



### The Shadows of the Lost Oasis

Zyrrak sits casually at the bar, his iridescent eyes reflecting the shifting lights of the pulsating walls. He sips his glowing green drink while flipping a coin-like artifact between his claws. As the visitor hesitates before taking a seat, Zyrrak lets the coin fall onto the counter with a soft click and leans forward.

“Ah, a newcomer,” he hisses in a tone that’s both friendly and dangerous. “Have you ever heard of the Lost Oasis? No? Well, sit down, stranger. Let me tell you a story.”

“Several cycles ago, I was tasked with retrieving an ancient artifact from a dead world—a desert of glass and ash, where even the stars in the sky seemed to fall silent. My employer, a merchant with too many secrets and too little patience, claimed it would be an easy job. But nothing that sounds easy ever is.”

Zyrrak takes another sip of his brew, his gaze momentarily distant, as if recalling the scene.

“The oasis was a legend—a place that wasn’t supposed to exist. Yet, as always, I found a way.

15 The entry was not without cost. There were... guardians,” Zyrrak begins, his tone sharpening slightly as he sips his green drink. “They weren’t mere creatures. They were living manifestations of the desert itself. Beings of sand, endlessly swirling around their formless bodies. Their eyes—two blazing suns—burned with a fury older than the stars. When they moved, it was as if the ground itself came alive.”

20 He pauses, his shimmering eyes seeming to look into the distance, as though recalling the memory. “I wasn’t alone. My team consisted of some of the most capable mercenaries credits could buy. But skill isn’t always enough. The guardians were faster than the eye could follow. A moment of carelessness, and one of my companions was seized by a sandy claw. The scream—a piercing sound that abruptly silenced—left nothing but ash behind.”



25 His voice grows quieter, more ominous. “We fought with everything we had. Energy blasters, vibrating blades, even a few improvised explosives. Nothing could truly harm them—they simply reformed. It was like fighting a storm that mocked us. But I noticed something. With every flash of light, every surge of heat, they seemed to... pause, if only briefly. Not because they were injured,  
30 but because they sought order. Sand responds to chaos—and chaos was my weapon.”

He leans back slightly, his voice calmer, though his expression remains serious. “I led them deeper into the desert, far from what they were protecting. It was a dance—a painful, shadowy dance for our lives. Until we finally reached the entrance to the oasis. The last guardian stood there, its blazing eyes like a challenge. It was all or nothing. I used the last bit of energy my blaster  
35 had to destabilize a sandy slope above it. As the mass collapsed over it, it vanished—at least, for that moment.”

Zyrrak exhales softly, a hint of pride in his grin. “Sacrifices, yes. But that’s life out there, stranger. It takes and gives nothing back. But on that day, I won. And the oasis? Oh, it was worth every single scar.”

40 A crooked, almost diabolical smile spreads across Zyrrak’s face. “The artifact? It was a mirror—not one that reflected light, but one that revealed the truth of your soul. When I looked into it, I didn’t see myself but... something else. Something that had influenced my decisions, my deals, for an eternity. A figure that lingered like a shadow behind me.”



He leans back again, his eyes narrowing, as though recalling something unsettling.

45 “I delivered the mirror to my employer. But I’m certain he won’t hold onto it for long. Such things belong to no one. They reclaim themselves. And if you ask me, that’s for the best.”

Zyrrak picks up his coin, tosses it playfully into the air, and catches it before it vanishes again. “The moral of the story? Some deals come with invisible clauses. Always read the fine print—or better yet, let someone else do it.”

50 He laughs, a soft, serpentine sound that echoes through the bar. Then he turns away, utterly relaxed once more, his gaze sweeping the crowd, ready to lure the next visitor with a tale.

