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# THE OLD REPUBLIC

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REVISIONED WARS

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To all my niggas.  
Prologue

**M**andalore was many things. A world, a king, and a prophet.

The world known to outsiders as Mandalore had a second name much more dear to its conquerors. Manda'yaim was the beating heart of the poorly mapped and explored sector known as 'Mandalorian Space' by scores of PTSD riddled pirates and star mappers who hastily vacated its territory due to its bloodthirsty inhabitants. Manda'yaim was a vibrant jewel of green forests and blue oceans, the terrestrial beauty was once dominated by the colossal dragon-like beasts known as mythosaurs, but even these titanic tyrants were laid low by an even more vicious creature. Said creature would be the savage Taung, a race of bellicose beings exiled from their true homeworld and thrust into the unforgiving stars. The previously unnamed Manda'yaim would become their new home, as decreed by their king and voice of their barbarian gods, *Mand'alor*.

The world's night side was typically as black as any other feral world, lacking the sprawling megacities of core worlds or even the flickering settlements of pioneer worlds. On Manda'yaim's dark face there was only one exception, the smoldering ember of Keldabe. The city was embedded into the flattened top of a granite hill so tall it towered over even the mightiest of the veshok trees that stood below it, nurtured by the wide Kelita River that curved around (and had begun to slightly erode) the foot of Keldabe's rocky hill. The city itself seemed to grow from the granite, a wall of stone twenty feet thick with angular bulwarks carved into its face encased the entire city. The Taung had built tall and had dug deep, the building that composed Keldabe were peculiar towers of tapering box-shaped stonework with a handful of rectangular longhouses nestled in each tower's shadow. The streets were a chaotic series of lanes wide enough for a bus to drift through with more in common with the cracks in a mirror than to planned infrastructure.

The widest road of this logistical nightmare led up the rough steps of the first layer of concentric walls that led to the encased capitol building of Keldabe and by extension the entire Mandalorian people. The Alor'aranad (meaning Chief's Hall) was part pyramid part rectangle (dubbed by mathematicians and architects as a trapezoid) whole fortress, it was the indomitable citadel of Keldabe and home of their king.

And it, just like every other building in the city, was empty.

Even the recently finished steel-framed foundries two hills over to the east and their series of square-shaped landing pads were dark, the forges no longer breathing cloud after cloud of smoke into the air.

The entire population of the world was at the city-sized graveyard of beasts, or more specifically, the ivory coliseum at its center.

The arena was a box within a square, (as if you expected anything else by now) at the center was a pit of gravel, the crushed skeletons of those once damned to the pit, and the blood of those currently damned to the pit. A thin wall of iron, rock, and bone separated the ground level spectator area from the intimate killing field.

This section of the arena was affectionately known as the 'splash zone.' Most of the beasts thrust into the pit were more than capable of barreling through the slatted wall and into the crowd of cheering T-visored

barbarians, but this move was likely to be more suicidal than fighting whatever other poor beast was locked in the pit with them.

The next tier was the general viewing area. A series of gradually rising steps that constituted as Mandalorian seating. This section was populated by the loudest and most animated spectators, the booming hammer-blow of excited cheers, taunts, and bloodthirsty advice or demands for the pit's occupants to brutalize each other. The next level was significantly quieter, not out of reverence for the bloodshed below but because it housed those that actually wanted to have conversations. Old friends separated by their bloody trade reunited by festivities retelling war stories or describing in sickening and accurate detail the recent slaughters they'd partaken in.

Discussions on how to properly gut a variety of species ranging from rodians to herglis, only interrupted by the occasional bouts of laughter prompted by the dismemberment below. There wasn't a tier higher than this one, only a small viewing box populated by a single being.

Mandalore the Ultimate sat in an asymmetrical throne of bones. Each section was from a separate but noteworthy kill. One armrest was the curled spine and back legs of a Boma beast from when he visited the moon of Onderon, his other arm rested on the huge curved horn of a reek. The upper jaw protruding from the skull of a male krayt dragon hung above his head, the tip of its front fangs inches above his head. The seat was the valuable skull plate of a wraid slain during the same hunt as the krayt dragon. Each Mandalore had to assemble his own festival seat throughout his tenure as king of the Mandalorians, and following the death of each Mand'alor his throne was cast into the pit by his successor.

The mythosaur skull backrest of Mandalore the Conqueror's throne, weakened by age, exploded into a cloud of splinters and dust as the huge claw of tonight's entertainment speared through it. Its opponent had executed a tight sideways flip that triggered a new wave of cheers from the crowd. The spear-legged beast's skin was an armored green chitin where exposed revealed a tan and leathery hide. The gladiator's skin was a dark bodysuit covered in plates of black iron. On each one of his asymmetric pauldrons was the despised sigil of his clan, a red shriek-hawk, and this specific gladiator was the only one of his family's name to be respected on Manda'yaim. The Mandalorian fought like an entertainer, and his exaggerated movements and acrobatic feats always stoked the crowd's excitement. Even the conversations in the second tier were marked with patches of silence as the speakers found themselves enraptured by the contest below.

The Mandalorian landed with perfect footing and lunged dramatically, thrusting his foreign weapon into the beast's exposed belly. The weapon was a long and spindly pike topped with an electricity-discharging tip, it had been seized during the same raid that captured the beast. Mandalore the Ultimate failed to recall the name of the world that both hailed from, supposedly it was a ringed orb of orange dust and hive-riddled mesas.

Disgusting.

He'd have to burn it some day.

The beast didn't react well to getting jabbed with a stun pike. The electrified spear tip sank to its base and discharged a nerve-searing pulse into the creature. The multi limbed monster let out an alien shriek that morphed into a low bleat as it snatched the pike out of the Mandalorian's grip, who jumped back with surprise and threw up his hands, before snapping the weapon in two with a single crunch. The creature charged forwards with another shriek and swung its front legs like hatchets, trying to behead its prey or carve it in half. Neither occurred as the gladiator narrowly ducked and leaned out of harms way. After another unsuccessful hack that split nothing but the three-skulled armrest of Mandalore the Indomitable's throne, the beast changed tactics. It brought its claws up like the arms of a Coruscanti prize-fighter and began trying to spear the Mandalorian with a series of small jabs. The gladiator responded in good faith, planting his feet and raising his hands like a holoivid boxer. His head movement and footwork was on point as he slipped a spear that would've gone through each side of his helmet and slid his body to the right all while slapping the other claw slightly as it came in to impale his chest, altering its trajectory by an inch. The creature let out a series of clicks that sounded and awful lot like a cackle as it swung its left claw like a hatchet right as the Mandalorian found his footing again, only to loose a series of enraged creaks as the black shape threw his upper body backwards into a steep lean. The beast's claw whistled above his faceplate and did nothing but scrape his breastplate with its dewclaw, leaving a thin scratch of silver on a field of black. The enraged animal lost all control and skittered forwards, and began stomping its claws at the gladiator below it while loosing its trademark shrieking. The

gladiator moved fast, sidestepping each claw as it bit into the pit's floor and raised an eruption of gravel and bones. But he couldn't keep it up. Each step was slower than the last and each was smaller, his avoidance became narrower and narrower until he finally made a mistake. The Mandalorian, aware of his rapidly shrinking steps, bit off more than he could chew when he tried to lunge backwards, losing his footing and collapsing onto the ground. The beast bleated with glee as it began hacking at the prone being, but that could barely be heard over the now screaming crowd.

Mandalore the Ultimate let out a sigh. He'd always enjoyed this gladiator's fights, and he was doing his best to ignore the impending conversation he would have to have. It was disappointing for him that his favorite distraction was going to end so soon.

The Mandalorian rolled to and fro, dodging each claw with sickening closeness. There were times where the crowd swore he would be gored, only for the organic spear to flash beside him and leave behind another silver mark. On the third narrow miss did the creature change its strategy and utilize the full extent of its brainpower. The pit was a small space, and the beast had been guiding the Mandalorian towards the wall. It brought up both claws and smashed them down at the same time, the right claw soared towards the Mandalorian as usual but the left did something surprisingly intelligent. It pinned itself in the middle of the gladiator's path, and while he rolled out of the right spear's path, he crashed straight into the embedded claw.

The beast acted fast, raising its right claw and jamming it down where the Mandalorian was. The gladiator had barely any room so he did the only thing he could, he threw himself against the embedded claw and hugged it with all his might, right as the other claw sank into the gravel beside him. He released the claw and fell back onto the floor, sprawled out with an organic spear underneath each armpit and his helmet bumping against a ribcage embedded in the pit's wall.

The creature, unsatisfied by this result but not above gloating, lowered its head and let out a full throated scream inches from the Mandalorian's faceplate. Spit and alien saliva flew from the opened maw of the beast and onto the T-shaped visor of the gladiator. The creature's mouth was big enough to fit the Mandalorian's head, helmet and all, inside of it and that's probably what it should have done instead of bellowing its victory in his face. The gladiator gave the creature a keldabe kiss, that is to say he smashed the chitin of its nasal passage with his helmet in a vicious headbutt. The creature's shriek was cut short as it pulled its head away but the Mandalorian wasn't done yet, wrapping his arms around each claw and heaving his body upwards his legs shot out like a piston and smashed the creature's mouth shut, cracking the lower jaw and a number of its knife-like teeth in the process.

Thinking fast but reflexively moving even quicker, the gladiator used his dropping legs to generate power for a kip up that carried him forwards as the creature freed its claws and began frantically slashing at the space occupied by the gladiator a blink ago. The gladiator found his second wind as he raced underneath the creature, leaping upwards and bludgeoning the highest joint on one of the creature's rear legs with his armored elbow. The beast stumbled forwards and crashed into the wall, cracking it slightly, as the gladiator strolled onward with his arms outstretched. With a practiced bellow that somehow echoed above the deafening cheers, the Mandalorian addressed the crowd.

"ARE YOU NOT ENTERTAINED?"

The crowd's response was equally practiced, and almost a tradition by now.

"NO! NO! NO!"

The gladiator's hands curled into fists and he held them close to his chest.

"WHAT DID YOU COME HERE FOR?"

"BLOOD! BLOOD! BLOOD!"

As one the entire population of the coliseum (minus one acklay that was busy picking itself up) turned to look up at Mandalore's throne. And with a heavy heart, Mandalore the Ultimate stood up.

A veritable giant well past seven feet tall, the holy king of the Mandalorians and chief of the Taung species dominated his viewing box. Wordlessly he grasped the heavy saber with one hand and raised it high. The sight of the *beskad*, a single edged sword of an ancient design, stirred a cheer so loud from the crowd it could probably be heard from the moon of Concordia. Mandalore the Ultimate seized the blade from its tip and pulled his arm back before halfheartedly throwing it into the pit.

It was easily one of his less impressive throws, with the blade embedding itself an arms-length in front of the gladiator opposed to the usual inbetween his feet, but with an exaggerated step and a spinning flourish, the Mandalorian prepared to finish the fight.

Sinking back down into his throne, now even more alone following the departure of the blade and left alone with naught but his bone chair, the torches flanking said throne, and the shadows they cast in the corners, Mandalore the Ultimate decided it was time to sell his soul.

“Speak now. The crowd will not be able to take their eyes off the bout, and Aknar Vizsla will draw this out as he always does, but your time is short.”

The shadow in the corner rippled like a wave before breathing a figure into reality. Clad in a smooth, reflective black suit with a black-tinted orb helmet, the Sith agent revealed himself.

The agent spoke basic in an odd accent, he seemed to flow from word to word opposed to speaking each of them individually, like he was speaking a whole dance opposed to each step. It irritated the back of Mandalore’s skull. “You nearly disappointed me, I was beginning to think you had not noticed me.”

Below in the pit, the gladiator and beast met once more. The creature was more reserved than before but still intent on dominating the encounter, emphasized by how it batted aside the Mandalorian’s harmless flourish. “Your time is short.”

The Sith operative half-chuckled half-snickered at Mandalore. Mandalore the Ultimate cataloged the insult in the back of his mind along with all the others he had endured from this shadowy people. They would all be repaid in kind, in due time.

The agent spoke quickly and efficiently but couldn’t restrain himself from throwing a verbal jab or muffle the arrogance in his tone. “The time has come for your people to repay mine, *Mand’alor*. (The Sith’s pronunciation of the word set Mandalore’s teeth on edge) despite your people’s distaste of us and our help. The debt is there and it shall be repaid.”

*You are absolutely right. It will be repaid.* Mandalore’s thoughts turned to the growing list of slights in his mind. Below the fight had become a murky reflection of its earlier phases, the creature’s lobster brain had decided it was time to act out the definition of insanity by once again jabbing at its opponent with the tip of its claws. The gladiator played along and confidently responded with fast, efficient body movements that denied the creature’s claws even a glancing blow.

Mandalore the Ultimate knew exactly what the Sith had in mind, and absolutely hated it. “We have constructed only a handful of new forges, and Cassus has barely fortified his home and converted its clans. Our fleet can only stand against a single Republic armada, which the Republic has dozens of.”

The Sith waited for a sudden eruption of noise to cloak his words before speaking. “These are not my or the Empire’s concerns, and neither should they be yours.”

“Why?”

“My people have sabotaged more key projects and Republic corporations than you can count, Mandalorian. And we both know that your clans are more than capable of challenging the Republic. Besides, my people are not yet done helping yours.”

Mandalore grimaced underneath his mask as the agent’s tongue turned to silver at the last sentences. Each of them were manipulative and forked, but had grains of truth carefully embedded within. Mandalore’s attempts at modernization and industry had been slow yes, but even without them the might of even a single rallied clan was considerable, let alone all of them. And as dishonest as the Sith was, he had never lied in the past. If his people had truly gone out and crippled the Republic’s industrial base, Mandalore doubted they even stood a chance against the full power of the Mandalorian people. But there was something else nagging at the back of Mandalore’s mind.

“What other, ‘help,’ do you mean?”

The creature was tired, and it was frustrated. There was a horrible hissing screech as its claws once again scraped down the side of the saber. The gladiator’s parries and refusal to die were infuriating, but it was his ripostes that were most effective. A moment after the claw dropped off the blade, the Mandalorian moved like a dark flash and took out a chunk of the creature. This time the target was the stab-wound inflicted earlier by

the stun pike, what once was a gash that dripped the occasional drop of blood became a foot-wide fissure that poured blood onto the gravel below.

"I have a datapad with a map on it." The agent spoke like he was explaining simple math to a child. "Your scouts are exceptionally good, they nearly caught us when we entered the sector. Twelve parsecs from the world you call Cheravh at these coordinates will be a pair of starships. We designed them to be simple for your people, be sure to bring one thousand slaves each. That means bring two thousand slaves."

The Sith's insulting words bounced off of Mandalore's skull as the gears in his head turned. A thousand slaves per ship? That meant each ship was practically as big as a *Kyramud*, battleship sized. Two extra battleships in the fleet was welcome but not all that impressive on its own, but Mandalore had seen the weapons of the Sith. Hell, the Sith's stealth harness was more advanced than anything the Republic had probably ever conceived, and these ships were tailor made for the Mandalorians?

It was a game changer. If he got his hands on Sith ships, Sith technology beyond mere (but nonetheless innovative and impressive) forging techniques and tools and advanced alloys, his clans would truly be unstoppable.

And the Sith had never truly lied to him before.

In the pit, things were wrapping up. The gladiator had graciously let the beast score another scratch on his plate but had even more generously handed out three more devastating wounds to the creature.

He had backed it into a corner, and like an animal, it fought like it. Despite its overexertion and the fact that a quarter of its lifeblood painted the floor, but more importantly to the crowd, its walls, (splash zone living up to its name) it swung faster than ever before, and for once the gladiator truly had to fight for his life. He'd given up on parrying three swings ago when it had nearly cost him his blade and wrist bones, and instead darted away from every hacking blow and vicious thrust of its claws. Its cackling clicks were long gone, replaced by exasperated bleats and desperate shrieks, the beast was running on less than fumes, all it wanted was for things to be over, to kill this horrifying insect stinging and draining its blood from it. Desperate strikes turned into callous swings, and callousness gave way to sloppiness. The creature lunged. Its claws moving like lightning with a quickness it hadn't shown before. But the Mandalorian was nowhere to be seen.

A sharp agony stabbed at the beast's chest as it finished its lunge, and even its slow, tired, primitive brain understood what had happened.

"Leave the datapad and leave Manda'yaim."

Mandalore could hear the grin in the agent's voice, "That I cannot do yet. I must witness your promise to march on the Republic."

The Sith strode around from behind the throne to directly in front of Mandalore. He had no fear of the Mandalorians seeing him, they were too busy screaming at the creature below to land a hit or die.

A black gauntlet of small reflective disks extended to Mandalore, and for once Mandalore the Ultimate looked into the black abyss that was the Sith's helmet.

There was nothing there. Mandalore could see his golden mask in the reflective disks on the bodysuit, but not in the mask. The blackness there was hungry, consuming every photon that touched it. It was almost shocking, but he was Mandalore. Nothing could stun him.

The creature slumped forwards, and the gladiator barely managed to get out from underneath it before it crashed onto the floor in a heap. He strode along it, kicking one limp leg out of the way, while saluting to the crowd with his blade. He rounded to the front of the beast, and right as he was about to gesture at Mandalore the Ultimate the beast's claws lashed out.

Death was robbing it of its strength though. All it took was a brutal kick with his boot to crunch the claw's chitin and rob it of its momentum. He took a moment to aim at the beast's arm, and for once the slight pause wasn't for dramatic effect, the beast had actually pushed the gladiator in their last exchanges, he aimed where its chitinous claw turned to leathery skin and struck it there with his blade, severing it completely. He took off the other claw in similar fashion, this time with an additional twirl to rile the crowd, before planting a boot on the beast's neck.

He stabbed down hard, breaking the chitin but unfortunately not severing the whole neck. He was more tired than he realized.

Mandalore the Ultimate extended his arm and grabbed the agent in a forearm shake. The operative had expected a handshake but didn't miss a beat, reacting fast and shaking along with the Mandalore.

"I shall summon the clans. Then, I will declare a new crusade against the Republic."

The Sith had his answer. Right as the neurons in Mandalore's mind fired to release his grip, the agent's stealth harness had already activated.

A wave shimmered from head to toe, and the Sith agent was swallowed up by the world behind him.

Mandalore looked out to see the gladiator deliver the final blow of the night. With a satisfying (to Mandalorians) crunch the beskad bit deep, severing the spine and freeing the beast's head.

With that, the gladiator weighing every pound of his body into his weapon, the Mandalorian impaled the beskad into the beast's back before raising his new trophy high so the entire coliseum could see it.

The whole crowd erupted in applause and cheering, but Mandalore stayed sitting. Something about his encounter with the Sith agent had left him hollow, left a sliver of ice that scratched at the back of his skull.

Despite all of the Sith's reassurances, despite the might of his clans, despite his own strength and power, he had a bad feeling about this.