

Book IV

SOLAR WARS

THE DAWN OF TWO SUNS

A long time ago, in unmeasurable eons of time... not in some distant galaxy, far, far away... but right here, in our own cosmic backyard... in our solar system... there was **no** earth!

Chapter II

The Final Mission, Part I



Kael'Ryn
MERCURY



Princess Lysara
VENUS



General
Vaelor Krynn
MARS



VX-17 (Vex)
Combat-Droid
JUPITER



The
Shallit'Biru



Xal'Zirath
MERCURY

DEE DOWNING

Chapter 11: The Final Mission, Part 1

Kael and Xal stood at the edge of the Solari training grounds, the air thick with anticipation. Six months had passed since their combat training with Vex, and now they returned to the Solari trials, prepared to prove themselves.

They had missed half a year of formal instruction, but neither twin harbored doubt. The lessons they had learned from Vex were far more grueling, their skills sharpened through relentless sparring against an opponent who never tired, never faltered.

The assembled warriors, fellow initiates, and masters watched as the trials began. The twins stepped forward, their expressions calm, their movements precise. They faced their first opponents... seasoned trainees who had remained on the prescribed path of the Solari discipline.

The battle commenced, and Kael and Xal moved as one. Their footwork was flawless, their strikes calculated, and their counters effortless. Their opponents struggled to keep up, their attacks anticipated and dismantled before they could even fully commit to them.

One by one, their adversaries fell, the matches ending quicker than anyone had expected.

Whispers rippled through the crowd. The masters exchanged glances of astonishment. They had anticipated that the twins would struggle, that they would need to make up for lost time.

Instead, Kael and Xal stood victorious, their skill levels beyond what any had foreseen.

The next round brought more experienced warriors, those on the cusp of earning their Solari titles. Yet still, the twins dominated, adapting fluidly to each opponent, countering moves before they could fully form.

It was as though they had transcended the very training regimen the Solari had so carefully structured.

Finally, the masters, themselves stepped in, their curiosity too great to ignore. A select few challenged the twins, believing their superior experience would overpower the young warriors.

The battles that followed were unlike anything witnessed in the trials before. Though the twins did not claim victory against the masters, they came astonishingly close, pushing them further than any trainee had before.

When the final match ended, silence fell over the training grounds. The masters stood in quiet contemplation, their faces betraying their amazement.

"Their trials are over," one of the **elder masters** finally declared.

"There is nothing more to test. They have surpassed every expectation."

Kael and Xal exchanged a look, their bond unspoken yet understood. They had proven themselves, not just as warriors, but as something greater.

The road ahead was still unknown, but one thing was certain... their destiny had only just begun.

Wait... Wait... There's More!

After the trials, Kael and Xal allowed themselves a rare moment of relief, believing they had earned a chance to relax. But their reprieve was short-lived.

Master Zephiron, one of the highest-ranking Solari, approached them with an unexpected proposal.

"Your skills have surpassed even our finest warriors," he said, his gaze intense.

"It is time for you both to begin separate missions. You no longer need to complement each other in combat. Each of you is more than capable of standing alone."

The weight of his words settled over them. The idea of fighting apart had never occurred to them. They had always been a team, their bond their greatest strength. But before that transition began, Master Zephiron had one final task for them.

"Your next mission will be the last one you take together," he announced. *"Make it count."*

Kael and Xal exchanged glances. This mission would mark the end of an era; one last battle fought side by side before their paths separated forever.

Master Zephiron had barely finished speaking when another master entered the chamber. **Master Orion**, known for his keen strategic mind, stepped forward, his expression grave.

"Your final mission together will not be one of conquest, but of discovery," **Orion** stated.

"This is a reconnaissance mission. Engage in combat only if there is no other choice. You must be in and out like the wind."

Kael and Xal straightened; their curiosity piqued.

"There have been unexplained occurrences near the forest moon of Pheldhor," Orion continued.

"It is more of a massive asteroid, situated on the outer perimeter near the void but between Mer'Kuri and Mars. Since it is teeming with life, it is considered a moon. Lately, ships have mysteriously vanished in its vicinity... along with their crews. No distress signals, no wreckage. Just... gone."

A heavy silence filled the room as the gravity of the mission settled upon them.

"Your objective is to uncover what exactly is happening out there," Orion instructed.

"Gather intelligence, observe from the shadows, and avoid conflict whenever possible. We need answers, not casualties. If you are forced into battle, ensure it is your only option."

Kael furrowed his brow. *"Has anyone attempted to investigate before?"*

Orion exhaled slowly.

*"A few. But none have returned. That is why this mission is critical. We cannot afford to keep losing people **without** understanding the threat."*

Xal smirked slightly. *"So you're sending us because we're expendable?"*

Zephiron interjected, shaking his head.

"No. We are sending you because you are the best chance we have. Your skills, your instincts... they are beyond what we expected. You have the ability to succeed where others have failed."

Orion nodded in agreement.

"You leave in two days. Use this time wisely. Prepare your equipment, study the star maps, and rest while you can. Pheldhor is a mystery, and mysteries are often dangerous. Do not underestimate what you find there."

This was no ordinary mission. Whatever awaited them on Pheldhor was an enigma wrapped in shadows.

And it would be the last mystery they unraveled together.

Pheldhor

Kael and Xal were in their shuttle, speeding toward the Pheldhor coordinates. The ride was quiet; an unusual stillness hanging between them.

Neither one wanted to address the pink garalephant in the shuttle; the reality that this was their last mission together.

Xal exhaled heavily and finally broke the silence. *"I can't believe this is it. Our last mission together."*

Kael, his eyes fixed on the navigation display, shrugged.

"It might not be our last... but we will be doing a lot more solo missions. After all, we both knew that we would someday outgrow each other. Like all siblings do."

Xal frowned but nodded. *"Yeah... I guess that's true."*

Kael glanced at him, offering a small, reassuring smirk. *"Besides, I think we will learn **more** out there on our own."*

Xal sighed. *"That's probably true."*

Before they could say more, the shuttle's control panel beeped sharply. An incoming signal... something was approaching.

Kael's fingers flew over the console. *"A ship... and it's big."*

Xal's gaze locked onto the scanner. *"Let's hide behind that asteroid. It's just big enough."*

Kael nodded, maneuvering the shuttle into the shadow of the floating rock. The moment they settled into position, a massive black battle cruiser stormed past, its dark hull cutting through space like a silent predator.

The ship showed no signs of detecting them.

Kael's eyes narrowed. *"Who is that?"* He didn't recognize the design, the markings, or anything about the vessel.

Xal shook his head. *"I don't know... but I bet they're headed to the same place we are."*

The twins exchanged a knowing look before easing their shuttle into a cautious pursuit, keeping a safe distance as they followed the mysterious battle cruiser toward the unknown dangers of Pheldhor.

They finally arrive. It was just as expected; an enormous asteroid. Its size could rival that of any small moon. But what stood out the most was its surface, covered in dense forests stretching as far as their scanners could detect.

"Did this use to be a planet?" Xal asked, gazing at the green expanse below.

Kael studied the readings on their console. *"It probably was. Most moons don't have an atmosphere... and they orbit a planet. There's oxygen down there."*

Finding a concealed spot, they carefully landed the shuttle beneath the thick canopy. They powered down the systems and engaged the cloaking mechanism before stepping out onto the surface.

The air was rich and damp, filled with the scent of unfamiliar flora.

Xal took a moment to look around. *"This place is incredible."*

Kael rolled his eyes. *"There's no time for sightseeing. We're on a mission."*

Xal smirked. *"Okay. But which way?"*

Kael pulled out a looking glass, scanning the sky until he spotted movement in orbit. *"The cruiser we followed is that way... Let's go."*

With weapons at the ready and senses alert, the twins marched off into the unknown depths of Pheldhor's vast forest.