

Whispers from Ravenspyre

The *Vornskr* exploded out of hyperspace announcing its arrival at the EH controlled world of Frigg with a burst of tachyon radiation.

Frigg was an interesting world. Covered mostly in water, its few landmasses were coated in jungles and swamps while large settlements floated above the treacherous world along the edges of the greatest landmass dominating the western edge of the planet.

But this was not General Master's destination. He was headed to the southern continent. Far smaller than the other, it was also covered in jungles but was completely abandoned of all forms of civilisation.

He had come following a whisper in the Force, a call that spoke of secrets hidden within the stones of the ruins of the former *Palace Ravenspyre*; once home to *House Ar'Kell* before they bombed it to ruin, abandoned the Dark Brotherhood and left to find their own way in the galaxy.

The ship landed in a small clearing not far from what little remained of the former palace and the General stepped out into the surrounding jungle, his boots crunching on the dead and decaying matter underfoot.

The ruins were visible in the distance, and he slowly made his way towards them, cutting through the thicker parts of the jungle with a vibroblade keeping a close eye on his surroundings.

He was not far from his destination when he felt a presence. Something was watching. It seemed to care little about hiding itself and while he could not pinpoint its exact location it was clearly watching and waiting.

The jungle eventually gave way, and it was obvious very little remained of the former palace, the bombardment doing a thorough job on the ancient stones scattering them wide while large craters dotted the landscape, the jungle relentless trying to claim back what it saw as its domain.

The air was still, animals clearly seemed to avoid this place and without them it seemed unnaturally quiet, almost wrong.

About to venture deeper into the ruins to start his search the Force was screamed a warning and the General stopped, senses on alert.

His eyes caught the glint of something – a creature of lore, a nightmare given flesh, a being of legend, of death. It had lived within this place for eons long before the earliest of settlers had even found this world, its existence a reminder of a violent time where this world had been far more treacherous than many could possibly imagine.

The Mortigena.

At over three meters tall, covered in white armour with several spider-like appendages, its form was a beyond terrifying, its mere presence a suffocating blanket over the land.

The Mortigena sensing his aura let out a sound that was part growl, part wail – a call that resonated deep within his soul, a warning, leave now or be consumed.

Ever the flippant one Master chuckled. "Come now, surely you can do better than that", he taunted, his voice dripping with mockery.

His only answer was a form of disturbed laughter before it whispered a word that echoed throughout the ruins, "*The Destroyer*", the title hanging in the air like a curse.

Master's heart thundered in his chest, for that name was shrouded in secret, a mantle that he bore in the deepest, darkest recesses of his being. It was a shadow of the past that was not meant for the ears of others. How did this creature know?

Anger flared within him. As rage threatened to consume his composure, he clamped down on his emotions and started back at the thing that knew far too much.

"You know, I've been called many things in my time" his voice calm in contrast to his internal struggle and the tension in the air, "but 'Destroyer' is so melodramatic".

His only warning was a half growl/half shriek before the creature lunged, a blur of white, its many limbs threatening to tear him asunder and its claws slicing through the air aiming to rend the flesh from his bones.

But Master was quicker, his movements had been honed through countless battles. He sidestepped its attack, his vibroblade singing as it sliced through the air meeting the creature's attacks, striking its well-armoured hide with a shower of sparks doing little damage.

The Mortigena was relentless, each attack a testament to its eons of survival, its form perfect. Its multiple limbs granted it a grace unnatural in a creature its size and they clashed with a whirlwind of moves. Yet Master met it with a smirk, his blade glinting of silver that struck with elegance and purpose all the while he ducked, dodged & dived to avoid its relentless onslaught.

The battle raged, neither giving quarter nor expecting any. Growls and shrieks were met with the General's quips and taunts and as the fight drew on Master felt himself being pushed to his limits. The creature's strength was immense, its resilience otherworldly, it did not tire, it did not yield, it was clear it would not stop until it had achieved its goal.

But it was its use of the title 'Destroyer' that fuelled Master's resolve, a reminder of a past he could not escape, a future he was destined to confront one day, one he tried his best to hide, to ignore but one that he could never escape.

In a desperate manoeuvre, Master feinted, attempting to draw the Mortigena into an overextended attack and for a moment it looked like he had succeeded, until his world exploded in pain.

The creature had clearly anticipated the move and taken advantage of the opportunity, two of its clawed appendages had driven deep into his flesh, one deep in his chest, the other below his ribs – deep into his side.

Sensing victory it began to laugh, a cacophony of triumph, a sound that seemed to resonate with the very stones of the ruins. It raised him up off the ground, claws digging deeper as it did so and the vibroblade fell from his grip, unable to support it any longer as the pain took hold. Blood seeped from his wounds and stained the ancient soil of Frigg further exciting the creature.

But General Master was not one to yield in the face of despair. With a grimace etched on his handsome features, staring into the dark maw of the creature - terrifying beyond all reason as it whispered to him of his defeat, how his flesh would empower it, his soul unable to escape the never-ending torment to come... of his weakness. He reached unto the depths of his pain, finding there a well of strength he knew he possessed even in his darkness moments. His hand,

slick with his own lifeblood, found the hilt of a secondary weapon – a small, concealed vibroknife.

With a roar that matched the ferocity of the beast, he plunged the vibroknife deep into the creature's chest, finding a gap in its armour at the close range. The creature's laughter turned into a shriek of agony as the blade severed sinew and exposed its dark heart.

With a grin, blood leaking from his mouth giving him a terrifying vestige in his own right, Master plunged his free hand deep into the opening, gripping the creature's heart before giving a scream mixed of pain and satisfaction, he wrenched it free.

The Mortigena's grip loosened, its claws ripping their way out as they were withdrawn and he fell to the ground, gasping for breath.

He watched as the creature stumbled backwards, its form beginning to dissipate like a mist in the morning sun. It was not just flesh and blood; it was a being of the Force and he had struck at its very essence.

As the Mortigena vanished, its final words were a whisper that chilled the air, "Not.. the end... Destroyer... listen for Death's whisper... calling thee home...".

Master lay there for a moment, pain threatening to overwhelm him. He knew he had won a great victory this day, but the cost had been great, nearly fatal and if he didn't move it most likely would be.

Somehow despite the unyielding pain he managed to rise to his knees, focusing deep within the Force in an attempt to slow his wounds, he couldn't help but admire his prize from the battle.

His hand clasped the heart of the Mortigena, a crystal of the deepest amethyst, coated in a white ichor, pulsing with an otherworldly malaise, proof the creature still lived somewhere, its removal clearly not enough to destroy it entirely.

With a deep breath he tried to stand but was overcome with pain as he coughed and heaved, blood splattering the ground as he did so and he fell back to his knees, head spinning and chest feeling heavier by the moment. Clearly the creature had damaged his lung.

The Vornskr was his only chance of medical help and it was a considerable walk, not one he thought he could manage in this state but left with no other alternative he didn't have a lot of options.

Gathering his strength he again tried to stand before falling back to the ground a scream of both pain and frustration leaving his lips.

Before he could try for a third time, darkness began to cloud the edges of his vision - a noise from the jungle drew his attention.

Internally hoping the creature hadn't returned for Round Two, he tried to prepare himself for another go-round before he let out a sigh of relief as one of his Security Droids, 'Uno' in this case, emerged from the trees.

If the droid had an eyebrow to raise at the situation it most likely would have, but as it was not blessed with such a feature all it could do was let out a monotone hum-sound that could only be interpreted as unsurprised resignation at finding its owner in such a state.

With another cough to help clear his airways, Master smiled and couldn't help but be amused with the timing of Uno's arrival and he managed to convey that thought out loud just before the darkness claimed him, "Well, better late than never I suppose"....

With another unsurprised tone of resignation Uno picked up the General, the weight of the man no burden to its mechanical strength. With a quick scan of the area to confirm nothing was left behind he slowly carried him back to the ship. The ship's medical bay, the haven of advanced technology, would ensure his survival until they reached the facilities onboard the ISD Challenge which would allow for better, more in-depth treatment.

The journey to the Challenge was swift, the ship cutting through the atmosphere and into hyperspace with effortless ease. This was not the first time something like this had occurred, so Uno was a deft hand at setting the course and ensuring they reached their destination with minimal effort.

Three days later Master eyes fluttered open, the sterile environment of the Challenge Med-bay greeting him with its antiseptic scent. The hum of the medical droids filled the air and he could hear a bacta tank being re-prepared on the edge of the room.

At his bedside stood his Wing Commander, *LC Elara*, her presence in silent vigil. Usually so commanding and professional, her features flickered with a concern she could barely conceal, yet she hid it well, but not well enough.

"Welcome back, General", she said, her voice betraying none of the emotion that raged within. "Seems like you'll live to fight another day".

Master, with a mischievous glint in his eye, offered a wry smile, "It seems perhaps I'm harder to kill than anticipated. Besides I'd hate to deprive you of the honour", he quipped, his words belying the gravity of his recent brush with death.

Elara's lips twitched, the ghost of a smile threatening to break through her façade.

"Indeed, Let's not make a habit of this, hmmm".

The General's laughter rumbled through the med-bay before he spoke again, "I knew you cared", he teased with a knowing smile.

She chose to remain silent, a slight flush on her cheeks betraying her stoic front.

With a small nod and a grasp of his hand in support she took her leave from the med-bay, leaving him alone for the moment with his thoughts. This adventure had been far too close and far too personal.

Sitting up slightly in an effort to get more comfortable, he surveyed his wounds. He had clearly been immersed in a Bacta Tank when he'd arrived, and it had done wonders for the worst of his injuries. While he was still tender and had the odd spark of pain when he stretched, he had been mostly healed from his ordeal. A sigh escaped his lips, he'd need to find a way to thank Uno at some point for rescuing his arse yet again.

He was about to fall back into a restful slumber intent on taking advantage of the comfortable bed and peace he was being gifted, preferably before *GN Boilv* came to give him his well-practiced disappointed look that he did so well, his gaze wandered to what was sitting at his bedside.

It had been placed within a clear, secure, storage tube and it still glowed with an unnatural purple light, pulsing ever few moments like the heartbeat of creation. *The Mortigena's Heart*.

He wasn't sure why he had been called to Frigg, let alone why he had to fight the creature, but a victory was a victory, and the prize would be useful. Just before he slipped back into sleep a thought crossed his mind... it would make another fine addition to the creation of his lightsaber.

Fin.