

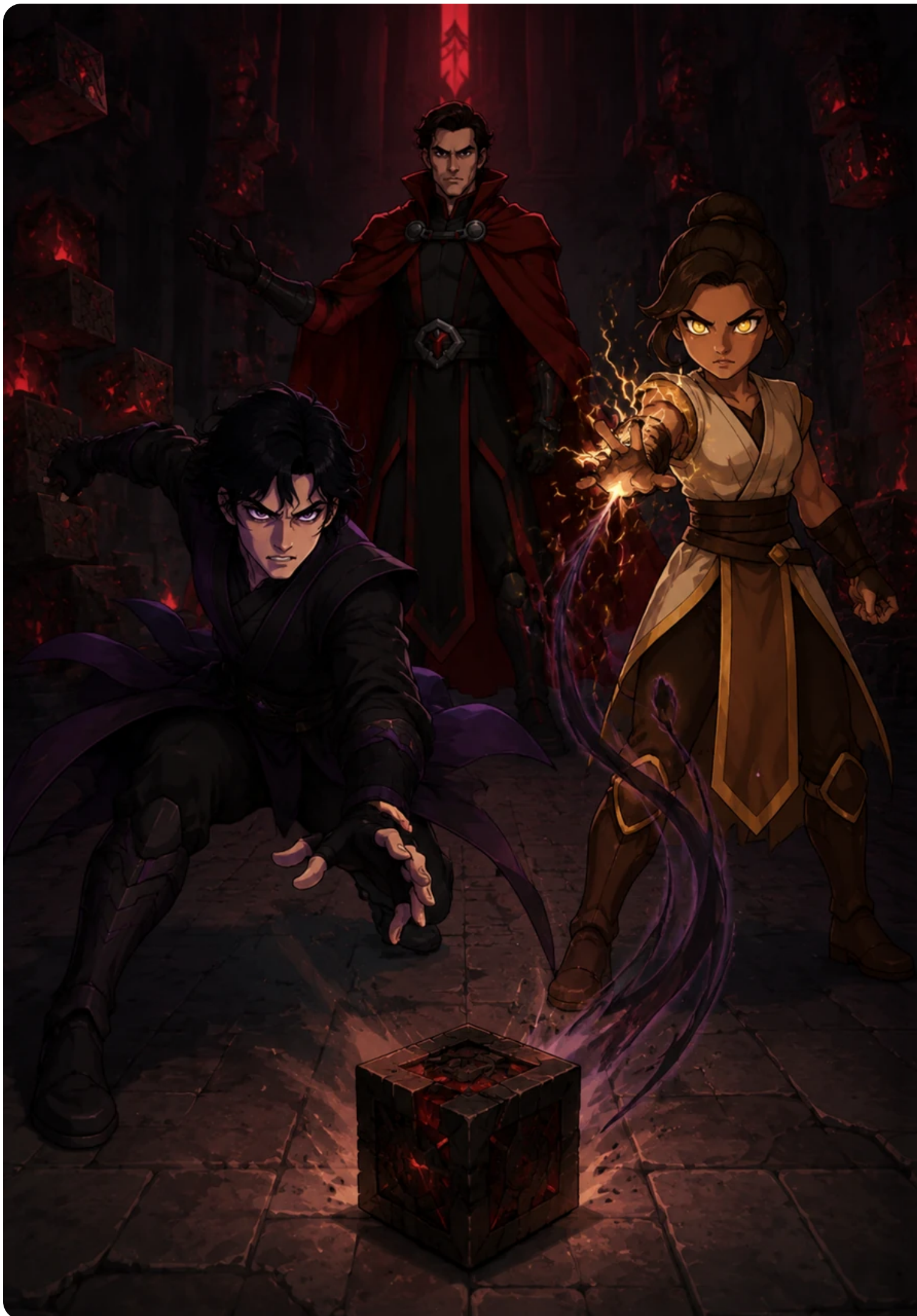


The Shadow's Choice

Ron Jon



Lord Tenax stands on a high obsidian balcony overlooking the grand training hall of a hidden Sith academy, his crimson cloak billowing in the cold draft. Below him, the lithe and graceful Kaelen moves with feminine elegance, his violet lightsaber spinning in a blur of lethal precision. Opposite him, the athletically built Vora stands like a statue of granite, her eyes glowing with gold as she effortlessly levitates massive stone pillars using the raw power of the Force.



Inside a flickering meditation chamber filled with ancient Sith holocrons, Tenax tosses a single charred relic onto the floor between his two pupils. Kaelen immediately lunges forward with a predatory strike, his slender frame coiled like a spring as he seeks to win through speed and martial skill. Vora remains rooted to the spot, her face a mask of intense concentration as she reaches out with a trembling hand, causing the very air to crackle with dark side energy as she attempts to bend the relic to her will.



The final trial takes place on a narrow bridge suspended over a sea of churning molten lava, where the heat rises in suffocating waves. Tenax watches from the shadows as the two acolytes face one another, their faces illuminated by the orange glow of the magma and the hum of their ignited blades. Kaelen's cold determination clashes with Vora's eager desperation, both young warriors ready to cast aside their humanity to prove they are the only one worthy of the Sith Lord's dark legacy.