this is the town it will happen in." Having a voice with such hate talk of something so mysterious made me let down my guard, making every instinct to turn and leave fade away. If I was smart I would have though, I could tell this person was not one to be messed with and eavesdroppers were not welcome.

Turning to my right I could see the fuzzy wall ran all the way to the glass window before it came to a halt, and in the middle of the wall was a door, left open as fate would have it. I closed my eyes and took a deep breath, before crouching down and walking as silently as I could along the wall. I made it to the door and looked in. A long table was set up with men and women sitting down in suits, much like a business. There were seven men and three women the sides at the table all looking to the front. At the front was a large man standing with both hands on the table looking at the others with a power mad look in his eyes even I could see. "This is where the deal goes down, I've already contacted them and they will be here by nightfall and we will have the parts ready for them."

I gritted my teeth, the voice sought nothing but his own gain, he sounded ready to do whatever it took to get what the parts were. My mind was alive with questions, what deal, who will be here and what are the parts? One of the women spoke up. "But Sir, is this the best way to make money? Won't we lose acts? That will mean finding new acts all over again which could take much travel and have a lot of expenses." The woman had a heartless voice, she wasn't as evil as the man but was task oriented.

The man laughed. "Always on task Jess, you would be right but this time around we managed to catch a few things we haven't put in the show. They won't cost us a thing, and we can spare a few acts, they are just here for that reason anyway. Where else can the market get what we offer? Anyone can get bones, some a few scales or feathers but we can give them the good stuff. Dragon organs, griffin beaks, unicorn horns, and in this town we have a special little number. When the Ringleader sent his mind out to the people of this town, found all of 'them' he found a special lady."

The word 'them' was like a hiss, it was obviously something foreign to the man, something not human. One man at the table scoffed and sat back in his chair. "Ha, the Ringleader is going to run into something that way. He'll find one of those strong ones working

to stop us.” The new voice got my attention, it sounded on the surface just like it was a part of the rest of them but the voice held a lot of hate for the Ringleader, he wanted him to be stopped. I looked to the man; he had to be no more than twenty. He had golden blond hair and amber eyes. He rested his hand behind his head and but his feet on the table.

“Oh don’t you worry about the Ringleader’s safety. He only reads minds late at night, when they are asleep. He finds them, gets the idea in their mind to come and join jus. This special lady did just that, as soon as she saw a flier long ago she came to try out. A pretty good routine all in all. Then again it should be where else can those freaks show what they really are and have the world not believe them?! Ladies and gentlemen, this time we have something worth even more than a live dragon, something that has never been offered on our market before. We can sell a mermaids tail!”

I could feel my heart start to race, I was ready to jump up and attack someone, ready to run in there and make it so they couldn’t hurt Liz, but something kept me back, the man’s voice let me know he was ready to kill Liz and any other creature they had, if they would kill and sell off parts of great and strong races, he would have no problem snuffing my life out in an instant. Fear and rage mixed together and I clenched my fist digging my nails into my skin. I dug in just a little too much and broke the skin. In pain I sucked in a breath making a sort of hissing noise. It was quite, not much louder than a whisper but that was even too loud.

The golden haired man stood up and looked to the door. “Sir, someone is out there.” His voice was about the same level as my small noise but I could hear it and its emotion. He didn’t like the ‘sir’ but was loyal to him. I could see nods in the room and they all stood up. I bolted to the behind the stairs where there was another hall going in a different direction. I ran down it, knowing going back to the show would be foolish at this point, every one of those shop owners by the door were most likely guards, maybe every shop owner was.

I could hear voices behind me, the blond man speak. “I got the dressing room hall.” Other voices said where they would go but I didn’t pay attention, they all sounded the same, they knew I was there and they wanted to kill me. The blond man’s voice was a little different, he just sounded like he wanted to find me, there was no intent of harm in his voice but that didn’t stop me. I ran down the hall, not taking in much detail, that is until a voice stopped me. “Hey girl, wait! I’m here as a friend. Trust me.” I skidded to a halt and turned to see the blond man. His voice was as honest as could be, he sounded like a friend and like he wanted to help. He took a step forward making me take a step back.

Having a little time I took in the hall, there were a bunch of doors on both sides making me cretin this place was an old hotel. Each room had a name on it, off all the doors I stopped by I saw the name next to me read Elizabeth. "Alright good, now if you would just come with me." The voice was soft, almost a whisper. "I...who are you?" I said taking a step forward. The man smiled. "A friend like I said, I can help you out here." His voice was so full of truth but I was wary, the talking of killing my friend and the fear made me not want to believe anything. "I don't trust you." I took a step back.

I knew then and there I should have spoken softer because footsteps could be heard coming our way, I must have spoken too loud. Before the man could answer I turned and ran, the other people would not at all be friendly as the blond man, trust or no trust. "Get out of the way kid!" I heard one of the other people yell; no doubt the blond man was helping me. I heard a struggle, someone being tossed to the ground then running, two or three people were running after me and I knew the only person who would be kind in any way was most likely tossed to the ground and long behind me.

I didn't look back at all, I didn't want to, I just wanted to run to get away. I felt like there was an instinct inside of me driving me onward, pushing me to run. I was faster than the group and had hopes of getting away but they faded when I looked forward. I could tell I was going to run into some kind of common room where various halls met up, and at the end of the hall opposite of me a boy was running right at me. I felt my body tense up, I lowered my head and ran literally headlong to build more momentum, almost like a four legged creature.

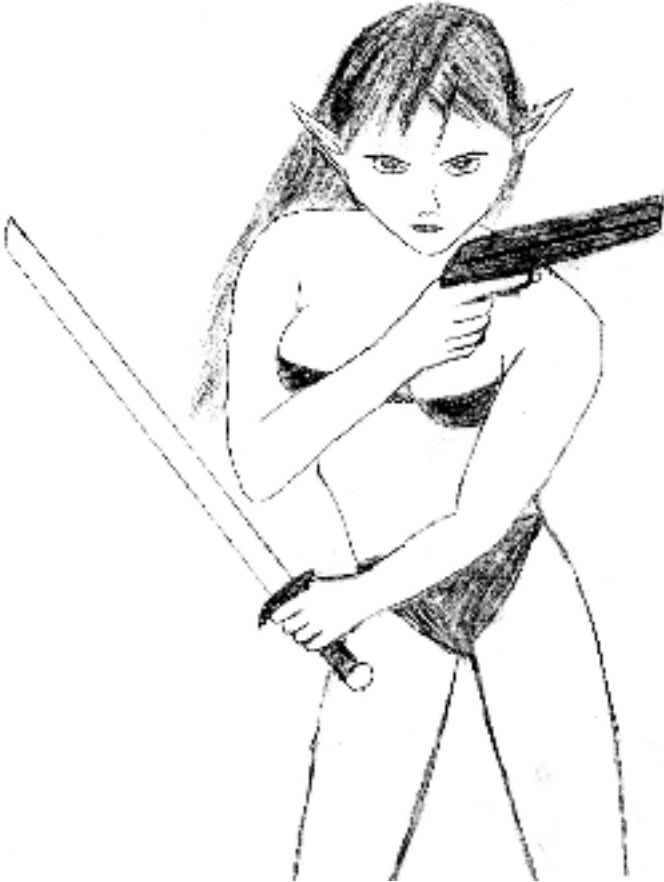
I was close to the boy now, we met up right at the merging point of our two halls and I was ready to turn my body and sidestep him but before I could he took my hand and ran down the open room taking me along on a left turn before ducking down a right hallway. He swung me in behind him and put his back flat against the wall, putting himself closer to the entrance of the hall and me a little farther back. I was conveyed, beyond confused in fact but again something inside told me to just stay and mimic him. I listened to that something and flattened myself against the wall as well. Despite all of our running our breaths were quiet, neither one of us seemed tired. We watched on as the three people chasing me, a man and two women ran by. After a few more moments of silence to make sure they were far gone the boy sighed and looked at me a smile on his face.

I looked to him and squinted unsure, looking at black hair and ice blue ice. I told myself it couldn't be, there was no way. "Whew that was a close one huh? Those guys are really persistent, you know you should have been more quiet, Ace was there to help you." So many things were swirling in my head at the words, they were happy, mostly

to outsmart to others, but the voice was one I knew even after years, even though now it was deeper and stronger. “Jet?” I said much more than confused.

Jet lagged and smiled. “See I told you you’d remember my name!”

FAN FICTION



or: Leanna's Return

Your Fan Fiction is published here for free, but if you want to help keep it free, check out some other things I publish, like

A long time ago, in a galaxy far far away....

STAR WARS

THE CLONE WARS: BATTLEFIELD CRISTOPHSIS

CHAPTER 2

Slade Eide-Ettaro

Aboard Republic Assault Ship Jelial, Crystal City, Planet Christophsis

Kahan lifted his head up and looked around the bridge of the assault ship with a frown.

“Is everyone alright?”

“We're fine General.”

Kahan looked to the clone officer. “Are there any casualties?”

“Still checking sir.”

“Find those in need of medical attention and assess the damage to the ship as best as you are able. Begin deploying our forces, we have a battle to fight.”

“Yes sir.”

Kahan's comlink chimed. “This is Master Kahan.”

“Master Kahan, are you unharmed?” came Master Kenobi's voice.

“So it would seem, I am awaiting further assessment from the crew on the ship's status.”

“I may be able to save you the trouble. Your forward strut is crushed, the prow of the assault ship is imbedded into the ferrocrete.”

Kahan nodded his understanding. “Thank you Master Kenobi, then at least our egress ramps are free of obstruction. We will begin debarkation immediately.”

“I look forward to meeting you face to face Master Kahan.”

Obi-Wan waited at the base of the ramp as the first clones and their equipment began offloading. At their head walked a man in the robes of a Jedi, and there were two slighter figures in his company. Obi-Wan could feel their force sensitivity but wondered at what it could mean.

“Greetings Generals.” Master Kahan said as he reached the bottom of the ramp.

Obi-Wan noted the ironic tone that the other master used in addressing them and had to agree with it. The title of 'general' was pretty ridiculous. However circumstances were what they were. There was no use in wishing for quieter times.

“And to you Master Kahan.”

“That was pretty impressive.” Anakin said quietly.

“You mean the ship?”

Anakin nodded and Kahan chuckled, spreading his arms out to either side.

“You and Master Obi-Wan provided the real power behind it. My strength has never been with telekinesis.”

“How many troops have you brought?” Obi-Wan asked, realizing how much he sounded like a military leader. It unsettled him, even after the events following Geonosis against Dooku's death machine.

“Two legions with supporting gunships and armor.” Master Kahan replied. “Though as you see, my ship is somewhat damaged.”

“So we saw.” Obi-Wan said, looking towards the prow of the ship where it lay imbedded in the ferrocrete. “How significant is the damage?”

“The damage is superficial, however those were high yield ion cannons that hit us. The vessel's systems are fried according to my technicians.”

“Separatist HWP's.” Anakin said in annoyance.

“HWP's?” Master Kahan inquired.

“Heavy Weapon Platforms.” Obi-Wan provided. “They're mobile weapon batteries designed to shoot down assault ships. There are several positioned around the city.”

“I see.” Master Kahan said thoughtfully. “We'll have to deal with them if Admiral Yularen and Msater Yoda are to bring a relief force.”

“So there is a relief force.” Anakin said with obvious elation. “I'd begun to think we were completely on our own.”

“Hardly.” Master Kahan replied. “I have half my 13th Assault Corps here and they're very capable. They'll reinforce the elements of your 7th Sky Corps. I believe you are short of armor yes?”

“We have almost none to speak of.” Obi-Wan provided. “Just a handful of walkers and some artillery.”

“We have tanks artillery and walkers in addition to our gunships.” Master Kahan provided. “I'll attach them to your Commander and allow him to position them as he deems fit.” he stepped aside and gestured towards the two hooded figures. “I believe you will both want to meet your new padawans.”

Anakin's eyes widened in alarm. Padawans? What in the name of the Force were padawans doing here? It was a warzone! Whose idea had it been to allow them here? They'd be nothing but a burden. The pair removed their hoods. One was human with short brown hair and matching brown eyes. The other was obviously not, her skin a bluish purple with black hair from which protruded a pair of small horns.

“Master Kenobi, this is Lana N'ahrr.” Master Kahan said,

introducing the human girl who smiled at Obi-Wan confidently.

“Hey Master, pleased to meet you.”

Obi-Wan blinked, but smiled, bowing graciously. “The pleasure is mine Padawan.”

“Knight Skywalker, this is your Padawan, Hanabi Iyoto.”

The girl's cheeks tinged slightly as she blushed, bowing respectfully.

“I hope I can perform to your satisfaction Master.”

Anakin looked at the girl for a moment, before looking to Kahan.

“I don't want a padawan.”

“Anakin.” chastised Obi-Wan. “It is a great honor to be entrusted with a padawan, you should be grateful to have been granted this chance to train the next generation.”

“We're at war Obi-Wan, this is no place for apprentices.”

Kahan smirked and held out a small holopad.

“I believe Master Yoda has the answers you're looking for.”

He depressed the button and a blue glowing miniature of the already diminutive Jedi Master appeared before them.

“Greetings Master Kenobi, Knight Skywalker, questions you have, yes. Master Kahan, bringing you reinforcements he is, but also your Padawans too, yes. Realize the Council does that an ideal place for apprentices this is not. But train them you must, the future they are, yes. Admiral Yularen's ships ready will be soon, join you then I will. With you may the Force be.”

The holorecording died and Kahan slipped it back into his robes. “So there it is, will you accept your charges General?”

Obi-Wan nodded. “Of course, I accept Lana N'ahrr as my apprentice.”

Anakin looked at Hanabi for a moment before nodding in turn. “I guess I don't have much of a choice.”

Hanabi's expression flickered but Anakin ignored it as he motioned for her to follow him.

“Come on, I'll introduce you to Rex and the troops.”

As the pair walked off, Obi-Wan sighed. Anakin wasn't off to the best start, he could do better, that much was certain.

“Are you sure he's ready for this?”

Master Kahan chuckled and shrugged. “I couldn't say, remember the Council didn't want to give me an apprentice either.”

Obi-Wan nodded, yes, he remembered hearing something like that, still Kahan's apprentice had fought at Geonosis and survived which was more than several Knights and a few Masters could say. Obviously giving him a padawan had been much deserved in Obi-Wan's opinion.

“Master Kenobi, come in Master Kenobi, you have clearance to land.”

Obi-Wan scowled and looked at his own new apprentice. Another attitude, hadn't he suffered enough while teaching Anakin? But then again, he supposed that Master Yoda had given him another problem padawan because he'd been able to train Anakin despite all the unique challenges he had posed for Obi-Wan. Compared to that, Lana couldn't be so bad.

“General, glad to see you made it.”

Obi-Wan turned and felt his eyes widen in shock. Why was a woman here? And why was she in Mandalorian armor?

Aira-ty ignored the look of surprise from the Jedi, walking right up to General Kahan.

“Casualties sir?”

“Unknown, currently tallying. We're offloading troops and equipment now.”

“Status of the ship?”

“She's not going to fly again, even once we can repair it, there are anti-ship batteries in the city ready to shoot us down again.”

Aira-ty nodded. “Request permission to lead a strike team to destroy them.”

The General looked at her for a long moment before nodding. “Very well.”

Aira-ty smiled, she was going to enjoy this.

“Take Anakin and Hanabi with you.” General Kenobi suggested. “He loves this sort of operation.”

And just like that, all the fun went out of the mission. How was she supposed to get her job done with some goody-goody Jedi following her around?

“General Kenobi, meet Commander Aira-ty.” General Kahan said belatedly with just a hint of mirth.

Aboard the Last Call on approach to Separatist HQ on Christophsis

Ventress brought her ship in low over the Separatist encampment, looking over the massed droids and weapons platforms. It was remarkable she thought, that such a superior force could be held off by the meager forces the Republic had managed to get on planet. Even with the assault ship, they only had a fraction of the military force that the Separatist Droid Army could bring against them. Add to that the fact that they had a full planetary blockade in place and they were eventually going to be starved out. Nothing could get past the Invincible. She smiled, at least that had been the theory. This assault ship, or more specifically the Jedi aboard it, had gotten through

somehow, and Ventress wanted to know how he'd done it, and then she wanted to kill him for invading her mind.

"Last Call, you are authorized to land."

Ventress said nothing as she descended and landed upon the designated platform for her fighter. She had no need to acknowledge droids. She was here to deal with the leader of the Droid Army on Christophsis. She shut her ship's engines down and walked out into the sunlight, wincing slightly at the harsh light.

"Commander Ventress, General Loathsome is waiting for you." a service droid intoned at the foot of the landing ramp.

"Very well, take me to him."

The droid led Ventress through the extensive base and to a lavish building that looked as if it might have luxury hotel at one point in its existence before General Loathsome had taken it over. From what Ventress knew of the kerkoidian general he had something of an ego and loved the finer things in life. In short, he was a fool. However he was a capable fool and so Count Dooku suffered him. At least that was how Ventress saw things.

The droid led her through the main doors and grand hall of the HQ, coming to a large double doored room whereupon the droid turned to her.

"I must ask you to relinquish your weapons."

Ventress glared at the servitor droid. "If you touch my weapons I will take your head."

"Err...yes madam." the droid said awkwardly. "General Loathsome will see you now."

Ventress smiled icily at the droid as she pushed the doors open and walked inside to find Loathsome leaning over maps of the city.

"General." Ventress said quietly.

"Yes, yes." Loathsome said absently. "You are Count Dooku's agent, I have no time for that now."

"I came to inform you that an assault ship, likely fully stocked, has landed within the Republic camp."

"So I saw, this will never do. We can't have them getting reinforced if we're to defeat them."

Ventress raised an eyebrow. "You could always allow Admiral Trench to bomb them into oblivion."

"No!" Loathsome said instantly, glaring at Ventress down his long snout. "I will defeat General Kenobi myself without the assistance of that insect! Besides he can't even keep his blockade in order, you expect him to defeat such a worthy opponent?"

"Enough." Ventress snapped, drawing a glare from the kerkoidian general. "I am not here for your petty infighting. I want to meet with the Republic informant."

“That is not possible, it is too risky.”

“Risky for whom?” Ventress asked darkly.

“If we lose the spy, our ability to predict the Republic's movements will be greatly reduced.” General Loathsome said.

“You're a general.” Ventress replied. “Stop making excuses.”

Loathsome continued to glare at her. “What is so important that you would risk my trump card?”

“There are now three Jedi on the planet, I intend to kill them all.” Ventress said with a wicked smile. “Once they're dead, you'll have an easy time rolling over the clones.”

Loathsome scowled, snorting in annoyance. “I want Kenobi for myself.”

“You do not have that luxury.” Ventress replied tersely, her annoyance growing. “What do you need to press your attack home?”

“Their artillery would have to fall...though I imagine this assault ship has brought with it further complications.”

“Then I will contact our spy and tell him to destroy the guns and you can march at the head of your army and win a glorious victory over Kenobi's forces. Meanwhile I will eliminate the Jedi and capture Senator Organa.”

“What good is capturing the Senator?”

“That is none of your concern General, win this battle and I will do the rest.”

Crystal City, Planet Christophsis

Hanabi followed her new master through the battle scarred city, gawking at the battle damage that had occurred in what had only been a handful of days worth of combat. She'd never experienced war before, and had barely any knowledge of what her duties as a commander were. She looked around her at the two companies of clone troopers moving through the debris strewn street with her. They all seemed so calm, when she touched them with her mind she could feel their calm stoicism and ease with which they traversed the battlefield. Many of them had the same singular thought: This is what I was made for.

That thought troubled Hanabi who had been taught and always believed that all life was sacred but many of the clones she touched seemed to think that they were expendable...it wasn't that they weren't each unique, though they felt similar in the Force, no...it was just that...they seemed to accept their lot in life. As if it was just the way things were. She would have to ask her Master about that...it confused her. She looked ahead of her to where her Master and the Mandalorian were walking together in silence. Her master seemed almost eager to start a fight, while the woman in the red armor was

calm, composed, almost as serene as the clones around them. It was all so very strange to Hanabi.

“What can you tell me about her?”

Jesp considered for a moment before he spoke, wondering what knowledge he could give to Captain Rex that the senior captain wouldn't already know.

“She's kept to herself for the most part. The other girl is far more engaging.”

“Can she lead in a firefight?” Rex pressed.

Jesp shrugged, the only external indication of the private conversation they were having through their helmet coms.

“She's a Jedi.”

“That doesn't mean much.” Rex replied. “Skywalker is a Jedi and I would never say he's a true military leader.”

“Bu—“ Jesp began.

“Listen, the Jedi are not infallible, Skywalker and Kenobi are doing the best they can but both are only now learning what we have been taught since birth.”

Jesp considered this for a long moment before he finally spoke again.

“Then I would say she's not a good combat leader...not yet.”

Rex's helmet bobbed in a nod. “I will keep that in mind when dealing with her.”

“What about General Skywalker?”

“He's brave, and takes the initiative even when things are hopeless, but he's rash and doesn't think things through before acting. General Kenobi is far more analytical.”

“So would you say General Kenobi is the better commander?” Jesp asked, trying to get a feel for his new brother in arms' opinion of their leaders.

“No, I wouldn't say that. I would simply say their leadership styles are different. Kenobi thinks more on the larger picture, Skywalker focuses on the here and now. They compliment one another very well...when they're not arguing at any rate.”

Jesp fell silent as they continued forwards, he kept his head on a swivel, examining all the building facades around them, Rex had mentioned a possible spy in their camp and after hearing about the dozens of ambushes Jesp was inclined to agree with him. There was a traitor somewhere, but who was it?

Anakin was not happy. He felt like he was babysitting. Not only did he have a mercenary but also a wet behind the ears apprentice. He hadn't even petitioned the Council for a padawan! He'd known that Obi-Wan had done so after Anakin had been made a Knight and he'd

told Obi-Wan what he thought about having an apprentice during a war then as well. It was stupid. How was a Knight supposed to concentrate on the war if they were constantly trying to teach an apprentice? Or the other way around, how were they supposed to teach their apprentice if they were constantly fighting? It made no sense...and there was a far more private matter as well...Padme...how could he keep sneaking visits to Padme if he had a padawan hounding his every step?

He would speak with Master Yoda when next they met and sort this out, he couldn't have a padawan, not right now, not in the midst of a war and not with a secret like Padme to hide from her.

He glanced over at Commander Nokta. Who was she? Why did Master Kahan have her acting as one of his commanders instead of a clone? And what was with that armor? It reminded him of the bounty hunter Jango Fett, the one who had almost killed Padme. It unnerved him to have her walking besides him...especially since he couldn't see her face behind the helmet. She hadn't removed it at all as far as he'd seen.

"What can you tell me about the enemy?" she said suddenly, jerking Anakin out of his thoughts violently.

"They're droids." Anakin replied, feeling foolish even as he spoke. "And there are a lot of them."

"So I noticed." Aira-ty replied dryly. "Look, I need to know what we're up against, you going to help or not?"

"Sorry." Anakin replied, his dislike for the woman growing. "It's mostly standard battle droids but you have heavy battle droids and destroyer droids supporting them in addition to their armor. The biggest things are the spider droids and gun platforms."

"Like the ones we're hunting." she said.

"Yeah. Like those."

"Tell me something General Skywalker, why don't the Separatists just come in and wipe you out from the air?"

Anakin shrugged. "I honestly don't know. We have some air defenses set up but nothing that could stop a planetary bombardment."

Aira-ty's helmet bobbed and Anakin tried reaching out to her through the Force to discern what she was thinking. She instantly stiffened and turned on him, her voice as cold as ice.

"Stay out of my head Jedi."

Anakin took a step back from her in surprise, he hadn't expected her to notice such a minor intrusion let alone have such a violent reaction.

"I'm sorry, I was just wondering what you were thinking."

"Then ask me." she hissed venomously.

Hanabi watched as the Mandalorian stormed off ahead of her Master and wondered what had passed between them to make her so angry. She stopped for a moment then as a nagging sensation ate at the back of her mind. What was that? Her eyes widened then as a trio of STAPs came swinging around the street corner ahead of them.

“Droids!” she cried, her lightsaber igniting and swinging up as the STAPs came around for another pass.

She deflected the first several bolts, and then the middle STAP launched a missile. Her eyes widened in alarm but then the missile reversed course and slammed into the STAP that had fired it. The repulsorcraft burst into bits as the troopers opened fire on the remaining STAPs, shredding the fragile craft in a withering blaster barrage.

Hanabi looked at Master Skywalker, he was watching her with a faint smile.

“Good reflexes kid.”

She bristled. “I'm not a kid...Master.”

He didn't say anything more as they continued forwards.

“Nice job with that saber.” one of the troopers said as he walked past her.

That brought a smile to Hanabi's face, maybe she could fit in amongst these soldiers after all...she just had to show them, and herself, that she could hold her own. It couldn't be too hard, the clones did it every day and they didn't have the Force to help them.

Ventress waited impatiently in the abandoned restaurant, her fingers tapping against the durasteel table. Where was the contact? He was supposed to be here already and yet there was no sign of him, she was growing annoyed, and that wasn't healthy.

A noise caught her attention and she turned to find a single clone trooper standing in the door leading to what had been the kitchen before a grenade had blown it to pieces.

“I've been waiting clone.” she snapped.

“I had to wait for a moment to slip away.” he said simply. “Who are you?”

“It doesn't matter.” she said darkly. “What matters is that I have a mission for you.”

“It had better be important.” he said dubiously. “Every moment I'm here talking to you is less intelligence getting to General Loathsome.”

Ventress hissed in annoyance and with a powerful Force push, slammed the clone into the wall.

“You will show proper respect or I will crush you.”

“Y—yes ma'am.” the clone gagged.

“That's better.” she growled as she let him drop to the ground.

“Now, your mission; I want you to destroy the artillery cannons and their ammunition.”

He stiffened and she felt his ill ease through the Force.

“That's too hot, I'll ruin my cover.”

“And if you do not do it, the assault ship's reinforcements will deploy and with the artillery support of those heavy cannons we won't be able to push on them and wipe them out before a relief fleet arrives.” Ventress said. “In which case your usefulness will expire, and so will you.”

The clone considered for a moment before nodding. “It will be done.”

“Good, set your charges and wait for the proper time for your attack to commence.”

“How will I know?”

“You'll know, believe me, you won't be able to miss it.”

Ventress said with a cruel smile. “Now, tell me everything you know about this new Jedi and the forces under his command.”

“Is it wise to send them out beyond our lines?” Senator Organa asked, looking between the two Jedi Generals.

“Further forces cannot land safely if those heavy weapons aren't eliminated.” Master Kahan said simply. “You've seen what happened when my ship made its landing.”

“Yes, but surely the landing forces that will be coming will be too overwhelming in numbers to be stopped by a handful of heavy cannons.”

“Senator, I would prefer it if we did not have to run any risk whatsoever in bringing in additional ground forces.” Obi-Wan said. “Our soldiers may be clones, but their lives still have value.”

Senator Organa paled slightly. “I didn't mean to imply that their lives were meaningless...it's simply that we're in an extremely precarious situation.” he looked to Master Kahan. “You say that we still have two days before our reinforcements will arrive in earnest?”

Obi-Wan looked to the other Master as he nodded.

“Yes Senator, that was the timeline that Admiral Yularen gave when I left. However he said he might be able to launch before two days were up if things were rushed aboard the damaged vessels.”

The Senator nodded. “I am sorry to be of so little help here, I am not a warrior.”

“Not all of us can be such Senator, you may rest assured that we shall fight the war and protect yourself and the Republic in your stead.”

Obi-Wan nodded in agreement with Kahan's statement. “You and the other civilians should continue to remain within the government building Senator. We'll hold off the Separatists until

Master Yoda and Admiral Yularen are able to relieve us.”

The Senator nodded. “May I make one request?”

Both Jedi nodded in turn and waited as Organa continued.

“If there are to be any negotiations, I would like to be involved, as a representative of the Republic.”

Kahan made a half bow. “Of course.”

“I see no problem that so long as you are not placed in undue danger.” Obi-Wan agreed.

“Thank you Generals, I will let you get back to your business.”

After they were once again alone, or alone as they could be with the assault cruiser's command crew around them.

Obi-Wan examined the holomap of Crystal City, with the assault cruiser and capital building at the center.

“I'd appreciate your thoughts Master Kahan.” he said.

Kahan shrugged as he held his chin thoughtfully. “We're boxed in, even with my gunships, the enemy air superiority is undeniable. I would not want to launch any air raids beyond our own airspace.”

“Will your armor be able to allow us to go on the offensive?”

Obi-Wan asked, perhaps they could launch a raid against the enemy, throw them off balance.

“We could, but it wouldn't be advisable. We have some walkers and tanks, but not enough to go head to head with the bulk of the Separatist force.”

“The fighter tanks could be used in lightning raids.” Obi-Wan suggested.

Kahan nodded. “Yes, that could work, but we'll have to make sure they have a clear line of retreat with a solid defensive line to break any enemy pursuit...we can use some of our AT-TEs to establish such a line, I've already deployed my AT-PT and AT-XT units to patrol our perimeter.”

“I'll leave you to handle the organization of the defensive line, I'll compile what intelligence we have on the enemy emplacements for the fighter tank raids.”

“Hey Master, what do you want me to do?”

Obi-Wan looked up at Lana as she leaned against the bulkhead. “Would you like to join Cody on a tour of the perimeter?”

Lana's face lit up, though Cody, standing silently with his hands behind his back suddenly looked like he'd swallowed something sour.

“Sure! That would be awe—uh, I mean yes Master, I'd be delighted.”

Obi-Wan smiled indulgently. “Alright, Cody, take a squad with walker support and make sure our defenses are intact.”

“Yes sir, I'll report in regularly.” Cody looked at Lana who was

grinning broadly. "Commander, if you'll come with me."

As the pair left, Obi-Wan turned to Kahan. "There is something I meant to ask you."

Kahan turned his icy gaze on Obi-Wan quietly, it was a serene and somewhat unnerving look to be meet but Obi-Wan had been under harsher scrutiny in his life and did not flinch from the older Master.

"I requested a new padawan and I am grateful the Council granted my request, but why did they send Anakin a padawan?"

"Do you have an issue with him having one?" Kahan inquired.

"No, not truly...I just wonder if he is ready for such a responsibility...it would seem more prudent for a more experienced Jedi," Obi-Wan nodded towards Kahan. "Yourself for instance, to take Hanabi under their wing."

Kahan chuckled and shrugged. "Come now Master Kenobi, you know my reputation."

"I know that you took a traumatized girl and turned her into a Jedi Knight." Obi-Wan replied. "Aside from Anakin, she's one of the only Padawans to survive Geonosis. That is nothing to brush off."

"Xiaan was given to me because no one else could help her emotionally." Kahan replied diffidently. "The Council allowed me to train her only grudgingly, and my promotion to Master was only bestowed because of the number of dead at Geonosis." Kahan smiled as Obi-Wan opened his mouth to protest. "No, don't deny it, we both know that if there had been fewer Jedi casualties at Geonosis I never would have made Master."

Obi-Wan didn't say anything in reply, preferring not to think of the Jedi—and friends—that had been lost during the opening battle of the war just two months prior. Out of two hundred and twelve Jedi, only thirty-three had survived. With the exception of Anakin who had made Knight later, all the surviving Padawans had been made Knights almost immediately after the battle and many of the Knights had been given the title of Jedi Master as well. Obi-Wan hoped he would never see so many Jedi slaughtered ever again.

POETRY

THROAT CLOSING

TheMeTheyDontSee
of <http://themetheydontsee.deviantart.com>

Throat closing.
Gasping for breath.
Thoughts swirling.
Head spinning.
Need oxygen.
"Just take a breath."
I can't.
"You'll be okay."
I won't.
Vision going black

PERFECT ADVENTURE

Lacesnflowers

The moon is high on the sky
I go there and see you
You've got that thing
That charm that makes me...!

No debts, no objectives
Just you and me tonight
I'll never see you again
But that's what makes me...!

Your body reminds me of the ocean
Let me drown on it
Everything is so perfect here
Don't let it go and make me...!

I can be everything you need
And you can serve me for tonight
Be my reason to stay here
Because you're good in making me...!

LIFE AS I KNOW IT

Kela Lewis-Morin

I am waiting for my opportunity.
Waiting for someone to give me a chance.
It is difficult to stand out within the writing community.
We all have to jump through hoops and enact the same dance.

What more do I have to do to get you consider me.
I have worked hard to be consistent to show my commitment.
I am trying to be adaptive and pro active so nothing will hinder me.
But I understand that publishing opportunities will not come in an instant.

I just want more time to assess, address and process all of my objectives.
My dream is to be able to fashion my writing into a way of thriving and surviving.
But because of the requirements of society I am labored to be realistically selective.
I am too cautious of taking that creative risk on my wrists and whole heartedly dive in.

I am grateful for all the genuine correspondents and comments I have received.

I never knew how my words would be perceived and how that could inspire me to believe.

Out of nothing emerged something, from eager thoughts up my sleeve a future was conceived.

Although I am swept in the motions forcing me to split my devotions,
I now know what I can achieve.