

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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I've got a website, where you can download old issues:
<http://fanaticalpublishing.weebly.com/wr-archive.html>

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.

You can include the text of your story in the body of the email, attached as an RTF, you can put in a link to your story on some webpage. 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

ALICE AMAZING DETECTIVE! - BLOCK (EXTRA)

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

BLOCK.

“Write, Carrie.” I said to my twin when she was quietly whining about some creative block. “The world must know about my incredible detective skills.”

Sister sighed and rubbed her forehead. She looked tired.

“You’re terribly selfish, Sis...” she murmured.

I placed my hand in my chest with a fake of horrified face.

“How can you say that...?! How can you say that...! I thought you were on my side, Carrie! Oh, it’s too much disenchant for my heart to cope!”

Carrie breathed in deeply, almost another sigh. I must annoy her really a lot.

“And you used to be so cute when we were little... So quiet...”

“Well... I can always stay quiet...” I said, bitter.

“Please do!” Carrie exclaimed.

She seemed too eager for my taste. I puffed my cheeks, decided.

---AFTER 5 MINUTES OF SILENCE---

“CARRIE, I CAN’T TAKE IT!” I yelled in frustration. “This is too boring!”

Sister didn’t answer.

“Ca-rrie-!” I called again.

Silence.

“Sister- I’m bored-”

“Do something then.” she finally mumbled.

“Nops. I don’t wanna.”

“Then good luck with your boredom.”

“That’s meeeeeeaaan. Carrie!”

“Carrie?”

“Carrie?”

“CAAARRRIIEEE!”

“If you’re not going to answer me, I’m starting to recite Shakespeare...”

“...To be or not to be, that’s the question...”

“...Barbara Cartland is just amazing.”

“Oh, look Carrie, there’s a pumpkin in the roof!”

“Carrie?”

Alright. I didn’t want to do that, but you forced me,
sister...

I pulled my cell-phone out of my jeans’ pocket, and raised
it to my ear.

“Hello, Maxwell?” I cried, cheerfully. “It’s Carrie!”

Sister looked up at me, completely horrified.

“I just called to say that I lo-”

My twin took the cell-phone of my hands in a flash.

“ALICE!”

I started laughing so much my tummy began to ache.

“Oh, my dear Lord... You fell for it!”

The next thing was a downpour of teddy-bears raining on
my head, and the door banged hard in front of my face.

And that’s the story of why Carrie never lets me stay with her in the
bedroom while she’s writing our adventures.

THE END

A HAPPY BURDEN

Marshall McCarthy

of <http://marshallnormanmccarthy.wordpress.com/> and
<http://mnmccarthy.deviantart.com/>

Toronto, Ontario, Canada - 2048

Tracking a Shifter wasn't easy, but let me tell you, it's not overly complicated; not when you've got the right tools. Shifters, for some reason that I'm not qualified to accurately describe, give off a kind of "psychic radiation". Something to do with their heightened brain power.

The processor affixed to the base of my spine gave my brain the ability to perceive this radiation as an aura. All I had to do was follow the glowing woman as I paced her through a river of drenched, bustling humanity.

The aura staggered, from left and then to right, drunkenly, or like someone who'd been wounded. I felt for my pistol, tucked under my arm, nerves tingling. I could almost feel her now, her vibrations like a distant call on a dark winter's night.

Something was wrong, and trepidation caught in my heart. Rent was due weeks ago. I couldn't ignore this much money... not again.

So I stalked on, as she stumbled, faltered and tripped through the crowd. I slowed my steps; her mind was almost there, almost close enough to touch. If she made me, she might do something stupid. Play it cool, hotshot. There were too many people around, if things got hairy. Shifters weren't known for their concern for human life.

Soon the aura took an abrupt right down an alley. My brain threw up the clear vision of a memory, of that very alley...that very, dead-end, alley. I tried not to smirk, but the professional in me was excited about the potential for easy money.

Sure enough, I found her crouched in the shadows of the dead-end, clutching something to her chest. Her form today looked very much human, and pretty. Long black hair shimmered in the ambient light from the street; chocolate skin, almost black in the shadows was wrapped in a tidy, red blazer and skirt.

As far as I'd ever seen, Shifters took one of two forms. Beauty or horror; they'd either seduce you or scare the shit out of you. I found that one out the hard way, six years before. When I saw Jennie shift the first time, the woman I'd bent knee to, and become something alien... She told me the truth, with the fire-poker sticking out of scaly chest: that they'd come to infiltrate, assimilate and control.

Never knew why she'd told me that then, when her blood was

on my hands. I just chalk it up to sentimentality.

At this beauty, aglow with mental prowess, I levelled my pistol and forced my mind to blank. It had to be the face: I couldn't bear to see what it was about to turn into. My weapon made not a sound when the blue bolt discharged, turning pretty into devastation.

The woman's body began to convulse the moment it hit the rain-soaked concrete. The bundle fell and rolled away, barely catching my eye. But the sound that wailed out from it, ripping the night, pull me around. It was a sound that no one could mistake, no matter the mouth that uttered it.

Crying. My eyes widened and teeth clenched. It sounded strange, animalistic, but I knew it was a child, an infant. Ignoring the quivering, peeling death throes of the Shifter – a sight I'd grown numb to – I rushed to the bundle, worried.

But when a diminutive hand, scaled and three-fingered rose out from the blanket I stopped dead.

In that moment, while the child yowled, I should have raised my pistol and added another head to my toll. I should have ended it then and there, but I had to see. It was an old rule, to look them in the face before you ended them. It didn't matter if it was human or alien. It was a rule that I was cursed with.

So I swallowed the lump in my throat and took another step. The swaddled form stirred, as if aware of my approach. Standing over it, I aimed my pistol and stared down the sights...

All I could see were these big, black eyes, staring back at me. The child became quiet, its elongated snout stilled. All I had to do was pull the trigger. All I had to do was my job.

But those eyes, inhuman as they were, held something in them as universal as a child's cry. Innocence. In my hand the pistol wavered and I felt my resolve crack.

'No,' I grated down at that wee, open mug. 'I'm sorry.' My pistol shook bad enough that I feared I might miss. Another lump rose in my throat, but this one I couldn't swallow. Just do it! Leaning down, I eased my pistol into the infant's face, steeling myself.

But that tiny, reptilian hand reached up then and grasped the barrel. I was struck dumb, watched those fingers flex. 'Kweh,' it chirped. That sound was like a pry bar driven into the fissure of my resolution.

'Ah, shit.' I took the gun from its face. The little bugger let go of the barrel, but held that hand up to me. Crouching, I held out a finger and it latched onto it immediately. It squeezed once and that was enough.

Enough to make me for a sucker.

* * * *

Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Canada - 2060

‘Watch out; puny earthling!’

I smiled at Alyssa’s face, scrunched in the mold of a twelve year-old girl’s. ‘You’re getting good at this, kiddo, but human girls don’t have tails.’

In answer, my adopted daughter showed me that she’d mastered the art of petulance to perfection.

‘Put that tongue back in your mouth,’ I admonished half-heartedly and patted the couch cushion beside me. ‘Show’s about to start.’

The transformation that came over her face, turning from peevisish to happy and sweet, made me question my earlier assessment. She might be better at this than I thought.

‘You know,’ she informed me as the opening scene flickered to life, ‘some girls do have tails, now. It’s quite fashionable; in fact, keeping my tail could help me fit into certain circles with greater ease. That’s what you want, isn’t it, Pop? For me to assimilate into your world and find safety in disguise? You know, you really should adhere to a higher order of logic.’

‘I forget, sometimes, your I.Q.’

To my surprise, Alyssa reached up and wrapped my neck in a hug. ‘Don’t worry Pop; at least we’re both in the triple digits.’

Smartass. I hugged her back, kissed her between the eyebrows and watched her settle down to take in the show. I was proud, looking at the bright young lady that I’d raised, knowing that it was her burning intelligence that would soon do me in. She’d always been curious about her mother’s fate and I was happy to remain cagey on the subject. But, I’d have to tell her soon.

Tell her that her mother is dead.

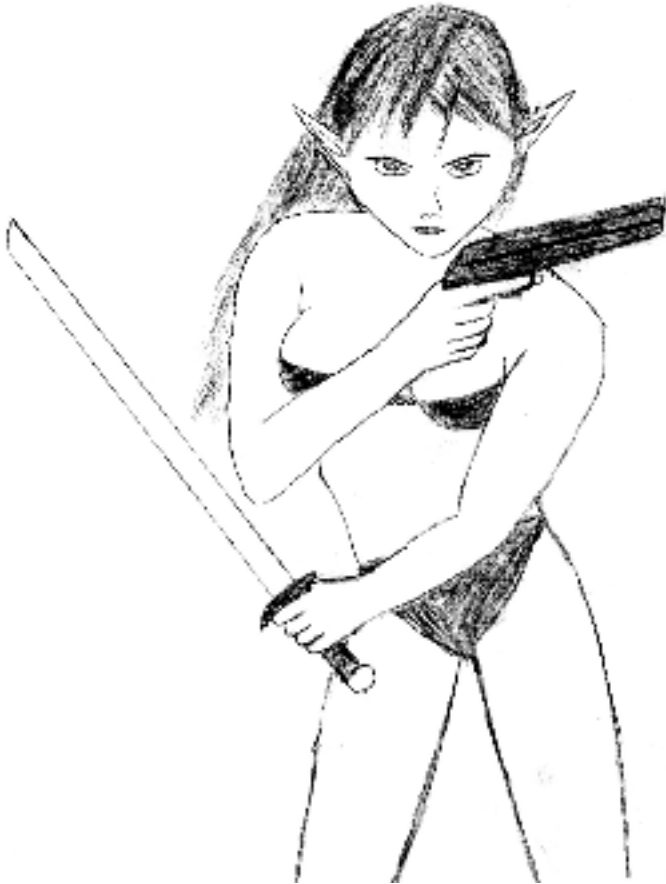
One day, I knew, she was going to sort it all out somehow. That I was a man who used to take money to kill her kind. That I was the man who once took money to kill her mother. An uncomfortable future awaited me.

But for now, I eased back and tried to enjoy the simple life. I pulled Alyssa into another tight hug.

‘What was that for?’ she beamed up at me.

‘For the future, kiddo. For the future.’

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 6

Slade Eide-Ettaro

Crystal City, Planet Christophsis

“Can't you just shield us again?” Aira-ty asked in annoyance.

“I could, but there is no guarantee that we wouldn't bump into one of them and thus give away our position.” Kahan turned to look at her. “I do not know about you Commander, but I am in no mood to find myself exposed in the midst of the enemy army.”

“What about Skywalker and Hanabi?” Aira-ty asked. “We haven't seen them at all.”

“They're nearby.” Kahan replied, looking back at the massed droids below. “I've ordered them to hold position for the time being until such time as we can make a difference.”

Aira-ty scowled. This was something she had never been any good at. Sitting and waiting. They were hidden away in the upper stories of an apartment block overlooking one of the main avenues of the city. A direct path to the government center where the Republic forces were stationed...though....

“Have you noticed how quiet it is?” Aira-ty asked suddenly.

“Yes.” Kahan replied. “It seems there is some sort of ceasefire in effect.”

“How do you—oh wait, nevermind.” she grumbled. “Jedi.”

“Is your wound troubling you?” he asked conversationally.

Aira-ty touched her flank where her armor had been slashed. She'd yet to apply bacta to the wound, or rather she'd yet to take off her armor to apply bacta.

“It's fine.” she said simply. “The lightsaber cauterized it.”

“I see.” Kahan said idly. “Very well I—” he frowned for a moment, then a smile spread across his face.

“What is it?” she asked, this mental communication thing was starting to irritate her.

“We're about to have company.” he replied cryptically.

Orbit of Planet Christophsis, Separatist Dreadnought Invincible

“Admiral, we are detecting multiple hyperspace signatures entering

the gravity well.”

Admiral Trench buzzed with excitement. “Well well, the Republic dogs have come back. All ships, battle formation, tear them to pieces!”

“Enemy ships entering sensor range.”

Trench watched as the ships in question appeared on the sensor screens. There weren't that many of them...though two of them were noticeably larger than the rest. No matter. He would slaughter them all.

Orbit of Planet Christophsis, Republic Star Destroyer Resolute

“Order the Archer and the Phalanx to engage that monster.” Admiral Yularen ordered. “The Firebrand and Manticore are in support.”

He watched as his orders were carried out, the four star destroyers were all heavier designs than the Venators that made up the bulk of his fleet. They were Tector and Victory class ships respectfully, and they were better equipped to engage the Separatist dreadnought, though none of them were comparable in size, their combined armor and firepower would hopefully be enough. Most of Yularen's fleet was still damaged from their last engagement with the dreadnought and its accompanying fleet, however the arrival of additional ships in the form of the Phalanx, Firebrand and Manticore with their escorts had convinced Yularen to launch his assault.

“All other ships, engage at will, launch fighters. Drive them from the planet's orbit, open a corridor for our assault ships and land our troops!”

He watched as the two battle groups closed on one another. It was going to be brutal, but it had to be done.

“Admiral Yularen, in contact with General Kenobi I am.” Master Yoda said from behind the Admiral. “In time we are barely.”

“Good, hopefully they're all still alive down there.” Yularen muttered to himself.

Crystal City, Planet Christophsis

Obi-Wan couldn't help the smile that crept across his features. Master Yoda was here, along with Admiral Yularen and a fleet with which to hammer the Separatists into submission. It wasn't a very Jedi-like thought, but after seeing so many of his men and the people of this planet die at the hands of the being before him he couldn't help but relish the knowledge that soon the Separatists would be defeated on Christophsis.

He leaned down and whispered to Senator Organa. “The fleet

is here. I suggest we curtail this meeting.”

Senator Organa stiffened but nodded curtly even as General Loathsome frowned at the interchange. He had no idea what was going on apparently.

General Loathsome frowned as General Kenobi leaned down and whispered into Senator Organa's ear. Just what were they talking about? Up until now they'd had all their conversations out in the open this sudden change made him suspicious and his eyes narrowed.

“General.” exclaimed the droid pilot of the AAT.

“What is it?” Loathsome snapped.

“Admiral Trench reports that a Republic fleet has entered orbit and is attacking the blockade. Several landing ships have already broken through.”

“What?!” exploded Loathsome as he whirled on his supposedly defeated enemies.

The ignition of a lightsaber was the only warning he got as General Kenobi leapt across the table and grabbed him, whirling him around and using him as a shield against his own forces.

“You honorless scum!” snarled Loathsome indignantly.

“Unhand me this instant! We were under a flag of truce!”

“I'm sorry.” Kenobi replied. “But I'm afraid negotiations are over. Consider yourself my prisoner.”

Loathsome roared furiously. These treacherous Republicans! They were barbaric! They'd even spilt the tea! He raged impotently as all around them, the battle renewed itself.

Orbit of Planet Christophsis, Separatist Dreadnought Invincible

Damn the Republic. Damn their clones and their warships and damn this infernal planet. Admiral Trench felt the deck of his ship bucking and protesting under the concentrated barrages of the four Republic star destroyers that had been sent against it. These were different from the others he'd faced. They had none of the structural weaknesses which had been so easily exploited on the other ships. They were heavily armored and their shields were potent. In short, he was outnumbered and outmatched despite his ship being almost twice the size of the largest of these vessels.

“Give me manual control!” he buzzed angrily.

Taking the helm, he turned the prow of the battered and broken Invincible towards the nearest of the Republic vessels, cackling madly as his ship raced towards the star destroyer.

“Die!” he roared triumphantly.

He would surrender to no one, only death.

Orbit of Planet Christophsis, Republic Star Destroyer Resolute

“What is that madman doing?” Admiral Yularen asked as he watched the dreadnought turn towards the Phalanx. Was the maniac actually going to ram her?

“Order the Phalanx to fall back! Evade dammit!”

The order came too late, and Yularen could only watch as the two vessels closed on one another. The first indication of the impact came with the crackling of energy shields as the ray shields flickered and flashed upon contact. Then the particle shields flared and died before the hulls collided. Large starships always seemed so slow, but few people realized just how much momentum was behind all that mass. The hulls of both vessels buckled as the dreadnought ploughed into the flank of the Phalanx. The explosion that followed was spectacular and rocked the vessels engaged around the dying ships.

Yularen stared at the wreckage of the Phalanx and the dreadnought and scowled.

“All ships, engage at will, recover survivors as you can.”

It was grim work this war. Grim work indeed.

Crystal City, Planet Christophsis

Anakin was grinning. He couldn't help himself, the com channels were alive with Republic chatter as assault ships began breaking the atmosphere and disgorging their forces. It looked like the tide had turned and it was not in the favor of the Separatists.

“Master, what should we do?” Hanabi asked from besides him.

Anakin stood and hefted his saber. “We finish this of course, come on!”

He hurried back to their STAPs and jumped aboard, the Force knew he wasn't going to let the reinforcements have all the fun.

Hanabi hurried to join him, clambering on her own STAP.

“Ready Master.” she called.

“Then lets go!” Anakin called out as the repulsorcraft lifted off and he raced towards the nearest landing site.

“Aren't we going to join in?” Aira-ty asked impatiently.

Kahan shrugged disinterestedly. “With the amount of forces being poured into the fight now there would be little purpose. Besides, you're still injured.”

“I can still fight.” Aira-ty snapped.

“Of that I have no doubt, but the two of us aren't going to make much difference here. Master Kenobi has already captured the

enemy general and the battle in space is going in our favor. This battle has gone from a fight for survival to a mopping up operation.”

Aira-ty looked down at the battle droids below them.

“That isn't a mopping up operation.”

Kahan shrugged again. “Without a leader? I'd say it is...but we shall see.”

She glowered at him but remained where she was. He wasn't wrong. Her side was stiff and ached painfully, but still, she wanted to be down there amidst the action. Not watching it from afar.

“Come on!” Rex shouted as he led the charge forwards into the enemy. This particular force facing them had gotten a very bad deal. A single assault ship had swooped in low over the line, disgorging dozens of gunships and jump troopers. It wasn't that which had shattered the Separatist line though, it had been the volley of concussion missiles and proton torpedos that the assault ship had unleashed which had truly shattered the Separatists. Now Rex was leading a mad charge straight into the midst of the desolated droid army.

All around him, blaster fire and heavier weaponry flashed and blazed. It was a maelstrom of whirling death as walker and tank advanced in support of the infantry, their ordnance shaking the earth with their issuance. The droids were far from beaten though, and fought with the cold efficiency Rex had come to know in the two months since the war had started. Still, the bombardment had broken their line, and destroyed much of their massed armor and now that the clones were in their midst there was very little they could do to stem the tide, especially not with jump troops and gunships assaulting them from the skies at the same time. The battle for the planet would take weeks to sort out, of that Rex was certain, however the battle for the capital was all but over.

Jesp followed in the wake of General Kenobi, his saber a blue blur as it slashed through droid after droid in their advance against the bulk of the droid army. Jesp wondered where Command Nokta was in all of this mess but couldn't spare too much thought for his missing commander, at the moment he had a different duty, shielding the General's flank from the droids deadly bolts.

“Advance!” he shouted over the command circuit. “Push them back into the city, annihilate them!”

“Captain Jesp, this is Commander Cody.”

“Here Commander.” Jesp replied, feeling a wave of relief wash over him at the sound of the senior clone's voice.

“I'm in contact with Commander Niklos of the 13th Assault Corps, where do you need those forces?”

Jesp considered for a moment before making the call, the

13th's 302nd Legion—the unit which he belonged to—and the 309th Legion were already planetside, that meant that there were two legions remaining who needed assignment.

“Send the 801st Legion to reinforce Rex.”

“The 7th Sky is already landing their 488th Legion in that sector.” Cody replied.

“Yes, but Rex's forces aren't at full strength, any help they can get will be more than welcome.”

“Roger that, what about the 666th?”

“Send them to the south, they'll need reinforcement.”

“Done.” Cody replied. “What about your forces?”

“We're just fine...the General is cutting a hole through them.”

“He does that.” Cody replied. “I'll remain here on overwatch and keep you appraised of any developments.”

“Roger that Commander...any word from General Kahan or Commander Nokta?”

“Negative, we've not heard from them.” Cody replied.

Jesp bit his lip as he poured a volley of bolts into the armored chassis of a battle droid.

“Roger that, we'll continue pushing forwards.”

Aboard the Republic Assault Ship Jelial, Crystal City, Planet Christophsis

“We're winning.” Lana said as she watched the shifting sensor screen as the Confederate forces were pushed back.

“For the time being. We can fight them on equal footing now at least. Without General Loathsome at their command and no aerospace support they're having trouble holding their lines...but we're still going to have to root them out of the city and destroy any other strongpoints they have on the planet.”

“What will that mean?” Lana asked, trying to absorb the rush of data that Cody seemed to take in with such ease.

“Planetary bombardment followed by ground assault to sweep away any survivors.” Cody replied easily. “Once the planet is secured we'll be on to the next battlefield.”

“Wait, don't you get down time?”

Cody didn't turn to look at her as he answered her query.

“Christophsis is our third major engagement in the two months since this war started. Our down time is the period between hyperspace jumps.”

“Jeez.” Lana said in awe. “How do you guys do it?”

Cody shrugged. “We're designed to.”

“But, don't you get tired?” she pressed, poking his armor. “You're still human under all that armor.”

Again the clone commander shrugged. "We rest when we can. You'll get used to it."

Lana smirked. "You know I'm going to make you go to bed once this fight is over."

Cody blinked, turning to look at her. "Go to bed?"

"Yep." Lana said with a grin. "You're running the battle from up here, but you're still not well enough to be up the whole time. After this battle is over, I order you to go to sleep."

He looked at her for a long moment before snorting and shaking his head. "Very well, as you order."

Lana patted Cody on the shoulder. "That's right, follow your commander's orders."

The clone commander smiled slightly and sighed, this kid commander was growing on him.

Orbit of Planet Christophsis, Republic Star Destroyer Resolute

Admira Yularen turned to look at Master Yoda.

"The Separatist fleet is retreating, they still outnumber us but they're spread too thin to pose a significant threat. I will be dividing our fleet up into hunter-killer units to isolate and destroy as many of the enemy as they're able before they can regroup and pose a credible threat."

The aged Jedi Master nodded. "A good plan this is yes. To the planet's surface I will go. Yes."

Yularen nodded. "My personal shuttle will be made available to you Master Yoda."

"Thank you Admiral." the little green Jedi said as he turned and strode from the bridge at a stately pace, leaning heavily upon his stick.

Admiral Yularen turned back to the battle in space above the jeweled planet below. He wasn't entirely sure how old Master Yoda was, but there were times when he felt that the ancient Jedi was ready to fall over and die. Still, there seemed to be an inner strength driving him forwards despite his bowed shoulders. He'd heard that the Grand Master had faced Count Dooku and defeated him, despite the fact that Dooku had defeated both Master Kenobi and Skywalker. Yularen wasn't sure if he believed that, but he'd not discount the story entirely. Yoda had been at Geonosis after all, of that there was no doubt, it was not impossible that he'd faced off against Dooku while on the planet's surface.

"Do not let the Separatists regroup." he ordered. "Planetary support is a secondary concern, leave that to our fighters, concentrate on their capital ships."

Separatist Command Post, Aboard the Last Call, Planet Christophsis

“So my apprentice, the Republic has taken the planet?”

Ventress winced at the regal tone in Count Dooku's voice, remaining bowed before his hologram.

“Not yet, but there is no sign of General Loathsome and they continue to land their forces uncontested, it seems that Admiral Trench was defeated as well.”

“I see. That is...unfortunate.”

There was no hiding the disappointment in the Count's voice. Ventress' face burned with shame at failing her master. She raised her head to look at his hologram.

“Master, I can take command of the remaining forces and renew the attack.”

“No.” Dooku said commandingly. “There is nothing to be gained in drawing out the battle. I am sending a retreat order to our forces on Christophsis. As for you my apprentice, I have a new mission for you.”

Ventress nodded. “What do you command Master?”

“We need more allies. I have already swayed the Mon Calamari and Quarren to our cause and more continue to join us, however there are other more powerful entities whose support we could use if only they can be swayed.”

“I am not a diplomat.” Ventress growled.

“Mind your words my apprentice.” Dooku cautioned. “And no, you are not...perhaps another mission is more suitable for you. I will consider this. For the time being, I want you to leave Christophsis. You should have no trouble evading the Republic. Return to my side and we will find a task more suited to your particular skills.”

“Yes Master.”

The hologram died away and Ventress stood. All her control vanished the moment her Master's eyes were gone from her. She shook furiously, she had not only failed in her mission, but she had been humiliated by the Jedi.

“Jedi.” she growled. “I will see you again...and I will kill you.” her fingernails drew blood forth from her palm.

Orbit of Planet Christophsis, Republic Star Destroyer Resolute

“Admiral, we have a single starfighter breaking the atmosphere, it's heading for the edge of the battle.”

“Ignore it.” Yularen said dismissively. “We have more

important things to deal with than a single starfighter.”

Aboard the Last Call, Christoph System

Ventress smiled as the Last Call leapt to hyperspace. It had been far too easy to evade the Republic forces, they'd not paid her any attention at all really which was just as well for her. She settled back in her chair as the stars stretched into the tunnel of hyperspace. She would have to redeem herself in her Master's eyes, she could not afford to fail in her next mission. No matter the interference from the Jedi.

Aboard the Republic Assault Ship Jelial, Planet Christophsis

“The droids are falling back to their ships and starting to launch.” Commander Cody said, looking around at the gathered clone and Jedi commanders. “We're not in a position to stop them, but hopeful Admiral Yularen's forces will be able to intercept them before they can escape.”

“No certainty that is.” Master Yoda said. “Many warships the Separatists have left.”

Cody nodded. “Yes sir, but for all intents and purposes, the battle for Christophsis is over...we've won.”

“Losses?” Commander Nokta asked from her position besides General Kahan.

“Heavy.” Cody replied. “Exact numbers are unknown, but for the 7th Sky Corps we're looking at losses up to thirty-percent. The 13th Assault Corps is looking at a lower figure, around eleven-percent losses.”

Commander Nokta nodded and the briefing turned to other matters. Cody answered the questions that the Jedi and his fellow commanders had for him concerning the battle and the readiness of his Corps. He was proud to say that his forces were still combat capable, now that they were fully reinforced by their remaining legions that had been unable to join them earlier in the battle. That included their armor and aerospace units too which added significant punch to their offensive capabilities. All in all, despite the losses, they'd won the fight, and it hadn't been the bloodiest battle he'd fought in yet. That distinction still belonged to Geonosis.

Master Kahan strode down the passageway on the command level of the assault ship. He was tired, felt filthy, and was fairly certain he looked worse than he felt. Still, he couldn't deny that for his first major battlefield command, this fight had gone rather well.

He stopped at the door he'd been seeking and hit the control panel. The door opened and he stepped inside, stopping in his tracks at what he saw.

Commander Nokta had removed her helmet and her breastplate, she was in the midst of applying a bacta patch to her flank where the saber wound was still fresh. She turned towards him, her long green hair flowing behind her movement as she brought her hands up to cover her bared chest.

They stared at one another for a long moment before her eyes narrowed dangerously.

"General." she said curtly. "Have you ever heard of the word 'knocking?'"

Kahan's typically calm demeanor remained in place though his face heated.

"I apologize." he said quickly. "I merely wished to see how you were."

"As you can see." Aira-ty snapped. "I am fine, I'm sure you've seen enough to verify that. Now if you don't mind, get out of my quarters, sir."

"Uh, yes, yes of course." Kahan replied as he backed out of her room.

As the hatch closed behind the General, Aira-ty removed her hands from her breasts and turned back to the mirror with a scowl fixed on her features. Blasted Jedi, walking in whenever they wanted, who did they think they were? Like they owned the galaxy or something! A smile played across her features, despite the embarrassment of the situation, seeing Kahan's face flush had certainly been worth the trouble!

Her door opened again and she quickly clasped her arms over her breasts once more, whirling on the intruder.

"I thought I told you to get out of my—" she stopped as Jesp practically fell over himself in his mad scramble to get out of the room.

Aira-ty didn't have the chance to reprimand him as he uttered apology after apology before the door slammed shut, sealing any further words he might have had behind them. She glared and stalked over to the door, engaging the locking mechanism. She'd had enough visitors for one day! She just wanted to get some rest now.

"Master Kahan, speak with you may I?"

Kahan turned to see Master Yoda, Knight Skywalker, and Hanabi walking towards him. He'd sensed them of course, but he'd not realized they were seeking him out.

"What can I do for you Master Yoda?"

"A situation most troubling developed has."

“Oh?” Kahan asked, looking from Master Yoda to Skywalker and Hanabi.

“I would like you to take charge of Hanabi for a short while.” Skywalker said simply. “I am taking a leave of absence and she will require further training.”

Hanabi's eyes widened in shock at her Master's words. What was he talking about? He hadn't mentioned anything about this to her!

“Master?” she asked questioningly.

He didn't say anything to her, keeping his gaze staring straight ahead as Hanabi's heart sank. Had she done something to upset him? Had she failed? Why was he rejecting her?

Anakin felt Hanabi's anguish and felt like a royal ass for causing the girl such grief. But he was unable to tell her the real reason behind this. He had not seen Padme since the war had started. He missed her, missed her terribly. If he was going to see her, he couldn't have Hanabi trailing his heels. The easiest way to deal with the situation was to allow Master Kahan to tend to her until he could return from Coruscant.

“Are you willing to take her on for a time?”

Hanabi turned towards Master Kahan, who looked at her appraisingly before he nodded.

“Of course, I will tend to her training until you return.”

She couldn't contain it any more, her eyes brimmed with tears as she turned and fled from the trio. She didn't want them to see how upset she was, how much being discarded like this hurt. She'd thought that she and Master Skywalker were developing a good relationship, he'd seemed happy with her performance during the fighting. What had she done to be rejected now?

Kahan watched the girl flee down the passageway, his gaze returning to Skywalker.

“I believe you owe her an explanation Knight Skywalker.”

Skywalker's gaze met Kahan's for a moment, his blue eyes flashing angrily at the commanding tone in Kahan's voice but he did not argue as he turned and followed after his fleeing Padawan.

“Troubling this is.” Master Yoda murmured.

“I'm surprised you didn't deny him his request.” Kahan replied.

“Fighting hard has he been. Rest he has earned.” Master Yoda replied. “But to leave his Padawan behind...troubling it is.”

Kahan nodded in agreement. “Will the Council accept my stewardship of Hanabi?”

“No choice they will have.” Master Yoda replied. “No other

choice there is.”

“Very well, then I accept her as my apprentice until Skywalker can return to continue her training.”

“Something else there is.” Master Yoda said. “Troubling news coming from Hutt Space.”

“The Hutts?” Kahan inquired. “I thought they were neutral.”

“So they have been.” Master Yoda said. “But information we have that Count Dooku's agents seek their allegiance, yes.”

“I assume this is going to be a very quiet mission.”

Master Yoda nodded. “Assemble a team you will, believe I do that your Commander Nokta can aid you here. Go to Hutt Space you must, seek out the truth, prevent the Hutt's from joining the war you must. Assigned to General Kenobi, your forces will be, until completed your mission you have.”

Kahan bowed. “Of course Master, I will inform Commander Nokta and ask her to select a few troopers to accompany us.”

As the Grand Master left him, Kahan considered these new developments. The Hutts were powerful, not as large as the Republic of course, but still very influential in their own right. He'd have to tread carefully in these matters...having Hanabi along would only complicate things. She would need careful tending to, Skywalker's handing her off as he had would do nothing good for her self-esteem.

Rex was at a loss for what to do. He'd never been trained for this sort of thing and didn't know how to handle it at all.

“Am I a bad commander?” Commander Iyoto sniffed as she looked up at him.

“Uh, no ma'am, I thought you handled yourself very well on the battlefield.”

“Then why is Master Skywalker sending me away?” she asked tearfully.

“I, uh I am sure he has his reasons Commander. It's only a temporary reassignment. You'll be back with the General in no time.”

Despite the attempt at kindness on Rex's part, they didn't seem to do anything to comfort the distressed girl who only sobbed more heavily now, burying her face against his breastplate. Rex stood there for a moment, at a complete loss for what to do with a sobbing Jedi Commander. He put his arms on her shaking shoulders in an attempt to comfort her.

“It will be alright Commander...uh, can you stop crying now?”

ME₃ THE HELLDIVER SAGA: THE LAST CYCLE PROLOGUE

Veyron722Skyhook

Wake up, my children. Another day dawns on us.

What news, your majesty?

Have they arrived? Has... he, made his move yet?

No. It would seem his... ally is still searching. They have not yet found it.

It is only a matter of time, your majesty. It cannot remain hidden forever.

We've seen countless others fall before their might. Why should this one be different?

Because of him. I have watched him for a long time.

So he killed Sovereign and defeated the Collectors. That does not mean he can destroy them all. We above all should know this.

This cycle is different. They are not as weak as the others. They are independent, united. They do not look up to one in-particular race as the others have.

And that makes them dangerous. If they discover us...

We have lived here in peace for over 65 million years. Why should that change now?

Wait! They're here... It has begun...

We observe as we have always done. This is not our war.

But what if he should find us. Worse still, what if this... Shepard, should lead... the others, to us?

We need not worry about that. Our protectors will see to our safety as they have always done. For now, we observe and study. But I have faith. I have reason to believe that we know what it is that the ones who came before where

trying to find.

Yes. This... Catalyst, as they called it?

Indeed.

Enough talk, my children! The invasion is under-way. The fallen ones will strike soon, and he shall strike the hardest.

Then let the games begin...

POETRY

F***ING PILLS

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

I can't think.
Thoughts so quick.
Racing by.
Fingers tap, tap, tapping.
Running through my hair.
Foot bouncing.
Leg shaking.
Head dizzy.
Can't focus.
Fucking pills.

CURSE

Amanda Applegate
of <http://thehityouneversawcoming.blogspot.com/>

You think this is a dream?
You make me want to fucking scream,
I won't back up,
I won't back down,
And yet my world is crumbling down,
Should I stay or should I go?
Try to fix this broken thing called a home,
I don't know anymore,
Don't know if I should care,
Don't know if my feelings are even still there.
Do you know what that feels like?
To not have a soul?
To not know when to be warm and when to be cold,
When inside you feel frozen,
Cold as ice and dark as night,
Feeling alone,
Tired of the fight.
You say I always start it,
And maybe I do,
But maybe anymore it's to see if I have any feeling left,
If there's hope for me and you.
I am cold, I am callous, I am the bitch that doesn't have her own
palace,
No place I can call my own,
Always wondering what would happen if I were alone.
Would it be better, would it be worse?
This is what I call my own curse.

FORTUNATE

Kela Lewis-Morin

Eat up all your food, even the vegetables.
Do you know how many kids who would die for your plate?
Do not even think you are leaving the table.
At this rate, you can forget about going out with your mates.

But mamma even if I ate all my dinner they will still be starving.
Eating all this food would not change that.
If they were here right now, I would have no problem with halving.
At least then it would feel like I gave back.

Son, you do not understand me.
Do you know how lucky you are to live the life you lead?
To be able to refuse food so candidly.
When these are things that kids in Africa desperately need.

But mamma...
No buts because you have always had it this way,
You do not realise how good you have got it.
You have no idea what it is like to wake up each and every day
In poverty with no possible way to escape from it.

You have no idea what it is like to wake up to no running water,
Living like a pauper with a crying 6 month year old daughter.

You have no idea what it is like to have no electricity
And live in captivity with no wifi connectivity.

You have no idea what it is like to have no vegetables,
Let alone eat anything delectable or digestible.

Be grateful that you are able to live the life you lead.
Because others may not have the luxury to be so lucky.
The things they need are the things you over see with greed.
Be grateful that you can afford to be fussy and still have a full tummy.

SNOWFLAKE MEMORIES

Fairygal11
of <http://Fairygal11.deviantart.com>

Snow drifting through the air
Journeying across the winter night
Snowflakes dance with grace
Traffic movies in slow pace.

I gaze upon the frost on the window
Reminiscing on days past
From snowball fights with my brothers
To sliding down a snowy hill at Wilson Park.

Caroling with the choir
As the annual Christmas Tree
Lights up the night
Like a million candles.

Decorating Christmas cookies
With my Aunt Rosie
To opening presents
On Christmas morning.

Exchanging presents with my best friend
To giving Christmas cards to my teachers
Christmas programs and caroling
The snow days that I looked forward to.

Each snowflake that my eye caught
Reflected a memory of Christmas past
Giving me an insight on how it was
When I was just a little girl.