Lexen Skywalker is more than he appears to be. Images of other times and places appear in his dreams, and he can't seem to stay dead. It would have been much simpler if he only had one dark past to wonder about.
There's a rumbling sound like unearthly thunder. The ground shakes and shudders like an angry bantha, bucking and buckling underneath me.

What's going on? The sky turns red, like blood spilling across the heavens, choked with black clouds. The ground breaks apart, tremors opening impossibly wide chasms. The world shatters beneath my feet.

A billion voices cry out in terror and are suddenly silenced.

I wake. A dream. It was a dream.

What an awful thing to be dreaming about. I sigh and rub my head, hoping to push aside the vivid imagery.

The ship shudders beneath an impact. That wasn't just a dream.

I quickly sit up in alarm, just as the door to my quarters whooshes open. An unfamiliar man comes in, wearing a uniform that I feel like I should recognize. He looks just about as panicked as I probably do at the moment.

"We're under attack!" he says.

"What's going on?" I ask in a rush. "Who's attacking us?"

"The Sith have boarded the Endar Spire," he replies. "Come on, we've got to save Bastila!"

"Wait a minute. Who are you? How do I know you're on my side?"

"I'm Ensign Trask Ulgo. I'm a Republic soldier, same as you! We work opposite shifts. That's probably why you haven't seen me before. Grab your gear from your footlocker and let's go!"

I suppose that makes sense. I guess I am a Republic soldier, like he says. Why else would I be here? Even though whatever I did yesterday is kind of hazy at the moment.

As I go to open my footlocker, I ask, "Who is Bastila?"

"Did you hit your head on the bunk when the ship was attacked?" Trask wonders, looking at me strangely. "She's a Jedi, and she's in command of this mission. She's the one who defeated the Sith Lord, Darth Revan! You swore an oath to protect her like everyone else on this ship!"

Why would I do something like that? I'm not one to make oaths or promises unless I really mean it, and I don't even know who this Bastila person even is. Never mind that I can't remember making any such oath now. But now isn't the time to be wondering. I'll just go along with things for the moment and try to figure out what's going on later. My mind is still kind of foggy, but I'm pretty sure I can fight.

I finish getting hurriedly dressed and pull out the weapons from the footlocker. A light blaster and a knife. It'll have to do for now, I suppose.

"I know you're a scout and not a soldier," Trask is saying. "But I hope you can fight. I'd think you'd have gotten into a scrape or two in your day. They say you've been all over the galaxy and have seen things I couldn't even imagine!"
I don't bother to tell him that if this is true, I must have some memory problems, because I don't even remember what planet I'm from, never mind anyplace I might have ever visited. Maybe he's right, and I did get a concussion or something when the ship was attacked. But there's no time for medical attention now.

"Alright," I tell Trask. "Let's go find Bastila, double-time!"

Outside of our quarters, we encounter a group of soldiers wearing silver armor fighting others dressed in Republic uniforms. These must be the Sith that Trask was talking about.

"For the Republic!" Trask cries, charging into battle like an idiot.

Well, at least he provides a good distraction while I get my weapons sorted out. I shoot a few of the Sith with my blaster. The damage is negligible, and I'm lucky to have not hit any of my apparent comrades in the process. Clearly, I'm not cut out for this sort of weapon.

The Sith notice my wild, ineffectual shooting, and fire several shots at me. Stinging blaster shots tag me in the leg and the side, and I stumble to one knee. Another shot hits Trask square in the chest, and he collapses in front of me. I glance at the side in alarm to see him sprawled out on his back, dead eyes staring blankly at the ceiling.

I don't have long to ponder his fate, however, as the next hit does it for me.

I wake, sitting up in my bunk in alarm. Was that a dream? I must be having nightmares about the ship being attacked now. Well, that's not going to happen. We're perfectly safe and nothing of note has happened so far. The stress must just be getting to me.

The ship shudders under an impact, and Trask Ulgo rushes in through the door. "The ship is under attack!"

Okay, so perhaps it wasn't just a dream after all. How strange. "The Sith found us? We have to protect Bastila!"

"Right," Trask says. "Grab your gear and let's go!"

I quickly get dressed and look at my weapons. A small blaster and a long knife. I'm not very good with the blaster, I know that much. Maybe that's what that dream was intending to warn me of. Well, I'll take that warning in good faith then. I tuck the blaster away and grip the knife instead.

Trask is talking to me, echoing the very words I had just been dreaming of. How odd. I say nothing and head out into the corridor.

There are several Sith fighting some Republic soldiers out here. "For the Republic!" Trask cries as he charges into battle.

While the Sith are distracted with the Republic solders, I slip up into the fray behind them and slit one's throat, then in a swift motion, slide the knife between the ribs of a second one. The blade feels much more natural in my hand, I note with approval.

As I wipe off my knife again and head after Trask, I think about how casually I just killed two men. Two human beings. Should I feel guilty about it? Probably not. They would have killed me, after all. But if anything, I feel excited. They're the enemy, people I can get away with killing without consequences. What am I, some kind of psychopath?
I find that thought doesn't really bother me much. I might not be able to actively remember a single battle, but I have well-honed battle instincts to fall back on. The minute I mentally tag someone as needing to die, I let my body do what it knows how to do, and bodies hit the deck.

"You're good with that knife," Trask says. "Smart move, using a weapon their shields can't stop."

"I wouldn't mind something with a bit longer blade, though," I comment. "A little more reach."

"A vibroblade would be a nice upgrade if you can find one," Trask says.

We round the corner to the sounds of humming energy blades. A woman in brown robes is fighting a man in black robes, and they're both wielding lightsabers, green and red respectively. I stop and stare for half a moment, frozen in fascination at watching them.

"A Dark Jedi!" Trask says. "And she must be one of the Jedi who came aboard with Bastila. We'd better stay back. We'd just get in the way."

"Black robes make someone a Dark Jedi?" I comment. "That's positively cliche. What are those things they're wielding?"

"Lightsabers," Trask replies.

"They're beautiful," I say, staring raptly at them. "And I want one."

"Good luck on that, you're no Jedi."

Both of them are very skilled, but they fight in completely different ways. The woman is all calm and precision, and seems to lean toward defense. The man, on the other hand, is all rage and power, leaning toward the offense. I readily pick out the weaknesses in both of their styles.

Unfortunately, the woman notices us, and in a moment of distraction, the man steps into his window of opportunity. With a swipe of his red lightsaber, he cuts her down, slicing vertically straight through her body.

Trask swears beside me as the Dark Jedi turns his attention toward us.

I ready my knife. "Trask. Run."

I parry the man's first lightsaber strike. Blue sparks fly.

"No," Trask says. "I'm not going to leave you." He pulls out his blaster and tries to shoot at the Dark Jedi, who easily blocks the shots with his lightsaber.

"Fine, then you'll die too, idiot," I say with a snort.

The Dark Jedi laughs at us. "Such heroic fools. You think you can hold me back for long with that little knife, even if it's cortosis weave?"

Slash! Clash! "Not particularly," I comment. "But maybe I'll surprise you, instead."

He sweeps his lightsaber over to my left, neatly cutting Trask Ulgo in two on a diagonal slice. I don't bother looking for more than a moment. I narrow my eyes in anger and grip my knife more tightly.

"Heh," the Dark Jedi says. "Go on. Give in to your rage. The Dark Side will make you strong."

"Most people wouldn't consider it wise to try to give combat pointers to someone trying to kill them,"
I say with a smirk. "Or are you just trying to taunt me into letting down my guard?"

I block another attack, and get in a kick to his kneecap. He stumbles for a moment, but quickly regains his balance before I can take advantage. I'm not going to last too long, at this rate. I don't have enough reach.

"You are beginning to annoy me," the man says. "I tire of toying with you. Fine. Die already. You can't block this."

He raises his hand, and a surge of electricity erupts from his fingertips and courses through my body. I cry out in agony. My body twitches and spasms in pain. Then he shoots a second burst of lightning at me, and it's over.

I snap awake, sitting up in my bunk suddenly. A dream? Yes, that had to have been a dream. Why would I ever do something so foolish as try to take on a Dark Jedi head on with only a knife, anyway?

What's going on? Dreams within dreams, nightmares within nightmares. As I get up and start getting dressed, I start to wonder if the Endar Spire really is under attack. Until the ship shudders under an impact and Trask Ulgo comes running in.

"The Endar Spire is under attack!" he says.

"I've noticed," I comment dryly, finishing getting dressed and arming myself.

"You ready?" Trask says. "Let's go. We've got to get to Bastila!"

We head out into the corridor, and I smoothly slip into combat with my knife, cutting down Sith after Sith as we go. Then we come upon the two Jedi fighting, Dark and Light, red and green, and I have to stop and stare for a moment. That dream was just too vivid, and too precise. Could it have been a warning of some sort?

"A Dark Jedi!" Trask says. "We'd better stay back. We'd just get in the way."

"What kind of an attitude is that?" I snap at him. If I'd helped before, in the dream, perhaps I could have saved all of our lives.

The Dark Jedi is engrossed in his battle with the human woman, allowing me to slip up behind him. Don't see me. Don't hear me. Don't notice me. I'm just a shadow darting across the ground. Slipping a blade into your back.

Blood spills out of the dying Dark Jedi's wound and onto my hand. Both Trask and the woman are staring at me.

"Thanks for the help," the woman says. "I didn't even see you there. My name's Kara Vir."

I go over to search the Dark Jedi's body, saying, "I'm Lexen Skywalker, and that's Trask Ulgo. Do you know where Bastila is?" I pick up the red lightsaber that had fallen from the man's grasp and flick it on experimentally. It feels good in my hand.

Kara pales visibly. "You should leave that alone. You could cut off a limb if you don't know what you're doing. You need Force training to properly wield a lightsaber."

"That's superstitious nonsense and you know it," I tell her. "There's nothing inherently mystical
about this particular piece of equipment. Anyone with sufficient skill should be able to wield one without a problem."

"Even if that were true, it's still a Sith lightsaber," she says. "You wouldn't want to wield something like that. People would get the wrong idea if they saw you swinging around a red lightsaber."

"What, is there something inherently evil about the color red now, too?" I say. "Look, if we survive this, we can get it swapped to a more suitable color, alright?"

"You still shouldn't be allowed to keep it or wield it. You're not a Jedi, not even a Padawan!"

"Either way, this isn't the time to be discussing this. We're wasting time. Where's Bastila? We need to find her and get off this ship."

The Jedi woman sighs and nods, dropping the argument for now. "We should head to the bridge."

"Good idea," I say. "Let's go. You take point."

We head through the corridors, fighting our way through more Sith. After seeing the way I handle myself with it, Kara stops staring at me like I'm going to accidentally decapitate her at any moment.

"You are... better with that than I had anticipated," she admits. "The Force is strong with you. I can feel it. Perhaps that's why Bastila wanted you brought along. You might be Force sensitive. Although, I'm still not comfortable seeing someone wielding a red lightsaber near me, though."

"Noted," I say. Maybe that's what's been happening with me. I must be seeing glimpses of what might be through the Force, or something. I'm not entirely certain how that's supposed to work, but I'm pretty sure I'm not just hallucinating.

There's no one on the bridge but more Sith. We dispatch them as quickly as possible. "We need to get to the escape pods!" Trask says.

"Bastila must have already escaped," Kara says. "I no longer sense her on board."

"To the escape pods, then," I say.

A short ways down the corridor to the escape pods, we spot another man in black robes wielding a red lightsaber. He's noticed us, and striding ominously toward us. I feel a chill run down my spine when I see him, and for a moment our eyes meet.

"Another Dark Jedi!" Trask says.

"I'll take care of him," Kara says. "You get to the escape pods!" She darts past the doorway into the next section of corridor.

"Kara, don't be rash--" I start to say, but the doors seal behind her. "Damn it, that was completely unnecessary."

We continue on toward the escape pods. A voice sounds over the comm. "This is Carth Onasi. I've been tracking your movements through the Endar Spire. You're the only ones left on board."

"What about Kara?" I reply.

"I'm sorry, she doesn't appear to have made it," Carth says. "All I'm picking up are more Sith. You need to get off the ship, quickly! I can't wait for you much longer!"
I didn't ask her to sacrifice herself for me needlessly. What a waste. We could have killed that Dark Jedi quickly and moved on in short order if we had worked together instead of playing the stupid hero.

Trask and I fight our way past a couple more squads of Sith before finally making it to the escape pod bay where Carth is waiting for us.

"Come on," Carth says. "There's only one escape pod left. Let's go!"

"You don't need to tell me twice," I say.

The three of us quickly pile into the escape pod and plummet toward the planet's surface as the Endar Spire blows up behind us.
Welcome to Taris

I'm fighting three Jedi with different colored lightsabers. I parry their attacks with my own blood red blade. They move with cold determination, pressing in on me, but I hold them back. I stand my ground and beat back their blades.

The ship shakes violently, and I stumble to the deck of the bridge. There's smoke. Something is on fire. What's going on?

The three Jedi close in on me...

I wake suddenly in an unfamiliar setting. Wait, where am I? What am I doing here? This looks like some sort of run-down apartment or something. How did I get here?

"You're awake!" says a male voice behind me. "I was starting to wonder if you were ever going to wake up."

I groan softly, rolling over and throwing my legs off the edge of the bed to sit up, and rubbing my eyes. I don't recognize this person, but his concern about my well-being seems genuine, so he must be friendly.

"Were you having bad dreams?" he asks. "You were thrashing about in your sleep."

"Yeah, you could say that," I reply. Was it just a dream? It was so clear and vivid, but something seems strange about it. No matter. First things first. "Where am I?"

"You're on the surface of Taris," he explains. "I've hidden us in an old apartment building. There's nothing but illegal aliens living around here. I'm afraid... Trask Ulgo didn't make it."

"Trask..." I murmur dimly. That name sounds vaguely familiar. I should know this person.

"I'm sorry," the man says, mistaking my tone. I should know who he is, too, I think. I try to put a name to the face or the voice, but come up blank.

"Who are you again?" I ask finally. I hate to have to ask something like that, but there's no sense in trying to hide it, and he might have just saved my life, anyway.

"I'm Carth Onasi, remember?" he says. "From the Endar Spire? I think you might have hit your head in the landing, but I haven't been able to get proper medical attention, I'm afraid."

"It's alright," I say dismissively. "That must be it. I'm Lexen Skywalker, but you probably already know that." The Endar Spire... the Sith. That's right. I wasn't fighting Jedi. I was fighting Sith.

"Hey, it's a good sign that you still remember your own name, at least," Carth says lightly, but his expression darkens after a moment. "I'd love to know what you were doing with a red lightsaber, though."

"Killing Sith, primarily," I reply flippantly. "I picked it up off a Dark Jedi I killed. Where is it now?"

"In the footlocker with the supplies," Carth says. "Where'd you learn to use a lightsaber like that? You're no Jedi, even if the Jedi did rather suspiciously add you to the crew manifest at the last minute."

"I'm still not convinced that being a Jedi has anything to do with being able to use a lightsaber," I
say. "But regardless, one of the Jedi on board the ship told me that I'm Force sensitive, whatever that's supposed to mean."

"Either way, you might want to find another weapon," Carth says, shaking his head. "Running around with a lightsaber on the planet's surface is bound to attract unwanted attention."

"Would you prefer I stick things with a knife?" I say. "I'm lousy with a blaster."

"Well, we could find you a vibroblade instead."

"Alright," I say with a nod. "Also, we're going to need new clothes. Something that doesn't scream 'secret Republic soldiers', I think. Masquerading as mercenaries or something might be a safer bet, I'd say."

"Good plan," Carth says.

I get dressed, careful to avoid anything that looks too Republic, and gather up my weapons. Carth continues to give me distrustful looks, especially when I tuck away the confiscated red lightsaber in a pocket.

"Are you sure you want to even have that on you?"

I snort softly. "I'd rather have it on me and available to use in an emergency than be dead. Besides, what Jedi would use a red lightsaber, anyway?"

"They might think you stole it from one of their own," Carth points out. "Which you did."

"I could just put on a black robe and pretend to be a Dark Jedi, and threaten to use the Force on anyone that questions me."

"Do you even know how to use the Force?" Carth asks dubiously.

"No," I admit with a shrug. "Perhaps not the best plan. Let's just go with mercenaries. But, first things first, I'm starved. Is there anything to eat around here? How long was I asleep?"

"You were out for three days," Carth says. "No wonder that you're hungry. Here, I've collected some food. Eat up and get your strength back. We're going to need it if we're going to find Bastila and escape from this planet."

I eat up, and don't bother to argue with the plan. Personally, I'm less concerned about getting off of this planet than perhaps I should be. So what if it's controlled by Sith? It's as good a place to be as any while I try to figure out what's going on, and I'm sure there are plenty of opportunities to be found here, regardless.

We head out of the apartment, but get no further than the corridor outside before running into a Sith patrol. They're not after us immediately, however. They're threatening a group of aliens.

When they spot us, however, the Sith says, "Humans hiding among the aliens? They're Republic fugitives! Get them!"

So much for laying low. Carth pulls out his blasters and I whip out my knife, and between us we make short work of the small patrol.

"Thank you for your help," says the surviving alien in his own language. "I'll take care of the bodies. They won't trace this back to here."
"Thanks for that," I tell him, smoothly replying in the same language. "Do you know where we could get a change of clothes, without running into anymore trouble with anyone else thinking we're Republic soldiers?"

"You could try Larrim, down the hall. He sells many second-hand goods."

"Thanks again," I say, heading off in the direction he indicates.

The Twi'lek in question has a good variety of junk, much of which I doubt was legally obtained. That's hardly my concern, however. The important part is that he has some clothing that will make us stand out less, and provide more protection as well. He also has a used but serviceable vibroblade that I pick up. We don't have a lot of credits to go around, though, and it takes half of what we have on hand to buy it, but it's well worth the price, I think.

We head back into our apartment and get changed. Carth says, "Your service record said you know a remarkable number of alien languages, but it's strange to see that in practice. Most people just talk to aliens in Galactic Basic, whether they understand what they're saying or not. But you're actually speaking their languages back at them..."

"If I'm capable of making the correct sounds, and I know how to do so, why not?" I say with a shrug. "There's still plenty of languages that I just don't have the vocal organs for. Kind of annoying, really, but what do you do?"

I'm not even sure whether I learned all these languages. Didn't Trask say something about me having been a scout and traveled a lot? That must be it. Even though I can't remember having done so, my skills appear to be intact, at least.

Out on the streets, we stop in at the first cantina we see, in hopes of obtaining credits or information. I stride along, as if I have every right to be there, neatly stepping into role I've assumed. It seems to be working, as no one even glances at us twice.

I ignore the Pazaak players looking for someone to play against and head further back into the cantina. My attention is drawn to an arena in the back of the cantina, where duelists are fighting it out for credits.

I watch a fight between two men called Deadeye Duncan and Gerlon Two-Fingers with interest, observing their moves and assessing their skills. I quickly come to the conclusion that both of them are completely pathetic.

I walk up to the one in charge, a Hutt named Ajuur. "Bets are closed," he tells me. "No more fights for today. Unless you're interested in signing up?" He eyes the vibroblade at my side. "We could use some new blood in the arena."

"This looks dangerous," Carth says. "Does no one ever get hurt?"

"Don't worry. Everything is set up to make sure that no one is seriously hurt," Ajuur assures him. "Death matches have been outlawed for years."

"It could be good for money," Carth says. "But it would be unwise to use your real name."

"I'm interested in signing up," I say. "How much do you pay?"

"You get ten percent of the pot," Ajuur replies. "No more."

"Make that twenty and I'll think about it," I say, feigning disinterest.
"Now, now, if I give you extra, everyone will want more, and what will that do for business?"

"Tell you what," I say. "For ten percent I'll fight. For twenty, I will put on a show. You're not paying me extra for participating. You're paying me for extra entertainment. If you don't like how I do, then I'll take the ten percent. What do you say?"

"Hmm," Ajuur seems to think about it for a long moment. "Alright. Show me what you can do and I'll consider it. But you'll need a name for the ring. Something like the other fighters, Ice, Twitch, and so forth."

"Stormseeker," I reply without hesitation.

"I was going to suggest 'The Mysterious Stranger'," Ajuur says. "What kind of a name is Stormseeker, anyway?"

I shrug. "That's my title. Say that I forever search for the storm of battle, or some such."

"Hmph. Fine, fine. Whatever."

A duel is quickly arranged between myself and Deadeye Duncan, and we head into the ring. I already knew that Duncan was a poor fighter, and seeing him trying to fight against me only cements that assessment. I could easily take him out with one quick punch. But that wouldn't be much of a show.

I dance around him lightly, not just to defeat him, but to utterly humiliate him and show everyone just how far above his level that I really am. The crowd goes wild with laughter at my antics, and Duncan is infuriated. He flails about, shooting at me haphazardly, but doesn't once actually manage to hit me. Finally, when I deem the fight has gone on long enough, before the crowd can start to get bored, I knock him out and finish things.

I approach Ajuur again to collect my winnings. He's laughing uproarously. "Hah! Stormseeker, you are really something. You've earned your twenty percent. Let me know when you're ready for another fight. They're sure to come out in droves to watch you!"

After another couple of fights, I take a break for lunch and to rest up before going up against Ice.

"Well, at least we've got some more credits now," Carth says. "We haven't really learned anything or gotten closer to getting off this planet, though. Not to complain, mind you."

"We've already been here for three days, apparently," I comment. "And you could have gone and done some investigating while I was out or while I was fighting just now. Why didn't you?"

"That's not really what I'm good at. I'm just a soldier. I shoot people. I was afraid I might say something wrong and give myself away and get us both killed." He shrugs. "I'd have to do something if you didn't make it, but you're the one that's good at talking to people and being discrete here."

"Fair enough," I say. "It takes a wise man to admit his own weaknesses, so don't feel too bad about it. You're probably way better with a blaster or piloting a ship than I could hope to be in this lifetime."

"You have a point, I suppose," Carth says.

After eating as though I hadn't had breakfast, I go to mingle with the crowd and chat with some people, to see if I can glean some information without drawing the wrong sort of attention to myself.
There are a number of off-duty Sith hanging around the cantina trying to relax, but looking generally bored and depressed in doing so. I approach one woman who is off by herself and seeming a little lonely, and try to strike up a conversation with her.

"You don't look like you're having much fun," I tell her. "Mind a little company?"

"Surely not, if you don't mind hanging out with a Sith," she replies. "It seems most people here don't even want to talk to me."

I snort softly. "Why in the galaxy not? It seems to me like people are far too eager to personally blame every Sith for all of their problems."

"Yeah," she says. "That's a refreshing attitude. You understand. I'm just doing my job, you know? My name's Sarna, by the way. Who might you be?"

"The folks down at the arena call me 'Stormseeker'," I say with a wry grin. "Have you seen me fight? I've got another couple rounds lined up for this afternoon."

"I haven't, but perhaps I'll go check it out later," Sarna says. "So you're a duelist, huh?"

"Not really," I say with a shrug. "I'm a mercenary, an offworlder, but as I'm stuck here for the moment, I figured I might as well get some credits in the meantime."

"You don't seem to be particularly upset about the blockade," Sarna says.

"Why would I be?" I say, grinning. "There's opportunity to be found in every situation. You just need to keep your eyes open for it and be ready to take it and be ready to take it when it appears."

"You're very optimistic."

"Heh. Nah," I say, shaking my head. "Optimism implies reliance on false hope. The idea that everything will work out alright no matter what happens. I know better. I prefer to make my own hope."

"I'll be there," Sarna promises. "I'd love to see how you fight."

I spare her another charming grin and head back out toward the dueling area. Before my match starts, Carth takes me aside.

"You sure were getting awfully friendly with that Sith woman," he says, narrowing his eyes warily at me.

"What?" I say, raising an eyebrow at him. "I'm hardly one for needlessly being a jerk when there's no reason for it. You can generally get farther by being friendly. Say the right words, and she'll tell me anything I want to know, right?"

Carth relaxes a little as he thinks about what I've said. "You're right, I suppose. I'd best let you keep doing the talking, though. I doubt I'd be able to stay civil with them if I open my mouth."

"Good plan," I say, nodding.

I step into the ring and fight my round against Ice. She's got a fair bit more skill than the has-beens I've been fighting before, but she's still no match for me. I can still give the audience a good show and leave them gasping dramatically as I pull out a victory.
"You're pretty good," Sarna says to me afterward. "How much of that is just show, though, I wonder?"

I laugh lightly. "You should have seen my earlier opponents. I realized that they were so pathetic that I could practically just walk up and tap them, and the fight would be over. That wouldn't make for much of a show though, would it?"

Sarna chuckles softly. "True. You know, if you're looking for work, I'm sure the Sith could always use a competent fighter. We've been hiring mercenaries of late to send down into the Undercity."

"Hmm," I say, making a show of considering it. "How's the pay? And the risks?"

"That all depends, I suppose," she says. "It's pretty dangerous down there, but you look like you're the sort that can handle it. And I can't complain about the pay."

"Because it's good, or because they'd shoot you if you did?"

She laughs. "I'll leave that for you to decide. I must be going. If you should decide you're interested, drop by our recruiting office and tell them I sent you."

"I'll think about it," I tell her slyly as she goes.

Carth is looking at me suspiciously again. I think I'm already starting to get used to this look of his. He seems to make it a habit of being suspicious and distrustful of just about everything that I do. It's going to get tiresome if I'm going to have to constantly be stopping to explain myself to him.

"You aren't seriously considering working for the Sith, are you?" he asks me incredulously.

I snort softly. "Didn't you hear what she said? They're sending mercenaries into the Undercity. They're looking for those crashed escape pods. We get in on that, and they'll give us papers and information, if we're lucky. And if we're clever, we'll be able to find them first."

Carth frowns. "I hadn't thought of that."

"No need to sneak around," I say. "Often, the best way to hide is in plain sight, right under their own noses. Now, I've got one more match scheduled for today. See you in a bit."

Twitch is almost a challenging fight, almost a match for my vibroblade. In the back of my mind, I'm certain that were I wielding a lightsaber, he wouldn't be a match for me at all. The biggest annoyance is that it's hard to block blaster bolts with a vibroblade.

Wait. Blocking blaster bolts? Where did I ever learn to do such an absurd thing? It must be something to do with that Force sensitivity that Kara Vir mentioned to me, I suppose.

After the match, Ajuur says to me, "Here's your winnings, and your well-earned bonus. You're good, Stormseeker. The best I've seen since Bendak Starkiller! It would really be something to see you go up against him, if you could convince him to come out of retirement."

"Perhaps I might," I say. "Where can I find him?"

"He can often be found in the cantina, since no one can kill him here," Ajuur explains. "There's a bounty on his head because of all the death matches he's won, you see. Look for the one in yellow Mandalorian armor."

I give a nod, and head off to locate Bendak. He's not hard to find. He was watching my matches
with interest.

"Ah. Stormseeker," he says. "I was hoping to speak with you. You've made quite a name for yourself in the arena."

"Heh. Itching for a fight, are you?"

"I only fight in death matches," Bendak says. "When they were outlawed, I lost interest. Not that they're impossible to arrange even now, but it takes some effort, not worth it for just anyone. I've been watching the ring, waiting for the right person to face off against for one last match."

"You sound like you're hoping to die," I observe. "Nothing worse than a Mandalorian with nothing left to fight for, I suppose."

"You have a lot of confidence in your own skills," he replies. "Killing you would be a fine way to end my career. They would speak my name in fear and reverence for years to come."

I smirk. "And if I win instead?"

"That's not going to happen. But if you were actually good enough to defeat me, then you'd deserve the victory," Bendak says.

"Fair enough. You're on."

"Excellent. I look forward to blasting your head off. I'll talk to Ajuur and make the arrangements."

As we head out of the cantina again, Carth takes me aside. "An illegal death match? Really? Are you sure about this?"

"What's the problem, Carth?" I ask.

"Well, just, the idea of someone killing someone else just for the sake of credits and entertainment! It's horrific!"

I snort softly. "If both parties agree to it, I don't see what the problem is. Besides, you heard them. Bendak has killed many people himself, and he has a bounty on his head for it. Between that and the winnings from the fight, that'll be a good chunk of much-needed credits."

"That's assuming you win," Carth says. "What if you lose? What if you're killed? Have you thought about that? You have a duty, you know!"

I sigh a little. In other words, he wouldn't know what to do without me. I refrain from saying as much, however. "I'm glad that you're so concerned about my well-being," I say dryly. "Let's make some preparations in advance in case the worst should happen, then. We'll go see the Sith so that you'll be able to get down to the Undercity on your own without having to deal with them."

I was already planning on doing that, anyway. He doesn't give me much credit toward my sense of foresight. Although I'm more than a little annoyed about being jabbed about my 'duty'. I'm starting to believe that if I really swore some oath, it was under duress or that I otherwise didn't have any choice in the matter. I still don't remember ever doing such a thing, however. This still bothers me. I'm thinking I should also look up this service record that Carth mentioned, and see what interesting things it says about me that I'm otherwise unaware of.

"Alright," I say as we approach the place Sarna mentioned. "From now on, I'm Lexen Chelseer, and you're Carth Brooks. Got that?"
"What kind of a name is that?"

"Just go with it," I say, rolling my eyes.

"Can't I at least choose my own alias?" he says.

"Fine, what would you prefer?" I ask.

"I was thinking something more like Carth Nix."

"That's a silly name," I say. "But whatever. You can be Carth Nix, then."

We head inside the office. The receptionist barely glances up at us and says, "Do you have an appointment?"

"Sarna sent us. She said you were hiring mercenaries?"

"I see," she replies. "Hmm, Sarna, Sarna... ah, yes. She did put in a note recommending someone matching your description who goes by the stage name of 'Stormseeker'. That would be you, I presume?"

"That's right," I say.

"I'll just have you fill out some forms, then." She pulls out some papers from her desk and passes them over to me.

We quietly fill out the forms and pass them back to her. She doesn't even bother looking at them. "Stop by in the morning to pick up your papers, if everything checks out."

"Will do," I say.

It's getting late by this point, so we head back to see about dinner and sleep. On the way back, however, we come across a middle-aged man being accosted by a couple of thugs.

"Davik doesn't like it when people don't pay him back," says one of the thugs. "But look. We have witnesses. We'll need to kill them, too."

"You know," I observe, "if you don't want witnesses, you shouldn't be doing this in the middle of the street. Isn't there a dingy back alley you could have used instead?"

"Huh?" Yeah, not the brightest thugs in the galaxy, obviously.

"Okay, let's make this easy on you," I say. "You point a weapon at me, and I will kill you."

I'm perfectly justified in killing in self-defense. And a little part of me in the back of my mind is itching for blood, after spending all day fighting only to knock out my opponents.

The thugs look at me consideringly for a moment, as if rethinking whether they really wanted to do this or not. For a moment, I wonder if they're actually going to think better of it, with a tinge of disappointment, but then they decide to be stupid and pull their weapons on me instead.

"Okay. Let's dance," I say, whipping out my vibroblade.

With a couple quick slashes from my blade, and a couple shots from Carth's blasters, the thugs are down. The aging human man mops his forehead with a handkerchief and sighs in relief as he watches me compulsively search their corpses.
"I'm grateful for your assistance," the man says. "But this will only be a temporary reprieve. Davik will keep sending his thugs after me until I'm dead or I've paid him back, and I simply don't have the money!"

"Sounds like killing Davik would solve some problems," I say lightly.

The man looks shocked at that. "You shouldn't say that so loudly. Davik Kang is a powerful man. If he could be killed so easily, someone would have done so by now."

I shrug. "A powerful man, perhaps, but still a man. He still dies like any other. Anyway, how much money did you owe him?"

"A hundred credits."

"Is that all?" I say. I made many times that much in the arena today. "Well, it just so happens that these thugs had a hundred credits on them. So, here you go. And stay away from shady deals like that in the future, alright?"

"Oh, thank you so much! I'm saved! I'll certainly take your advice. I'll never deal with thugs like this again! You have my eternal gratitude."

He hurries off to pay off his debt, and Carth looks at me thoughtfully for a moment as we continue on our way. "That was nice of you. I'm worried about the look on your face when you killed those thugs, though."

"What look?" I wonder.

"You looked almost... gleeful," Carth says. "A wild, bloodthirsty grin. It was a little disturbing, really."

Was that really how I looked? "I see," I say flatly.

"Tell me, Lexen. Do you... enjoy killing?"

I'd be lying if I said I didn't. And I doubt he'd believe me anyway. "Yes. I'll admit it. Is that a problem, Carth?"

"It doesn't speak well for your character," he says. "I'm not sure that I like the idea of working with someone like that."

"I'm perfectly capable of controlling myself and not acting like a lunatic consumed by bloodlust, if that's what you're worried about."

"Is this why you're really doing the death match? Out of some crazy rush you get from fighting and killing?"

"No! Well, maybe. I don't know. Gah. Look, damn it. We're on the same side here. You can psychoanalyze me all you like once we get off this planet, alright?"

"Fine," Carth says, and drops the subject for now.
My red lightsaber flies through the air out of my hands. I tumble away from my opponent's next swing with his blue lightsaber. I use the Force to draw my lightsaber back into my hand, just in time to parry the next attack.

He's keeping me from my goal. I must not let him stop me. That's all that matters right now. It doesn't matter that I've forgotten why I came here in the first place.

I shoot Force lightning from my fingertips, but he blocks it with his lightsaber. But wait, is he retreating now? The glow from his lightsaber is moving away in the dark, but then it suddenly slashes at one of the support pillars holding up this room. I hear an ominous crack from overhead.

"I can't let you have the terrible secrets that have been buried here," he says. "I can't let anyone have that. But since you're so obsessed with them and refusing to turn from the Dark Side, you can be buried with them here."

I move quickly, but not fast enough. He slashes another pillar and darts away as the ceiling collapses behind him. Tons of old stone come rumbling down upon me. I'm broken and crushed amidst the darkness.

I wake, blinking slowly. Another nightmare? It seems that's all I can remember these days. Never any happy or peaceful memories. Just myself dying in many horrible ways. Perhaps that's the story of my life.

Was that supposed to be a warning of some sort? Well, I'll make note that if I'm ever in an ancient ruin looking for unspecified dark secrets, to not let any Jedi bury me alive. Or maybe it's a warning to avoid the Dark Side. Twice now I've dreamed I was wielding a red lightsaber and fighting against Jedi. Does this mean that I'm destined to be a Dark Jedi or something? Or is the Force warning me to avoid that path, or something? I don't know. I wish I could remember more of my past rather than these strange warnings of the future.

I get up and stretch. I have a death match to prepare for in a couple hours. But that leaves me plenty of time for important things, like breakfast.

"You looked like you were having nightmares again," Carth says as we eat.

"Do you always watch people sleep?" I wonder.

"I was keeping watch, in case someone decided to barge into the apartment and try to kill us, or at least to try to steal our stuff."

"So when did you sleep?" I ask.

"Well, I haven't yet," he admits. "I figured it was important for you to be well-rested before you go into the dueling ring and put your life on the line for the sake of credits or bloodlust, whichever it is. I might not agree with your motivations, but it would be troublesome for you to die."

I sigh heavily. "Fine, but you are so taking a nap as soon as possible. I'm not going down into the Undercity with a sleep-deprived blaster-slinger."

He nods, not bothering to argue the point. I take a shower, get dressed, and gather up my weapons, then head back out to the cantina. Carth follows behind me silently, but I can feel his looks of
disapproval practically boring into my back.

"There you are, Stormseeker," Ajuur says, greeting me. Bendak is already there with him. "Are you ready for your death match?"

"I'm ready," I say. "Let's do this."

"That's what I like to hear!" Ajuur exclaims. "The crowds will go wild over this one. Step into the ring and let's begin."

I bring out my vibroblade and face off against the armored Mandalorian in the dueling ring. He pulls out his blaster, and we fight. Damn, I'm dodging his shots as well as I can, but I can't actually block them with a vibroblade. And they're not being suppressed, so they're much more powerful than Twitch's attacks. They don't just sting when they hit, they *burn*.

One blast strikes me dead in the face, and I know it's over. My vision is gone before I lose consciousness. I collapse.

I wake, rubbing my eyes. Another nightmare? Am I just worried about today's death match, or is this another premonition? Well, considering it's my life on the line, I can't discount the possibility that it's the latter.

"Bad dreams again?" Carth says.

"Were you watching me sleep?" I say, raising an eyebrow.

"No, I was guarding the door in case anyone broke in to try to kill or steal from us."

I frown faintly. A premonition then, for sure. "Take a nap, Carth," I mutter as I go off to take a shower.

As I head out to the main room to eat breakfast, I notice that Carth actually took my advice. Well, that's refreshing. After eating and getting dressed, I make sure anything valuable that we have is on me, except for Carth's blasters. If someone does break in and kill him, which I find unlikely, at least they won't have much to steal.

As I head out toward the cantina, I think about my latest dream. I can't block blaster bolts with a vibroblade. Perhaps I should invest in some equipment that might help me survive the match. I turn to stop in at a shop on the way to the cantina.

"Good morning!" says the shopkeeper brightly. "I'm Kebla Yurt, and welcome to my shop. Say, aren't you Stormseeker? I hear you have an illegal death match scheduled today against Bendak Starkiller! You need to take a look at my stock, if you don't want to die."

"That was the plan," I say dryly. "Considering it's illegal, it seems like a lot of people know about it."

"I'd say a lot of people know about it *because* it's illegal," Kebla replies. "Everyone's all excited about it and can't stop talking about it, and the Sith have been bribed enough to ignore it."

I chuckle softly. "Well, I'll not complain. I'd rather be killed than arrested... wait, that doesn't sound right. Never mind. What have you got that could protect me from blasters?"

"Check out this fine energy shield," Kebla says. "State of the art. That'll keep Bendak from blasting your head off."
"I'll take it," I say, not even bothering to ask how much it costs.

"Here you go," Kebla says, handing it over to me and ringing up the bill. It's pricey, but I'm more concerned now with survival than credits. "Just remember, it'll only stop so many shots before it collapses, so you'd better be sure to get in and finish off Bendak quick while you can!"

"I'll keep that in mind."

I head into the cantina and over to the dueling ring. Bendak is already there waiting near Ajuur.

"So you're here, Stormseeker," Ajuur says. "Are you ready for your death match?"

"As ready as I'll ever be," I say. "Let's do this."

I pull out my vibroblade and put on my energy shield, and step into the ring to face off against Bendak. I hope this protection will work as well as Kebla claims, or this is going to suck.

Sure enough, Bendak's blaster shots are ineffectual against me. I take advantage of the opportunity to close in and attack him with my vibroblade. But it's hard to find a weakness against that armor. I slice and stab at him, perhaps scratching the armor a bit, and I get in one good strike that might make his elbow ache when it rains for the rest of his life.

Damn my ineffectual weaponry! Rage builds up in me and I attack with renewed force. I strike toward his neck and head, trying to get a clean shot. I think I might be making progress, but my time's up. My energy shield flickers away, and Bendak blasts my unprotected face at point-blank range.

I wake with a soft groan and rub my eyes. Another nightmare? No. A warning.

"Carth, take a nap," I tell him without even bothering to let him say anything.

Shower. Breakfast. Stumbling out of the apartment with my mind on the upcoming death match. I don't even bother to stop in at Kebla Yurt's shop. It won't help.

The problem is my weaponry. I'm going to need to use my lightsaber if I want to win this one. And I don't think they're liable to let me back out now, not that I'm really inclined to unless there's no other option.

I go into the cantina and up to where Ajuur and Bendak are waiting for me. "Ah, Stormseeker, you've arrived!" Ajuur says. "Are you ready for your death match?"

"Ajuur, am I allowed to use a lightsaber in the dueling ring?" I ask.

"A lightsaber?" Ajuur says in surprise.

"I don't care what you wield," Bendak says. "I'll kill you either way."

"Hah," Ajuur says. "I didn't realize you could use a lightsaber, Stormseeker. You're just full of surprises! You should have mentioned this sooner so we could play it up, but we can work with this! We'll say you're two war veterans come to settle your final score in the ring!"

"Whatever," Bendak says, obviously disinterested in the theatrics.

I pull out my lightsaber. "Alright. Let's dance."
I step into the arena and activate my lightsaber. I ignore the announcer's grandiose words and focus on my enemy. That's what's important right now. No show, nothing dramatic. This isn't entertainment anymore. This is death.

The crowd vanishes from my mind. Everything but the fight fades away. I'm one with my weapon. Blaster shots are coming in, but I neatly block them with my lightsaber. It's always there before they can strike me.

I close in on my enemy. I will kill him. I will spill his blood. I will take his life. He hurt me. He killed me. He caused me pain. He deserves to die.

Rage gives strength to my strikes as I cut into his armor. It still protects against my attacks, but here I'm actually making progress. This time my enemy will die. His armor is weakening. He can't hold out forever.

One final swipe removes my enemy's head. "Bendak Starkiller is dead!" the announcer is saying, and my mind still clouded by slowly cooling blood rage is only half hearing it.

I stumble out of the ring to collect my winnings, although they hardly seem important to my mind now.

"Stormseeker, that was incredible!" Ajuur exclaims. "Here's your twenty percent, plus a little bonus. That was the greatest fight ever seen in the Taris dueling ring! They'll be talking about that one for years to come! Everyone on Taris will know who you are now!"

His words hit me through my mental haze. There's no hiding anymore. Everyone on Taris is going to think I'm a Dark Jedi. And I'm not entirely sure that they'd be wrong to think that. So I may as well keep the lightsaber and play up the image, I suppose.

"I didn't realize you were a Dark Jedi," says a woman's voice.

I turn to see a face I think I should recognize. A Sith officer. What's her name? It started with an S. Stella? Sharra? No, it was Sarna.

"Sarna," I say. "I didn't know you were here."

"I wanted to see you fight again," Sarna says. "Don't worry, I'm not here to arrest you or anything. Not that I'd dare to try, after seeing what I just saw, the way you handled that lightsaber."

"Would it be a problem if I am a Dark Jedi?" I ask.

"No, of course not," Sarna says. "It's just a surprise, is all."

"Heh. How can you be sure that I'm not just secretly a Jedi in disguise?"

Sarna smirks. "I've seen Jedi fight. They're calm and calculating, even when their life is on the line. You fought like a Dark Jedi, full of rage and bloodthirst. There was murder in your eyes."

"I see. Is that what I looked like?"

It seems Sarna wasn't the only one watching my fight. Carth comes over to grab my arm, and tells Sarna, "Excuse us." He pulls me aside and barely waits until out of immediate earshot before hissing at me, "What were you thinking, pulling out that lightsaber in public like that? Now everyone on the planet will know--"
"Will know what?" I interject. "That I'm a Dark Jedi?"

Carth pauses. "This will still draw unwanted attention."

"Nobody's going to think anything but that I'm a mercenary Dark Jedi who is working for the Sith. Now shut up before I Force-choke you."

"You--" Carth begins angrily, then looks around realizing he's hardly in a private place.

I smirk faintly, and then return to Sarna. "Sorry about that. My partner here seems to be overly concerned about the Jedi on a Sith-controlled planet." I roll my eyes dramatically. Well, it is strictly true, but not in the way that I imply.

Sarna chuckles softly. "Quite alright. I understand. It must be tough being a fugitive from such a powerful organization. But you have nothing to fear with the Sith."

"I didn't think so," I say with a grin. "So I wasn't afraid to dramatically reveal myself in front of everyone."

"Heh," Sarna says. "Bold as well as handsome and skilled. I like that."

"I'm off for lunch now," I say. "Killing people really works up an appetite. I'll see you around."

She appears to be a little disappointed, but I ignore it and wave to her as I head off. Carth seems to relax a bit as we leave the Sith woman behind.

"At least you had the good sense to brush off her advances," Carth comments quietly.

"What?" I say, casting him a blank expression.

Carth looks at me incredulously. "Don't tell me you didn't notice she was flirting with you. I think she was hoping you'd invite her to lunch."

"I didn't notice," I say, shrugging.

"You know, for all your intelligence, you can be really dumb sometimes."

I laugh lightly.

After lunch, we head over to the Sith offices to see if the paperwork has gone through yet or not. The same receptionist boredly glances up at us and asks if we have an appointment again.

"We were in here yesterday," I say. "You had us fill out some forms."

"Oh, it's you," she says. "You're right on time. Approval just came through for a Dark Jedi named Lexen Chelseer, also known as 'Stormseeker', and his associates."

"Ah, good," I say, taking the papers she passes me and glancing over them. A free pass to travel almost anywhere on Taris I might want to go.

"Take a look at this list for the bounties on any Republic soldiers and equipment you might recover," she says.

I absently glance over the list, trying to keep my expression neutral. They're offering a lot of money for this.
"I'll certainly keep that in mind," I say. "Looks like I'd best get to work, then."

I head out onto the streets again, followed by Carth. "You're not seriously considering turning in anyone you find, are you?"

I snort softly. "Have some faith in me, will you?"

"That's a little hard to do considering your recent behavior," Carth says. "I don't trust easily, and you're making that even harder than usual."

"I haven't turned you in yet," I point out. "Considering the way you've treated me since we arrived on Taris, you'd think if I were inclined to do so, that I'd start with you."

Carth considers that, making a face. "You might have a point there."

"Let's take our new pass into the Lower City and see what we can find, shall we?"

"Right behind you," Carth says.

There's a uniformed Sith guarding the lift leading down from the Upper City. "Do you have authorization to come down here?"

"Here's my authorization," I say, showing him my papers.

He glances over them disinterestedly. "More mercenaries hired to scour the Undercity? Well, good luck down there. There's swoop gangs causing trouble all throughout the Lower City, and watch out for rakghouls in the Undercity. But it says here you're a Dark Jedi, so you should be able to handle that sort of thing without a problem."

We head into the lift and go down to the Lower City. As the Sith warned, it isn't long before we run into two groups of gangs facing off in the streets. Judging by the insults flying back and forth, they appear to be called the Black Vulkars and the Hidden Bek's.

After dispatching a few unruly groups of thugs with my lightsaber and Carth's blasters, we find a cantina in the Lower City and head inside. Perhaps a good place to find information or pick up some quick credits. According to a sign, the bounty office appears to be inside as well.

I approach a Hutt by the name of Zax. "I'm here to collect the bounty on Bendak Starkiller."

"Ah, yes," he says. "I've heard about that. That bounty's been posted for years, and I was wondering if anyone was ever going to collect it. Here's your reward. Take a look at the other bounties we have listed while you're here and see if any of them interest you."

"Alright," I say, glancing over the information. For the most part, they seem to be petty things. I have to snort softly at them. "Your boss seems eager to offer money to kill people who owe him money. That seems to be counterproductive, isn't it?"

"Not at all," Zax replies. "It discourages anyone else from thinking they can hold back money from Davik Kang."

I shrug. "Well, it's hardly any business of mine what Davik Kang wants to do with his money. I'll keep these in mind if I should run across the individuals in question."

As we head out of Zax's office, Carth says to me quietly, "I don't know about these bounties. While taking out that assassin sounds like a good idea, the others seem... questionable. You aren't really..."
considering doing them, are you?"

"What, do you think I'm going to kill anyone I think I might get away with?" I say, raising an eyebrow at him.

"The thought had crossed my mind," Carth replies.

I snort softly. "You really don't trust me, do you."

"I thought I'd made that clear already."

I sigh softly and roll my eyes, but don't bother replying, as we've come back to the main part of the cantina and I spot a group of thugs threatening a young Twi'lek girl. They're Black Vulkars, apparently.

I walk up behind the girl and tell the thugs, "You know, I'm very impressed with the strength and might of the Black Vulkars, if they feel so threatened by little girls."

"Yeah!" she says. "Why don't you just leave me alone?"

"Little girl has a mouth on her," says one of the thugs. "We should teach her a lesson."

"Wait," says the thug next to him. "Isn't that Stormseeker?"

"No way," says the third.

It's funny how word of me has already spread so quickly throughout Taris, despite the lift being guarded and only authorized people being allowed to go through.

"Look, he has a lightsaber on his belt," says the second thug. "I'm not fighting a Dark Jedi."

He runs off.

"You should listen to your friend," I say. "This isn't worth the trouble."

Before they can think it through any more, a Wookiee appears behind them. "Mission? Are you alright?"

"Hey, Big Z," says the Twi'lek. "These guys want a fight."

"Little girl is lucky she has strong friends," says the first thug. "We leave you be, for now."

The remaining two thugs leave again.

I snort softly in amusement. "I'm surprised he managed to get two brain cells rubbing together to realize this was a bad idea."

"Thanks for sticking up for me. I'm Mission Vao, and this is my best friend, Zaalbar." She glances at the lightsaber on my belt. "Is it true what they said? Are you a Dark Jedi?"

"I am Stormseeker," I reply. "But you can call me Lexen. I just came out of Zax's office to collect the bounty on Bendak Starkiller."

"Wow," Mission says. "So you really are, then... But you seem awfully nice for a Dark Jedi."

"What, do you expect that every Dark Jedi spends all their spare time kicking gizka?"

"Well, I suppose not," she says. "But aren't you working for the Sith, then?"
"Yeah," I say. "As a freelance mercenary. I'm not actually a Sith."

"Oh, I see."

"And at the moment, my opinion of the Black Vulkars is steadily growing lower. They're nothing but common thugs with over-inflated opinions of their own importance."

"Yeah, no kidding," Mission says. "The Hidden Bek's are much better." She hesitates for a moment.

"Are you nervous because I'm working for the Sith?" I ask gently.

"Well... kind of, yeah," Mission admits.

"Relax, I'm not going to hurt you. In fact, I'll kick the asses of anyone that tries to do so, provided Zaalbar doesn't get there first, at least."

"Really?" Mission says in surprise.

"Really," I say. "I promise."

I'm leery about keeping an oath I may or may not have made to a Jedi I may or may not have ever actually known, but here I am making promises to a Twi'lek that I just met. I really don't understand myself a times. It's a whim, but it feels like it's just the right thing to do.

"Wow, thanks. I do appreciate it," Mission says. "If you ever need a place to hole up, stop by the Hidden Bek's base, and tell them I sent you!"

"Will do," I say, then wave to Mission and Zaalbar as they leave the cantina.

"Why were you so nice to that Twi'lek girl?" Carth says.

"What, are you complaining that I'm not acting evil enough now?" I say.

"No," he replies. "I'm just wondering just what you're intending on manipulating that innocent girl into."

"Oh, for fuck's sake," I say, putting my face in my hands. "Can't I do anything without you thinking I have some ulterior motive for it?"

"Probably not, no," Carth replies.

I sigh in frustration and stride out of the cantina again. I find myself growing angry at Carth, but I push it aside. I'm not a bad person, and I will prove that to him, somehow. I will choose not to be angry at him for being suspicious of my suspicious behavior.

The bounty posted on the assassin, Selven, mentions that she was suspected of hiding out in an apartment complex in the Lower City. This appears to be the one mentioned. Is every other bounty hunter on the planet afraid of coming here? I should be cautious. She might have put up traps or the like to discourage people from bothering her.

As I approach, I spot one group of thugs shaking down another. The Black Vulkars apparently owe David Kang money and are feeling too self-important to pay. Does everyone on this rock owe Davik Kang money?

The Vulkars appear to have the upper hand until Davik's man casually calls in someone named Canderous Ordo. He's a well-built man with tattoos on his arms, wielding a rather large Mandalorian
blaster. Well, more like medium-sized so far as Mandalorian weaponry goes. It's strange seeing a Mandalorian without his armor on, but I imagine that's a much more common sight nowadays. The Mandalorians as a group are a pale shadow of what they used to be. But the individual before me is no pale shadow. He's six feet of muscle as solid as a brick wall, and I have no doubt that he has the skill and strength of mind to use it.

After a brief exchange with the thugs, Canderous notices me and approaches. "You look like you've never seen a Mandalorian without armor on before."

I blink for a moment, snapping from my trance. "Perhaps I have," I say with a shrug.

"I recognize you," Canderous says. "You're that Dark Jedi duelist who beat Bendak Starkiller in a death match this morning."

"That's right," I say. "Is that a problem?" My lightsaber could be in my hand, ready for a fight on an instant's notice.

"Not at all," he replies. "You both fought well, and you gave him the best death a Mandalorian could hope for these days."

I give a short nod. "It's kind of sad to see what your people have been reduced to in this day and age. And what are you doing, running around glaring threateningly at people who owe Davik Kang money? You deserve better than that."

Canderous shrugs, but looks at me with a touch of respect. "Maybe I'll find another line of work, once this blockade is over with. But for the moment, Davik's money is as good as anything else. There was a time when this job actually had respectable fights, but now things have been going downhill."

"Would you try to shoot me if I said I'd love to kill Davik Kang, and I haven't even met him?"

Canderous chuckles softly. "Not an uncommon sentiment, but coming from you, you might actually be able to pull it off. Right now, though, I've chatted long enough. I have work to do."

I watch him leave. Once he's out of sight, I notice Carth is looking at me strangely. "What?"

"Lexen, are you... interested in men?"

I blink at him. "What are you talking about?"

"Well, the way you were staring at that Mandalorian... never mind. Forget I said anything."

I snort softly and shrug, and head into the apartment complex. I look around warily, keeping my eyes sharp for any signs of traps or the like, or any indication that Selven is present and where precisely she might be hiding.

Everything looks ordinary here. I don't see any indication that there might be traps set up, which makes me even more uneasy. If I'm not seeing anything, chances are something is well-hidden, and I don't want any surprises at the wrong moment.

"I'm not going to start just breaking into random apartments to see which is the right one," I mutter.

After doing a full circle of the floor and seeing nothing peculiar, I let out a sigh of frustration. I was expecting the location would be obvious as the correct apartment would likely be the only one which was trapped. Of course, a particularly clever villain might trap one apartment and then hide in a
different one, but that's attributing more cleverness to Selven than most people would possess. As it is, however, there's no defenses that are visible from outside. Perhaps she's relying entirely on interior defenses instead. In which case, breaking into random apartments would be an even worse idea, as they might all be trapped for all I know.

No. I'm just being paranoid. This is an apartment complex, and normal people live here. I see them walking about to and fro, ignoring me and Carth pointedly. I flag down a human child and squat down to talk to him.

"Hey there, kid," I say. "I'm looking for someone. A human woman named Selven. Do you happen to know where she is?"

"Uh-huh!" the boy says, nodding eagerly. He points out the correct apartment. "She's a scary lady. I don't like her."

"Don't worry, she won't hurt anyone else ever again," I assure him. "Here's a credit, kid. Buy yourself some candy or something."

"Wow, thanks! You're nice!" He runs off happily.

I nod to Carth. "We've got our mark. Take position to the side of the door just out of sight and be ready."

Carth nods and stands where I tell him. I hack the lock on the door, cautious for anything suspicious, and growing increasingly wary when I see it's just a simple lock with no additional safeguards.

The door opens to reveal a small apartment, much like the one we've taken refuge in ourselves. A human woman is inside, eating lunch. There don't appear to be any sort of traps or defenses. Now I have to wonder if we have the wrong target.

"Well, how rude," she says. "What do you think you're doing, barging into my apartment like that?"

"Pardon me," I say. "I was looking for someone, and I was told that this was the right place."

"Did someone finally bother coming to try to collect that bounty? Well, I'll show you why Selven is the most feared assassin on Taris!"

I stare at her, positively stunned, both at her audacity and her stupidity. I realize suddenly that this is it. There are no traps here, no ambushes, no clever plots. Just one woman sitting around boasting.

I whip out my lightsaber in one swift motion and block a shot from her blaster. "I can't believe that you are this stupid. Why hasn't someone killed you by now?"

A neat shot from Carth's blaster strikes her in the arm, causing her to drop her own weapon. "Gah," she says, reaching for the fallen gun, but I kick it out of the way and pointedly hold my lightsaber to her throat.

"Greatest assassin on Taris?" I say. "I find it hard to believe that you've managed to kill anyone."

"It's true! I've killed hundreds of people! I murdered the entire Ulgo family!"

"What did you do, poison them?" I ask.

"Yes!" Selven says. "A little poison in the food, and they're all dead. Men, women, children, servants. Even the kath hound."
"Poison is a coward's weapon," I snarl. "And you don't deserve to live."

With one angry swipe, I take off the woman's head in disgust. I glance over at Carth, who has been watching the entire exchange appraisingly.

"What is it, Carth?" I ask. "Am I disturbing you again?"

"No," Carth replies. "Just the way you became so upset about the idea of her poisoning children. You seemed almost normal for a moment there."

"I don't like poison, and I don't like killing children," I say, shaking my head and looking down at the body, and then start to search the apartment for valuables. "Anyone that murders a child deserves to die. And the way she was bragging about it, as if she were insulted by the idea that she couldn't possibly have managed to kill anyone with how stupid she was being. The door was barely even locked!"

"We're not exactly hiding out in a more secure location ourselves," Carth points out.

"Yeah, well, neither of us has a bounty on our heads yet, either."

"That 'yet' disturbs me," Carth says. "Also, you told me to take a nap and then left me alone in the apartment. The sound of the door opening woke me up, so I followed you out to the arena."

"Sorry about that," I say, apologizing sincerely. "I didn't seriously think there'd be any trouble, though. After we turn in this bounty, how about we go over to the Hidden Bek base and crash there for a bit?"

"Do you really think we can trust the Hidden Beks?" Carth wonders.

"The Black Vulkars don't like them. I don't like the Black Vulkars," I say. "Also, a child who had no reason to deceive me recommended them. That's good enough for me."

After collecting anything of value from the apartment, I grab Selven's head by the hair and turn to head back to the cantina.

"Do you have to take that gruesome trophy back with us?" Carth says.

"What?" I say. "The Hutt is going to want proof, I'm sure, and I'd like to make sure I've killed the right person. Besides, the lightsaber cauterized the wound, so it's not like it's dripping blood all over the place or anything."

Carth starts to say something, thinks better of it, and just follows along after me in silence. We return to the cantina and I drop the head in front of Zax.

"This human female claimed to be Selven and bragged about her kills," I say. "This is Selven, right?"

The Hutt takes a look at the face and compares it to his records. "Yes, this is Selven. I'll have your bounty transferred to you now."

"Seriously?" I say. "After seeing how stupid she was, I was kind of hoping that was a decoy or something. If that's the most dangerous assassin on Taris, it doesn't speak well for this planet."

Shaking my head, I turn to leave the cantina again. Down the street, I come upon a door being guarded by a woman wearing Hidden Bek colors.
"This is the Hidden Bek base!" she tells me. "Sith sycophants aren't welcome in here."

"You know, for a group calling itself the Hidden Bek's, you guys aren't exactly very well hidden," I comment.

"It's just a name," she replies.

"Anyway, Mission sent me. I helped her out with some Black Vulkars who were harrassing her. Can we go in? I'd like to speak with your leader. You seem to be the sorts of people I might like to ally myself with."

"Mission Vao?" she says. "But I've heard you're a Dark Jedi working for the Sith."

"I'm a freelance mercenary who signed on with the Sith just to be able to move about Taris freely," I reply. "I have no sympathies toward them."

"Well, alright, I suppose. But you better not cause any trouble. We'll be watching you."

We head inside, and quickly find the Hidden Bek leader, Gadon Thek. A Twi'lek woman at his side tries to stop us. "What's this? A Dark Jedi in our base? Have the Sith finally come to shake us down?"

"Relax," I tell them, holding up my palms. "My intentions are peaceful. I'm not here to cause trouble."

"So you say," the Twi'lek says. "Did the Sith send you? What do you want from us?"

"No. A girl by the name of Mission Vao sent us," I say. "And perhaps I might be able to help you out with the Black Vulkars? I've grown none too fond of them and their behavior in my short time in the Lower City."

"So you say--"

"Stand down, Zaerdra," Gadon Thek says. "If he really intended hostility, he'd be swinging around that lightsaber of his by now."

"Gadon, how can we trust him?" Zaerdra says. "He's with the Sith!"

"No I'm not," I reply. "I signed on with them as a freelance mercenary. I'm not a Sith. I just wanted to be able to get around their guardposts more easily."

"That's understandable," Gadon says. "You are Stormseeker, aren't you? The Dark Jedi who killed Bendak Starkiller?"

"Although," I comment. "For all that the Sith have the lifts locked down, it seems like everyone I talk to already knows everything that happened a few hours ago in the Upper City." I smirk.

Gadon chuckles softly. "Oh, yes. You're the news on everyone's tongues today. And I have no desire to go up against your lightsaber myself. But you offer to help with the Black Vulkars? Why?"

"I'll be honest with you," I say, lowering my voice. "We're actually secretly Republic soldiers, hoping to find any surviving crewmates that we can."

"That's preposterous," Zaerdra says. "Why would a Dark Jedi be working for the Republic? You have a red lightsaber and everything!"
"Did it ever occur to you that I might be a Light Jedi working undercover to avoid attention from the Sith?"

"I... well.. I suppose that could be true," Zaeandra says uncertainly.

"I would not see the Black Vulkars slaughtered needlessly," Gadon says. "Their leader, Brejik, is like a son to me, but I fear that this conflict will not be able to be solved peacefully. Furthermore, it would seem that you have a stake in this as well. The Black Vulkars have apparently captured a Republic officer and are holding her as a prize for the winner of the big swoop race in a few days."

I narrow my eyes, "What do you mean, a prize?"

"As a slave," Gadon explains, shaking his head sadly.

I clench my fists angrily. "I'll kill them."

"That won't help," Gadon says. "They're probably hiding her in some secure, secret location, not at their main base."

"I don't care," I say. "I don't like slavers. Anyone that would trade in intelligent beings deserves to die."

"I can't really argue with that sentiment," Gadon says. "Unfortunately, Brejik seems intent on having one of his own win the race. We had a prototype accelerator that we were going to use in the season opener, but the Black Vulkars stole it from us."

"What's so important about this swoop race, anyway?" I wonder.

Gadon gives me a look as though I've just said something absurd. "Well, you might not understand, but it's very important to us swoop gangs."

"Somehow I get the feeling that the outcome of this race isn't actually going to matter much, anyway," I comment. "If he's gone to this much trouble to make sure the race is rigged, do you really think that he'll hand her off to someone else?"

"What?" Gadon says. "That would violate our most sacred traditions! He already agreed to put her up as a prize. He can't withdraw her now."

"How much do you trust in Brejik's respect for your 'sacred traditions'?"

Gadon thinks about that for a few moments. "You might have a point there. Still, I doubt you will find an opportunity to rescue her before he brings her out on the day of the race."

"Alright, fine," I say, sighing. "I'll see what I can do, either finding where they're holding her or getting back this accelerator for you. For the moment, however, we could use a place to rest. Our place topside isn't very safe or secure, and we'd feel better if we could stay among friends."

"Of course," Gadon says. "Our friends and allies are welcome to stay here as much as they like. You'll be safe here."

"Thank you."
There's a man standing before me in dark robes, and a darker expression on his face. I know this man. I know who he is. I know his name.

His name is Sedder.

"So, you're the latest Chelseer brat, aren't you," he says to me. "You have their look about you. The whole black hair, green eyes thing. You don't have the long ears, though. They must have been breeding with humans lately."

"You aren't supposed to be here, Sedder," I tell him. "You were exiled! They said you were exiled!"

"And now I'm back," Sedder says with a wicked grin.

"What do you want, Sedder?"

"I want revenge, starting with those who humiliated me and exiled me. I want to destroy your entire family. And you're as good a place as any to start with, little brat."

I turn to run in a panic, but I don't manage to get more than a few steps. Dark energy surrounds me like tendrils, holding me in place and bringing me to my knees. I feel like my very life force is being drained out of me. Screaming in agony. No, let me go, don't do this to me!

I wake with a gasp. My heart is racing. I'm surprised I wasn't screaming aloud at that.

That was a very strange dream. I must calm down. I must analyze things rationally. It was so vivid, but something struck me as very, very strange about it, different from the other dreams that I have been having, but I can't quite put my finger on what.

Wait. That's it. I was a child.

These can't all be premonitions. If anything, that had to have been a memory.

I was attacked as a child, by what, a Dark Jedi? Seemed like it. And his name was Sedder. He seemed to have some grudge against my family. Chelseer? I thought that was just a false name I pulled out of a hat. But it seems there's something more to it.

Focus. Think about where I was. That might give some hint as to where I'm really from originally.

The sky was weird. Purple and black, swirling about chaotically. The buildings were weird. Made from some substance I cannot immediately identify. Smooth, grayish-blue. Covered in strange markings, many of which are glowing cyan. But I can't quite bring to mind the name of the place.

That's all I can manage at the moment. But it's not fading away like a dream is supposed to. It's burned into my consciousness like a nightmare that won't go away.

I sit up with a sigh and look around. Actually, it seems like the here and now is what's been fading away like a dream. It takes me several moments to remember where I am and why. I'm in the Lower City of the planet Taris. Inside the Hidden Bek's base. That man sleeping across from me is named Carth Onasi. But he's going by the name of Carth Nix at the moment. The Sith have blockaded the planet. We need to find Bastila and escape. I don't remember why, or even who Bastila is.

This is no good. Maybe I should start writing a journal or something, if I weren't too paranoid about
it falling into the wrong hands. I weigh my options, and ultimately decide that forgetting what I'm doing at any given moment is a greater danger. I can always mitigate the concerns about someone reading it by encrypting it, after all.

Carth is still asleep. It's not even morning on Taris yet. So I've got some time to play around with before we head out. I procure some equipment, nicely portable and compact, and start programming. I construct an elaborate series of safeguards. Passcodes, genetic matches, sequences to run through if I forgot the passcodes. To make certain that I am who I am, and not merely a clone or something. I test it thoroughly, and once I'm satisfied with my work, I start writing.

I put in multiple sections. A day journal describing what I've done each day. A dream journal detailing the strange dreams I've been having. Speculation on whether they're memory or premonition, and it would seem to be a mix of both. Speculation as to my own origins and identity. Thinking about it and putting it down helps to set things clearer in my mind as well.

Carth starts stirring, so I finish up and lock things up, and tuck the datapad away. "Awake already?" he says.

"Couldn't sleep," I say with a shrug.

"More nightmares?"

"As always," I say. "Breakfast?"

"Sure."

After eating, I go to see Gadon Thek again. I've determined that whichever course of action I might take from here, it will probably require breaking into the Black Vulkars base, either to search for information or to try to recover that accelerator he mentioned.

"Do you know how I could get into the Black Vulkars base?" I ask.

"There's a lot of hidden tunnels down in the sewers," Gadon says. "I've heard that there's a back way in. If anyone could get you in, it would be Mission. She knows the sewers better than anyone."

"Gadon, you can't be serious," Zaerdra says. "She's just a child!"

"She's a smart girl," Gadon says. "She does a lot of dangerous things, but she has a Wookiee to protect her. Still, look out for her."

"I won't let her come to any harm," I say. "Do you know where I might be able to find her now?"

"She headed off early for the Undercity. Probably going off to explore the sewers some more. You should look for her there."

"I will," I say. "Thank you."

The two of us head down toward the lift to the Undercity. There's a Sith guarding this one as well. "No one is allowed to enter the Undercity without the proper authorization."

"Here's my papers," I say.

"Hmm," the Sith says, peering at them. "A Dark Jedi mercenary, huh? Maybe you'll be able to get something done. Carry on."

We head down the lift. If I'd thought the Lower City was a dump, the Undercity is a pit of hell that
makes the Lower City look like a paradise. Everything here is run down and falling apart. Everyone here is wearing filthy rags and looks as though they haven't had a decent meal in years, if ever.

A couple of them approach us. "Hey. You there! It's five credits to use our elevator! You have to pay the toll!"

"What kind of a place is this?" Carth mutters. "Even the beggars are trying to shake us down."

I roll my eyes. "You know, I would have given you money if you'd just asked nicely instead of acting like idiot thugs. You aren't nearly strong or well-armed enough to get away with that, you know. Sooner or later, someone's going to get annoyed at your pathetic antics and kill you."

"Um," says the second beggar nervously. "Maybe we should just let them pass."

"Yeah," says the first beggar. "No toll for you. You get to use the elevator for free."

"Let's go," says the other, and the two of them run off again.

A young woman approaches us. "I'm sorry about those two. They don't give a very good impression of our little community here. Not all of us are like that. I am Shaleena. Welcome to the Undercity."

"I'm Lexen. It's a pleasure to meet you, Shaleena." I pull fifty credits out of my pocket and pass them over to her.

"What's this?" Shaleena says in surprise, looking at the money with wide eyes. It's a pittance to me, but it's probably more money than she's seen in her life. I know perfectly well that what seems like nothing to me can go a long way in a place like this.

"You seem like a nice girl," I tell her. "I see a lot of need around here, and I'd like to alleviate that however I can. Buy some food or something for yourself and whoever else is hungry, alright?"

"I will, thank you! Thank you very much!" Shaleena smiles brightly at me. "You should talk to Rukil. He's a very wise man."

"Perhaps I will. By any chance, have you seen a blue Twi'lek girl by the name of Mission come by?" I ask.

"I've seen her, but I haven't spoken with her," Shaleena says. "I think she went off with her Wookiee companion to explore the sewers."

"Thank you," I say, and bid her farewell.

I go over to see the old man named Rukil. He gives me a long, strange look as I approach. "A stranger comes to speak with old Rukil? An upworlder... marked by destiny. A mantle of greatness surrounds you, upworlder."

Considering the highly accurate premonitions of the future I've been having lately, I'm hardly one to scoff at claims of 'destiny'. "Greetings, Rukil. I am Lexen. It's good to meet you."

Rukil tells me about the history of his people, the Outcasts, and I make myself patiently listen at his tale of being cast out into the Undercity, silently raging at the injustice of it all. Forcing people to live in this pit solely because they're the descendents of those who rebelled against poor treatment in the past? Taris holds darker skeletons in its closet than I had imagined.

These people need my help. "Is there any way I can aid your people in their plight, Rukil?" I ask.
"Old tales tell of a Promised Land," he says. "Where there is bountiful food and water, and people can live in peaceful and safety. But it's not just a tale. I know the Promised Land is real. I've been searching for it all my life. My apprentice, Malya, believed she'd found clues as to its location. But now she's disappeared. Lexen, would you do a favor for an old man, and see if you could discover her fate, for good or ill?"

"I'll look for her, Rukil," I say. "And if I should run across any information as to this Promised Land, I will bring it to you."

"You have my thanks, Lexen," Rukil says. "You are a ray of light in the darkness of the Undercity."

I head over to the village gates. There's something of a commotion going on over there. A woman is shouting, "Open the gates! Let him in! Hendar, run! You can make it!"

"No!" says the man at the gate. "The rakghouls are too close! I can't risk it!"

"Open the gate," I tell him. "I'll deal with the rakghouls." I pull out my lightsaber and stand at the ready.

"Well, alright," says the guard, opening the gate for me. "But I'm closing the gate behind you and not opening it till they're dead!"

I nod, and step through the gate. I intercept the rakghouls, and put myself between them and the man they're chasing. They're humanoid in shape, but they're feral, mindless creatures. They have no skill or intelligence, only blind instincts to attack. This makes them very easy to kill. I cut them apart with my lightsaber in seconds.

"Thank you for your aid, stranger," says the man, Hendar.

"No problem," I say. "I'm happy to help. Try to be more careful in the future, though? You won't always have a Jedi around to save you."

"I will," he says.

"What were those things, anyway?" I ask.

"They're rakghouls," Hendar says. "They were people, once. But now they've been transformed by a terrible disease to which there's no cure. It's a mercy to kill them."

"Ah, I see," I say. "Thanks for the information."

He heads back to the safety of the village, leaving me and Carth alone to explore this rakghoul-infested metal jungle.

"You're being awfully nice to people today," Carth says.

"What?" I say in confusion. "I'm always nice."

"Except when you're killing people, anyway."

"I only kill people who deserve it," I say.

We run across Canderous Ordo, leading a group of men laden down with scavenged goods. The other men look weary and a bit beaten up, while Canderous has a look on his face as though he's annoyed at having to babysit them, unless I miss my guess.
"Canderous," I greet him. "Fancy seeing you down here."

"Same goes for you," he says. "Is Darth Malak desperate enough to find those escape pods that he's sending his Dark Jedi to search for them now?"

"Perhaps," I say with a noncommittal shrug. "I wouldn't know. I'm just a freelancer."

"Heh," Canderous says. "It's probably safer that way. This isn't really a good place to chat, though."

"What's that sound?" says one of the men. "More rakghouls coming? Oh no!"

I sigh a little, and put myself between them and the incoming rakghouls, activating my lightsaber. Between my blade work, and Carth's and Canderous's blaster fire, the rakghouls don't even scratch the scavengers.

"Thanks for the assist. We'd best run along before more of those things show up," Canderous says. "I can't carry all this junk back by myself."

"Good luck," I tell him.

Further on, we come upon a body dressed in rags, like the villagers in the Undercity. Upon searching the corpse, I find a journal discussing the Promised Land, and indicates that the journal was written by one Malya.

"Looks like we've found Rukil's apprentice," I say. "Poor girl." I pocket the journal and we continue on.

We encounter a Sith patrol. "Hey, you there. Do you have clearance to be down here?"

"I've all the proper security papers right here," I say, showing him.

"Ah, you're one of the mercs they hired. Well, you'd best be careful down here, even if you are a Dark Jedi. We've already lost one patrol, and we're out of rakghoul serum ourselves. Don't want any of us to get infected if we can help it. We might not be able to make it back up top fast enough to get the serum in time to prevent the transformation."

"Where did you lose that patrol?" I ask.

"You're here for search and rescue?" says the Sith officer. "We lost contact with them a ways to the south. The place is swarming with rakghouls."

"You worry about your own duty," I tell him. "I can deal with the rakghouls."

We head off in the indicated direction. When we're out of earshot, Carth says, "Are we really going to rescue Sith?"

"No," I say. "We're going to search their bodies and take their stuff. And if they happen to still be moving, well, the rakghoul problem is quite unfortunate down here, isn't it?"

"Oh, okay," Carth says, clearly not the least bit bothered by the idea of murdering Sith.

There's no worry about that, however, as the bodies of the Sith patrol are quite dead by the time we arrive, anyway. I go over and thoroughly search the corpses for valuables, and find a vial of the rakghoul serum the Sith officer had mentioned as well.

"This might come in handy," I comment, pocketing it before continuing on.
We come upon something that looks like one of the downed Republic escape pods. There's traps laid out all around it, and what appears to be a man hiding nearby.

"Looks like we might have a survivor here?" Carth says.

"Either that or squatting scavengers," I say. "Let's find out."

I carefully go through and disarm enough of the traps to get us through, and approach the man. He does appear to be human, and he's dressed in a dirty Republic uniform, but he also appears to be ill.

"Don't come any closer," he says. "I'm sick, and I don't want anyone else to catch it!"

"You've got the rakghoul disease," I say. "Here, I have a serum that should cure you. Let me inject you with it."

He looks at me for a moment before apparently deciding that he's desperate enough to take the chance. "Alright."

I approach and inject him with the serum, and glance at the vial. There appears to be enough for at least a dozen or so more injections.

"Thank you, friend," he says. "I think I'm starting to feel better already. Wait, the two of you seem familiar. Do I know you?"

"We're Carth Onasi and Lexen Skywalker," Carth says. "From the Endar Spire. It's good to see someone else alive down here, soldier."

The man salutes wearily. "It's good to be rescued, sir. I'm Ensign Jass Ardin."

"Let's get you back to the village where it's safe," I say. "Then we can continue the search."

We escort Jass back to the village, killing another group of rakghouls along the way. He gives me a strange look when he sees me pull out my red lightsaber, but he chooses not to say anything about it. I did just save his life, after all, I suppose. Beyond the rakghoul sickness, he does seem to be tired and hurt.

I ask the guard at the gate, "Do you have a doctor or healer who can look over my friend here?"

"Take him to Esala," the guard says, pointing. "She can take a look at him."

I head over in the indicated direction and find a woman standing near a large cage of sorts. Behind it, I see human figures moving around, but they appear to be locked inside.

As Esala looks over the soldier we rescued, I ask, "Why are you keeping those people in a cage?"

"They have the rakghoul disease," she says. "There's no cure, so we're forced to lock them up until they change, and then they kill one another."

"That's horrible," I say. "I have a cure for it right here."

"Really?" Esala says, looking to me in surprise.

"Or at least something that can stop the transformation, apparently," I add.

"We can't risk sending anyone inside to administer it, though," Esala says. "They could change at any moment and attack."
"Well, I'll do it, then," I say. "I can't just leave them to die like that when I could easily help them."

"If you wish, I won't stop you," Esala says. "I'll have to close the gate behind you until everyone is dead or cured, though, as a precaution. I hope you understand."

"That's fine," I say. "Just let me in there."

I step inside the cage and look around at the bedraggled, diseased individuals huddled up inside. I carefully start to inject the serum into each of the thankful villagers. One of them in the back corner, however, seems worse off than the others. She looks to be starting to change. Her skin has lost most of its color, and she has a feral look in her eyes.

Maybe it's not too late for her. I can hope, at least. I wrestle her to the ground, holding her in place so that she can't attack me, and manage to inject some of the serum into her body. But there's no effect. She just screams like a beast and tries to claw my face off.

"It's too late for her," says one of the survivors. "There's nothing you can do. You'll have to put her down."

"Damn it," I mutter, injecting her with another dose, and then another. I don't even care if it's wasteful.

But it's no use. At this rate, I'm going to wind up infected myself, the way she's clawing at me. I don't like the idea that I can't save her. I can't save just one person who needs my help. Her life was in my hands, and I was too late. I'm too late. There's nothing left of her. Her mind is gone. There's nothing more to be done but to put her out of her misery.

"I'm sorry," I say. With a swift movement of my lightsaber, I cut off her head. Quick and clean, it's over.

I kneel by the corpse, weeping unashamedly. Behind me, I distantly hear the gate opening. The other patients are leaving, and someone else approaches me from behind.

"There was nothing you could do," Carth's voice says gently.

"I tried to save her," I murmur. "Why couldn't I save her?"

"You can't always save everyone," Carth says.

I sigh softly. "I know. I should know that. But why can't I stop crying?"

"It means you're human," Carth says quietly. "You're not a monster after all."

After I've composed myself, I head over to Rukil to give him his apprentice's journal and tell him of her fate. "I'm sorry, Rukil, but your apprentice is dead."

"I feared as much," Rukil says, taking the journal from me solemnly. "But thank you for recovering her journal nonetheless. I didn't think anyone would actually do that much for this old man."

"It wasn't a problem," I say.

We then head back out into the Undercity again, leaving the Jass in the relative safety of the village for the moment. If nothing else, at least Carth doesn't seem to be staring at me quite so suspiciously anymore.

Finally, I spot a blue Twi'lek girl skulking around trying to avoid rakghouls. But I don't see any
Wookiee in sight.

"Lexen?" she says, recognizing me and running up to me. "You've got to help me! It's Zaalbar! He's been captured!"


"He's been captured by Gamorrean slavers," Mission explains. "They're probably going to sell him to some mine somewhere or something! He told me to run, and I thought he was right behind me, but when I looked back, I was all alone..."

"Slavers..." I snarl, clenching a fist. "Don't worry, Mission. We'll get him back, and kill every slaver we come across along the way, too. You'd better get back to safety."

"No way!" Mission says. "I'm coming with you! He's my friend, and I'm not going to be left behind. I can use a blaster as well as anyone!"

I sigh quietly and look at her, and I can see there will be no dissuading her. "Fine, but stay back and be careful. I won't be able to forgive myself if I let anything happen to you."

The three of us head down into the sewers. We fight past a number of rakghouls and Gamorreans along the way. I also come across two more journals talking about the Promised Land on the bodies of more unfortunate Outcasts. I tuck them away for safekeeping to deliver back to Rukil, hoping that he'll get some use out of them.

The sewers are trapped and treacherous. A number of mines have been planted at various points, that the Gamorreans don't seem to be triggering. Maybe they placed them there to try to keep out the rakghouls. I carefully approach the mines and, with a quick bit of mechanics, disable them safely without detonating them. Then I tuck them away into my pack. They might come in handy later on.

More Gamorreans ahead. I grin as I let myself slip into battle mode. I take great joy in slaughtering slavers. I wade into the thick of battle, swinging my red lightsaber about, slashing at the Gamorrean scum. Bodies drop to the ground, as well as a number of severed limbs and heads.

Finally, we come upon the cell where Zaalbar is being held and free him. He looks none the worse for wear, aside from seeming understandably upset about the entire ordeal.

"Good to see you again, Big Z," Mission says. "I was worried about you!"

Zaalbar turns to me and says, "You have saved me from a fate worse than death."

"I'm glad to have helped," I tell him. "Plus, I got to kill a lot of slaver scum."

"You speak my language?" Zaalbar asks.

"I can understand it," I say. "I regret that I don't have the proper vocal organs to make the correct sounds in order to actually speak it intelligibly. I sound like a dying tach when I try."

"I'm surprised that a human would go to the trouble to attempt," Zaalbar says.

"I'm a very strange human, I'm told," I say dryly.

Zaalbar says, "To express my gratitude to you for saving me from the terrible fate I faced, I wish to swear to you a life debt."

"A Wookiee life debt?" Mission says, eyes widening. "Are you sure about this, Big Z? This is
serious."

"I am... honored by the sentiment," I say. I'm a little uncomfortable about it, but I won't insult him by trying to refuse, and I trust a Wookiee's sense of honor.

"Lexen," Zaalbar says. "I, Zaalbar, do hereby solemnly swear my life to you. I will serve and protect you for the rest of my days. From this day forth, my life is yours."

I reply, "I, Lexen Chelseer Skywalker, hereby solemnly accept and acknowledge your oath."

Mission says brightly, "And you're stuck with me now, too, because where Big Z goes, I go!"

I chuckle softly. "I'm glad to have you both along. I've been sorely short on friends of late." I clap Carth on the shoulder on the way past, and head through the door into the storage room where the Gamorreans had kept Zaalbar's belongings. "This looks like it's yours," I say, handing the things over.

"Thank you," Zaalbar says. "Would you rather I use the vibroblade or the bowcaster?"

"The vibroblade, usually," I reply. "I'd like you to fight by my side in melee. Mission and Carth can back us up with blasters."

"Very well."

"Mission, which way is the back entrance into the Black Vulkars base?" I ask.

"It's this way," Mission says, heading off down a corridor. "But we've got to be careful. It's guarded by a huge monster. We might be able to sneak past it."

"What sort of monster?" I say, raising an eyebrow.

"A big rancor," Mission says. "I've always been able to just sneak by. It's not very smart."

We come to a forcefield, and Mission puts in some codes into the terminal to deactivate it.

"Stealth isn't really my strong suit," I comment dryly. "Why don't we just kill the thing and save ourselves the trouble?"

The other three are looking at me as though I've just said something absurd.

"If you like, you three can stay back here and I'll go in and kill it myself," I say.

"Are you insane?" Carth says.

"I've been accused of that on prior occasions," I reply lightly. I peer into the large room containing the rancor. It's at the far end, looking away at the moment. "Alright, stay here for a moment. I'm going to go plant the mines."

"Is that why you've been collecting them?" Carth says. "I thought you were just being a packrat."

I snort softly. "It's always good to have things on hand just in case."

"You were carrying so many explosives that I was half afraid that you'd blow up if anyone nudged you."

"Would you prefer to carry the explosives in the future?" I ask lightly.
There's a different tone to my interactions with Carth now, I notice. He's not just being suspicious of me or accusing me of anything. Now he's just playfully bantering. It's a lot lighter and more relaxed.

I get as close to the rancor as I dare, and carefully set out successive rows of mines, three wide, back toward the tunnel entrance where the others are waiting. It's a good use for them, I think. I might be able to kill the creature with my lightsaber, but this method is a lot less likely to get me maimed. I don't need any ominous premonitions in my dreams to tell me that.

"Alright," I say. "The mines are set up. Carth, would you piss it off for me, please?"

I pull out my lightsaber and stand ready past the far edge of my minefield, just in case it's not enough to kill it. Zaalbar takes a position beside me with his vibroblade. Carth shoots the monster in the tail with his blaster. The rancor roars in anger at the sting, and shakes its head about looking to see what hit it. When it sees us, it comes charging across the open space. Carth and Mission tag it a few more times before it reaches the minefield.

The mines explode beneath its feet. It crosses one row, two, three, and keeps coming. I can't believe it can take so much punishment and hardly even notice. Four, five, it's obviously pretty hurt by this point, bleeding from gaping holes in its underside. I tense up, prepared to fight if need be, lightsaber held at the ready. When it hits the seventh row of mines, it finally collapses, meters away from my feet.

I let out a breath I didn't realize I was holding in, and relax. "Tough critter," I say, plunging my lightsaber into its head to make sure that it's dead. "I barely had enough mines on me for that."

"I still say you're insane," Carth says lightly.

We head on past the rancor's corpse and into the Black Vulkar base. We fight our way past a number of Black Vulkars, and I make sure to thoroughly search the area for valuables, information, or any sign of where they're keeping Gadon's accelerator.

In the dining area, we come across a terrified, cowering woman dressed in a short skirt and a low-cut top. "Please, don't hurt me! I'm not one of them!"

"What are you doing here, then?" I ask.

"My name's Ada," she says. "My... my father owed Davik Kang money. When he couldn't pay, Davik had him killed and sold me into slavery to pay his debts, and the Black Vulkars bought me. They make me wait tables for them and dress up like this, and... and... other things."

I growl and clench my fists in renewed anger. "Come on, we'll get you out of here." I lead her back down to the room where we came in. "Wait here until we're done clearing the base and we'll escort you to safety. Don't mind the dead rancor. I don't think anyone will bother you here -- they won't know the rancor's been killed."

"Thank you," Ada says shakily, and goes to hide off in a corner and wait.

I turn to head back into the Vulkar base. "Alright," I say with a snarl. "Every last Vulkar in here is going to die."

My companions don't bother to argue with the sentiment, as we return to slaughtering Black Vulkars. Anger guides my blade, and I cut down everything in my path. One of them tries to bribe us or beg for his life or something, but I don't even listen to him, slicing him neatly through before he can even string three words together.
After hacking through a terminal with a stolen pass card, we enter the Black Vulkars' swoop garage. There's more Vulkars to kill there. All the blood I've spilled today only serves to stoke the fires of my rage.

Finally, we come to a central office, and a green Twi'lek man says to me, "Wait! Hear me out first. I have a proposal for you---"

I slice off his head. "Not interested."

With all the Vulkars in the base either dead or, if they were smart, having fled at the news of my rampage, we search the garage for the swoop accelerator.

"This is it!" Mission says, holding up a piece of equipment.

"Doesn't look like much, but if you say so," I reply. "Let's go."

I check all the computers on the way for any information I can find on Bastila, but nothing comes up, even with the stolen cards to make them think I'm a Black Vulkar lieutenant. I don't like it, but I suppose we'll have to go with Gadon's plan, as much as I doubt it will work. I also pick up a couple suits of armor from the supply rooms.

We return to the room with the dead rancor. Ada is still there, and still appears to be terrified. "You're back!" she says. "Are they-- are they dead?"

I give a nod. "Every Vulkar I could find. Here." I toss her the smaller armor that I grabbed. "Put that on. There's probably still some rakghouls running around out there."

We head back out through the sewers and return to the Outcast village, and I go over to speak with Rukil and give him the datapads that I'd found.

"I found these down in the sewers," I say.

"You found them?" Rukil says, looking over them excitedly. "This is wonderful! This is enough information for me to determine the location of the Promised Land."

"Good luck," I say.

We meet up with the Jass Ardin, and I toss him the other set of armor. "Expecting trouble, sir?" he says.

"Always," I say. "Also, we're going to need to sneak you past Sith patrols, so we want you to look like a common mercenary, not a Republic soldier."

"Understood, sir," Jass says, and goes to put it on.

The Outcasts are packing up and preparing to leave. Ada tells me, "I'm going with them. This Promised Land sounds wonderful, and there's no place for me in the Upper City any longer. This will be... a chance to start a new life. Thank you so much for saving me from those horrible Black Vulkars."

"I'm happy to help," I say. "Good luck with your journey. I hope you make many new friends with the Outcasts."

Once Jass has finished changing, the five of us go back to the lift to head up to the Lower City.

The Sith at the lift asks me for my authorization to come up from the Undercity. I'm not sure if it's the
same one who was on duty when I came down or not. I'm a little uneasy about the idea that he might be suspicious about the idea that I came down with a party of two, and am now coming up with five.

He's eyeing Mission and Zaalbar suspiciously, and completely ignoring the Republic soldier. Good. "Do you have a problem with my companions?" I ask him in a dangerous tone.

"I don't question who a Dark Jedi chooses to travel with," the Sith guard says. "That's not worth my job -- or my life."

"Good," I say. "Best keep it that way."

I stride off toward the Hidden Bek base without glancing back at him, firmly keeping my haughty Dark Jedi mask in place until we're safely inside. I feel as though I'm like an actor. I've played many roles and put on many masks in my life. It's very important to give the right impression to whoever is watching you. All they see is the mask, and if you do it right, they won't even consider that what's under the mask may not match what they see.

"Gadon, we've retrieved the prototype accelerator you mentioned," I say, passing it over to him.

"Excellent!" Gadon says, taking it and looking it over. "It doesn't appear to have been damaged. I'll have our mechanics pull an all-nighter to get that installed in time for tomorrow's race."

"Oh, I also slaughtered every Black Vulkar in their base," I say. "I think I was spectacularly unsubtle about it. I can't imagine that Brejik wouldn't notice."

"Was that really necessary?" Gadon says.

"I was a little annoyed at them when I discovered their habit of enslaving and raping women," I say darkly.

"Understandable," Gadon admits with a sigh. "Well, Brejik can hardly call off the big race, even if a number of his gang members have been killed. We'll just have to go through with things and see how things work out."

"I'll be standing by ready to kill more of them if they don't release our crewmate," I say. "Brejik included, if need be."

"I'd hoped it wouldn't come to this," Gadon says.

"You've seen how the Black Vulkars act," I snap. "Did you really think that this was going to end without bloodshed? Your two groups have been killing one another in the streets! I'm not going to hold back. If I see an opportunity, Brejik will die."

I don't bother to stay and argue it any longer. I head off to my room. I have a lot I want to write down in my journal before I have a chance to forget it.

Carth comes in a bit later, hair still damp, and says, "Fresher's free. What're you doing?"

"Journal," I reply simply, finishing up and locking it down again.

"Are you sure that's wise?" Carth says.

"I doubt anyone other than me will be able to get through the layers of protections I've put on it," I say. "But if they do, they probably deserve to. For starters, they'd have to clone me."

Carth stares at me for a moment. "I'm not even going to call you paranoid."
I chuckle, and go in to take a shower myself. I catch up with the others for dinner, now that we're not all still smelling of sewage.

"Lexen," Mission says. "Zaerdra was talking about you after you left. I guess she didn't realize I'm with you now."

"Oh?" I say. "Is there a problem?"

"She doesn't think you're really a Jedi," Mission says. "She thinks you really are a Dark Jedi, and is suspicious of why you're helping the Hidden Bek's. She even convinced Gadon that you might have sabotaged the accelerator or something, too."

"They're not going to throw us out or try to kill us in our sleep, are they?" I ask.

"No, nothing like that," Mission says. "They wouldn't do that. They just don't fully trust you. They don't know why you're helping them and think you're going to betray them."

"And what about you?" I ask, raising an eyebrow. "What do you think?"

"Me?" Mission says. "I don't care whether you're 'light' or 'dark'. It doesn't mean anything to me. You saved Zaalbar, and that makes you alright in my book."

I chuckle softly and smile at her, and pat her on the head. "Well, it'll be good to have you along when we get off this rock. You deserve better than this place. You ever dream of seeing the galaxy?"

I can practically see the stars in her eyes.
I'm stumbling through a cave. It's hard to see in the dark. My red lightsaber doesn't illuminate much. I'm having to use the Force to find my way.

I'm being pursued. I glance behind me. Sometimes I can see the green glare of my enemy's lightsaber.

My heart's pounding in my chest. I should focus on what I'm doing. I need to watch my step. There might be other enemies or pitfalls in this cave.

And I think I just ran down a dead end. Damn it. The drop is too far. I'll never make it.

My pursuer has caught up to me. "Surrender. There is no escape."

"I don't want to kill you, old friend," I say.

"Nor I you," he says. "But you leave me little choice."

"There's always a choice," I reply. "Every choice has consequences. I know. I'm facing the consequences for my own choices, but I will face them. I will never hide behind the claim that I had no choice."

"At least you own up to your crimes. But your dark path ends here."

Our lightsabers clash. Sparks fly, lighting up the darkness of the cavern briefly.

"You don't need to die here, Lexen!" he says. "You can still turn back to the light! Reject the dark side!"

"I will do no such thing and you know it, old friend. I will no more reject the Dark Side than I will reject my left hand."

"So be it, then."

A swift movement of his blade catches me off guard, slicing through my wrist. My left hand, the one bearing my red lightsaber, goes flying into the chasm. I scream and clutch my forearm. The red light has gone out, winked out and vanished down into the darkness. I fall to my knees, trembling.

"What will be your choice now, Lexen?"

"I could still kill you, you know," I say. "But I will do no such thing. I choose not to continue fighting you, my friend. This isn't worth it."

"I'm glad that you've finally seen reason. So you surrender now?"

"No," I say. "I'm simply not going to fight this battle any longer."

Before he can react, I roll off the ledge and into the abyss.

I wake with a sigh. What was the name of that Jedi I was fighting in my dreams? I don't remember his name. We were friends. I'd known him for years. But now I no longer even remember his name.

My hand. My left hand. I sit up, feeling it, poking at it. It's flesh and blood. Not a mechanical
replacement or anything.

How can I remember losing my hand when I haven't actually lost my hand? Maybe this is, indeed, a premonition of the future. A distant future, perhaps.

I'm so confused. I shake my head at trying to make sense of it, and just go to record this latest dream in my journal.

I go to eat breakfast. Gadon says to me, "Good news, Lexen. The new accelerator installed fine, and the bike is ready for the race today. Sadly we don't have enough time to give it a test run. I'd like to ask you a favor, as well. I'd like you to be the one to ride the bike."

"Me?" I say. Of course. He thinks that I sabotaged the part I brought back. Well, maybe I can show him that his distrust is misplaced. "Of course. I'll be happy to. I've never ridden a swoop bike before, however. Is it difficult?"

"Nah, not at all," Gadon says. "The bike does most of the work for you, anyway. With this new accelerator, you could probably just point straight ahead and drop the hammer, and fly straight to victory."

"Well, alright then, if you say so. I'll do it." I'll trust Gadon and assume that he's not trying to intentionally sabotage the race himself.

After breakfast, I head out to the race track to prepare for the big race. I'm still not sure what the big deal is about this. But it'll get me closer to Bastila, so I'll go along with it anyway.

The mechanic for the Hidden Beks takes me aside. "You're the one going to ride the souped-up bike, huh? Well, I've got to warn you, you'll only get so many heats with it before it dies. We've pushed it to the limit, but it's very unstable."

"Good to know," I say with a smirk. Great, I didn't need to sabotage the accelerator. It's already half-broken to begin with. "What do you mean by 'heats'? How does this racing thing work?"

"The participants race one at a time," he explains. "Your time is just compared against the other racers. You can fly as many heats as you want, but only your best time is counted. Or at least, you normally could, if you didn't have a bike that's liable to go boom after five or six runs."

"I see," I say. "Well, then, when do I start?"

I climb into my swoop bike to fly my first heat. I can barely even make sense of the controls. They're both ridiculously simplistic and excessively obnoxious. And I'm only going to get so many chances at this? I just hope that the Force will be with me, and that I might have actually flown one of these damned things and just don't remember it.

Miraculous surfacing of swoop bike racing skills fails to occur, however. On my first heat, despite the speed of the accelerator, I get a positively abysmal time.

"You should try switching gears," says the mechanic.

"How do I do that?" I say.

"You pull that lever there, and push that button, and then lean against the foot paddle."

I stare at him. "Alright then..."
I try another race. It takes me halfway through the course to successfully even switch gears. Well, that might have been useful sooner.

"You got the hang of that down yet?" the mechanic says. "You should try hitting the speed pads!"

"The what? Where are those?" I peer at the swoop bike's controls.

"No, not there," he says. "On the race track. They make you go faster."

"I see. Alright, then, I'll try that..."

I swing around for a third heat. I'm still not getting the hang of switching gears, and my attempts at guiding my bike into these speed pads only results in flying wildly into debris, into walls, and off the course. I manage to make my worst time yet.

"Well, that could have gone better," I say.

"Okay, how about you not worry about the speed pads or anything," the mechanic says. "I'm going to make some tweaks to the bike and pour our some more juice. You just focus on flying fast and straight and avoid running into anything, alright?"

"I... might be able to do that?"

In my fourth run, I try to focus on switching gears, which results in my engine stalling several times, and on avoiding debris on the track, which results in me running into almost everything on the track. I'm starting to think I'm just plain not cut out for swoop racing. Or piloting in general, for that matter. I somehow manage to do even worse than my previous time.

"One more try," the mechanic says. "I've pumped the accelerator up as far as it'll go. You'll either win this one, or you'll go out in a blaze of glory. So you'd best finish this next race as quick as you can before it blows up on you."

I have to wonder if he's trying to kill me. "I don't think I like the sound of this, but alright. Let's give this one more shot, shall we?"

"Good luck."

I head out onto the track again. I don't even try switching gears, and just fly as straight as I can without running into anything. I have to swerve a couple times to avoid things, but I even actually manage to not run into anything this time.

But it's to no avail. My swoop bike is flying hot. Way, way too hot. Suddenly, I find myself riding a fireball.

I wake up with a soft groan. Great, now I'm having nightmares about the upcoming swoop race. No, not nightmares. It's the Force warning me that I'm about to make a terrible mistake. No matter what happens, I must not get into that swoop bike.

I roll over and pull out my journal, and proceed to write down what I just saw, up to my apparent fiery death. I don't want to miss or forget any detail.

I look through my journal, and find no mention of the dream about getting my hand cut off by a Jedi. I could have sworn that I'd written that down after I woke up. Strange. A little confused, I go to write it down again.
This is going to get annoying if I'm starting to dream about writing in my journal and then being confused when I didn't actually do it, I think. I'm going to have to make sure to double-check that everything from the previous day or so that's supposed to be there is present once or twice a day.

Come to think, it's happened before that I've had more than one 'dream' in the same night. On the night before my death match with Bendak Starkiller, I had two premonitions of being killed by him, in addition to another, unrelated dream. Most intriguing. I wonder what this could mean.

Once everything is squared away, I head out for breakfast and listen to Gadon telling me about the swoop bike he wants me to ride.

"I'd be happy to," I say. "But I've never ridden a swoop bike before and I'm a terrible pilot in general. Hey, Carth? You're a good pilot, aren't you? Have you ever flown a swoop bike?"

Carth looks up from his meal. "What? Yeah, I've flown a swoop once or twice. You want me to race the bike?"

Gadon Thek looks at Carth questioningly. "You'll fly it? Well, very well, then." He casts a suspicious glance over toward me for a moment, or perhaps it's just my imagination. "I'll have my people show you to the swoop track when you're ready."

They need to sign me up as a racer as well in order to get me into the back area with the mechanics and swoop bikes, and where the 'prize' is being awarded. If need be, I'll (poorly) race a heat or two on a normal swoop to keep up appearances (and get thoroughly mocked for it, I'm sure).

But for now, I have a chance to scope out the area while Carth races. I look over to the stand where Brejik is standing next to the race announcer. A woman, Bastila I'm assuming, is being kept in a nearby cage with what appears to be a neural suppression collar around her neck. No wonder she hasn't escaped already.

Wait. Wait a minute. I recognize this woman. I've seen her before. In a dream -- in a vision. She was one of the Jedi I was fighting on that ship. The ship was attacked, the bridge was on fire, and I collapsed.

What does this mean, I wonder? Will she recognize me? Will she know who I am? She probably knows who I am better than I do. I think I'm going to have to have a nice long chat with her when we get out of here.

I also would love to know her motivation for bringing me along, knowing that I am or was a Dark Jedi at some point in the unspecified past. Perhaps she hoped to redeem me or something? Or maybe she just wanted to keep a close eye on me to make sure I didn't revert to form? Keep me under her thumb, so to speak. I don't know. I don't know enough to assume any malice from her. I'll give her the benefit of the doubt until I've had a chance to figure things out better myself.

After assessing the tactical plan of the area, I determine that it would not be overly difficult to break her out, and if I could remove that collar from her neck, she could help fight our way out instead of having to carry her. Brejik doesn't have a lot of guards here, mainly just other racers. They might put up a fight, but I'm not really too worried about them.

I consider hiding my lightsaber and using only my vibroblade so that Bastila doesn't see me wielding the thing. But that would be too dangerous. I can't block blasters with a mere vibroblade. I can't hold back and compromise the success of the mission for fear of what she might think of me. I'll just have to deal with the fallout when it comes.
Carth races three heats with increasingly good times. The final one is apparently the best they've ever had on this track. The other racers don't have a chance of even touching him.

The announcer says, "The winner of the Tarisian Season Opener is Carth Nix, racing for the Hidden Beks!"

"But wait," Brejik says. "It has come to my attention that the Hidden Beks were using an illegal swoop modification to give this bike additional speed."

I snort softly and approach the stand with Carth. I say, "Our swoop was inspected before the race began and deemed to be acceptable, and now you change your mind now that we've won?"

"I was unaware that any such modifications were made to your swoop," Brejik says. "Perhaps it slipped past inspection."

"And how about the fact that you were intending on using that part yourself in this race to ensure that your Black Vulkars would win?"

"So you admit it!" Brejik says. "You admit to stealing the accelerator from the Black Vulkars!"

"... Which was stolen from the Hidden Beks in the first place."

The announcer helplessly says, "Can we keep these grievances off the race track? They've clearly won, and it's against our traditions to withdraw the prize now."

"She's too dangerous," Brejik says. "Perhaps they don't realize that my prize is a Jedi -- or perhaps they do. A most delicious and valuable prize, especially for Sith spies, wouldn't you say?"

I narrow my eyes at him. "I am not a Sith spy."

"Oh?" Brejik goes on. "Why else would the famed Stormseeker, slayer of Bendak Starkiller and Dark Jedi, be working with the Hidden Beks?" His voice positively drips with contempt when he says their name.

I'm about to grow impatient and decide that it's time to just kill everyone present, but it seems Bastila has beaten me to the punch. "She's loose!" says one of the guards, just before being knocked down.

I pull out my red lightsaber, and Carth brings out his blasters and joins the fray as well, as the race track quickly turns into a free-for-all. Most of the remaining racers flee from the site. Bastila raises her hand, and her lightsaber pulls free of Brejik's belt and into her hand. A yellow, double-bladed lightsaber, just like she was using in my vision.

"Brejik," I snarl at him. "You deserve to die for what you've done here. You tried to force this woman into slavery! And if you so much as laid a finger on her in the meantime to take advantage of your position, so help me, I will slice off your balls and force-feed them to you before I kill you!"

"Calm down!" Bastila says behind me. "He didn't do anything like that to me!"

"Fine, then I'll just kill him." I step in and cut off his head in one motion, his face forever frozen in terror.

Once the attackers in the immediate vicinity are all dead, Bastila says to me, "So what did you think you were trying to pull, coming here like this? You've ruined all of my plans!"

"Your plans?" I say, looking at her incredulously. "We came here to rescue you!"
"And it's good to see you're alright, Bastila," Carth says.

"Carth Onasi?" Bastila says. "I'm glad you survived, at least. Do you have a plan as to how to get off this planet and away from Darth Malak and his Sith?"

I turn away and search the bodies for valuables while she talks to Carth. "We've been busy trying to find you and save you," Carth says, a little indignantly.

"Well, I appreciate the effort," Bastila says. "But now we need to formulate a plan of escape. Now that I'm here, I can take command of the operation again."

"Whatever," I say, returning to where they're talking laden down with blasters, vibroblades, credits, and a rather fancy pair of bracers. "You and I need to talk. But not here. Let's get back to base. We'll be safe there for now."

Bastila opens her mouth to protest, but a look from Carth silences her. I lead the three of us back to the Hidden Bek's base to meet up with the others.

"Such a fiasco," Gadon is saying. "I can't believe Brejik would try to pull something like that."

"I did try to warn you," I tell him. "I didn't think for a minute that he'd just hand her over like that."

Gadon sighs. "You were right. Still, it's unfortunate. And this is the lady in question, I take it?"

"I am Bastila Shan of the Jedi Order. Who are you?"

"Please forgive her abruptness," I say smoothly. "She's still rather stressed over her recent captivity. Bastila, this is Gadon Thek, the leader of the Hidden Bek's, the swoop gang who helped us to rescue you. They're letting us use their base as a headquarters for the time being."

"I understand," Gadon says, nodding. "I'll be sure to have suitable quarters and a change of clothes prepared for you, my good lady Jedi."

Bastila seems a little taken aback, and just manages, "Um. Thank you."

We part ways for the moment to get cleaned up and eat some lunch, and I go to make another entry in my journal regarding Bastila's rescue and my recognition of her. She comes in while I'm writing, and I quickly lock the datapad down and put it away.

"You're right, we do need to talk," she says. "First off, what is your name?"

"Lexen Skywalker," I reply. "Or Lexen Chelsea. Whichever. Also, Stormseeker." I pause and look at her. "Don't you know who I am? Didn't you specifically request that I be brought on board the Endar Spire?"

"Just answer my questions," Bastila snaps.

Ah. Of course. She's trying to see how much I remember. "Very well," I say. "Ask, and I will answer."

"What planet are you from?" Bastila asks.

"I don't know," I say.

"How old are you?" she asks.
"I'm not sure," I reply. "Judging by my appearance, I'm probably somewhere between twenty-five and forty, but for all I know, I could be older than I look, too."

Bastila sighs. "So you have amnesia, it seems."

I give a nod. "I was hoping that you might be able to shed some light on things." I chuckle softly. "It's possible to fake not remembering things I remember, but it's a little harder to fake remembering things I don't remember."

"What do you remember?" she asks.

"Not much," I admit. "Bits and pieces. The occasional image without context. I know I was a Jedi at some point." I gesture vaguely to my lightsaber. "Probably even a Dark Jedi. I even fought you once, I think." I shrug. "No hard feelings."

"You're taking this awfully well," she says.

"Heh," I say. "It is what it is. It's hardly my place to judge you without knowing the circumstances. And I'll understand if you don't want to tell me everything. Just, tell you what. If you don't want to tell me something, just say so. Don't lie to me, please. And I won't lie to you, either."

"Very well," Bastila says. "Although, after seeing how angry and violent you were back at the race track, I'm surprised at how calm you are now."

"Violence has its place," I say. "But so does discussion. And this is a place for discussion, I think."

"You're right," she says, nodding. "So you don't remember serving with the Republic? Or growing up on Deralia?"

I shake my head. "None of that. The name 'Deralia' means nothing to me. I don't think I've ever even been there." I lean back on the couch with a heavy sigh. "I mostly remember a lot of very strange and unpleasant things. I don't understand them much at all. Nightmares, really. And in many cases, I'm not entirely certain if they're memories or visions of what may be to come."

"I see," Bastila says, frowning thoughtfully.

"Let me know if I have this right," I say. "We were fighting on the bridge of a ship. You had two other Jedi with you, wielding green and purple lightsabers. Someone fired upon the ship, and I collapsed. I don't remember anything after that... You saved me?"

Bastila nods distantly, staring at me uneasily. "That's... that's what happened, yes."

I lay on my side on the couch casually, propping my head on my shoulder. "The way I see it, I owe you my life."

"You..."

"We might have been enemies at the time," I say. "But you had the opportunity to kill me, and you did not. Not only that, but you seem to have gone out of your way to save my life instead. Why? Were you trying to redeem me or something?"

"We were under orders to capture you, not to kill you," Bastila says. "And the Jedi don't kill their prisoners."

I chuckle softly. "Be that as it may, I now owe you a debt, just as much as the Wookiee I rescued
from the slavers yesterday."

She stares at me uneasily. I've obviously caught her completely off-guard here. Whatever she might have been expecting of me, this wasn't it. "You don't have to--"

I raise a hand and cut her off. "I don't have to do anything," I point out. "That is my own choice."

"I'm surprised that you would seek redemption so readily," Bastila says.

"Redemption?" I say, shaking my head. "I'm not concerned about sides. I'm concerned about people."

"Well enough," Bastila says.

"I do have one question, if you're willing to answer, though," I say. "Who was I? I seem to have been the commander of at least a large ship. And if the Jedi wanted me captured, I must have been someone important. So who was I?" I pause for a moment, watching her face go through a number of interesting expressions. "You don't have to answer if you don't want to. But I'll probably figure it out sooner or later."

"You're right," Bastila says. "I should not keep it from you, especially given the state of your mind as it is. Your memories are already coming back on their own, and your mind appears to have rejected the false memories the Jedi Council tried to plant."

"They did what now?" I say, smirking. "I take it that's the bit about Deralia and the Republic and whatnot you mentioned? I guess my mind didn't like them overly much. I don't even remember boarding the Endar Spire."

Bastila nods, and takes a deep breath. "You were Darth Revan."

I stare at her blankly for a long moment. "... Who?" The name seems vaguely familiar, but that's it.

"The Dark Lord of the Sith," she explains. "Malak's former master. It was he who fired upon the ship and betrayed you."

I get the feeling that this should be some monumental revelation. But at this point, all I can muster is, "Oh."

"We were afraid that if you knew, you'd just go back to being a Sith Lord again," Bastila says.

"Well, I suppose I can understand that," I say with a shrug. "I won't hold that against you."

"I'm glad to hear that."

"The others should know, though," I say. "I don't fancy keeping secrets from my friends."

"Your friends?" Bastila says, raising an eyebrow.

"Carth, Mission, Zaalbar," I say. "I don't know Jass very well. But the other three? I'd trust them with my life."

"And what of me?" she asks.

"You as well," I say. "I trust you."

"You're... not what I expected of a Sith Lord, either," Bastila says.
I chuckle. "I'm not a Sith Lord anymore, remember?"

"I suppose not."

"And I suppose we're going to need to figure out what to do next, as well."

"Find a way to escape from Taris," Bastila says.

"After that," I say. "What are you planning on telling the Jedi Council about me?"

"I'm not even sure what to make of you," she replies. "Do you even remember how to use the Force?"

I shake my head. "I think I've been using it unconsciously, but nothing intentional."

"We might consider retraining you," Bastila says. "I fear we're going to need your help if we're going to stop Malak from conquering the galaxy and killing trillions of people in the process. Whether you want to help out of some sense of redemption, or out of revenge for Malak's betrayal."

I give a nod. "I'd like to know how to use the Force again. The knowledge will probably come back on its own eventually, I think. But if we can help jog it along, why wait?"

"I'll give you a quick lesson tonight, then," she says. "Just a simple meditation technique. That should help center your mind and calm your emotions."

"Very well."

Bastila isn't much of a teacher, I'm afraid, but the knowledge comes back to me easily, as if it had never left. All I needed was to be pointed in the right direction to start. I center myself and my mind, finding the calm eye in the storm of my emotions.

After dinner, I gather up Carth, Mission, and Zaalbar to speak with them. "There's something you guys need to know," I say.

"What is it, Lexen?" Mission asks.

"I've been talking to Bastila," I explain. "About who I am, who I was before my amnesia." I pause, making sure that they're all sitting down first. "I was Darth Revan."

"What?" Carth says, staring at me incredulously. "But they said Darth Revan was killed!"

"Apparently not," I say. "Captured, suffering from amnesia, and implanted with false memories which my mind subsequently rejected."

"This changes nothing," Zaalbar says. "Whatever you call yourself, you are still the man I swore a life debt to."

Carth frowns deeply, and says, "This would certainly explain some of your... darker behavior."

"Perhaps so," I say. "You can hate me for it if you like. I don't remember much of that life, but I'm not going to keep secrets from my friends."

Carth doesn't seem to be sure what to think of that. "I see."

Mission says, "Well, I'm still with you either way. You don't act much like any Dark Lord I've ever heard of. You're my friend."
I smile at her and pat her on the shoulder. "I'm glad to hear that."

Carth says, "I knew there was something up with you from the start. But this? Darth Malak bombed my homeworld, Telos, into oblivion and killed my entire family! What do you have to say about that?"

"That I'm not Darth Malak?" I reply, sighing. "I remember little, as I said, but I don't think I would have ordered such a thing, if it's any consolation to you. I'm hardly one to flinch at bloodshed, but destruction on that scale is pointless and wasteful."

Carth doesn't seem particularly mollified at my words. I look at the floor. Here I'd finally thought I'd earned his trust, at least a little bit, and he was starting to relax more around me, and now that's been shattered again. And all over things I don't even remember. There are times when I want to curse my own sense of honor.

I head back to my quarters to record all that I've learned today in my journal, meditate a bit, and go to sleep. It's not until this point that the magnitude of Bastila's revelation really starts to sink in. *I'm the Dark Lord of the Sith?* I'd thought I was just some random Dark Jedi, but this? I don't know what to think of this. Who am I, really?
My green lightsaber deflects another blaster bolt. The bodies of countless Mandalorians lie in my wake. I cut down another one, and stride toward their leader. No one else is left to stand in my path.

"Mandalore," I say to him in his own language. "Fight me."

The armored man pulls out a vibroblade to meet my lightsaber. Our blades clash again and again, thrust and parry, dodge and swipe. My heart pounds and my blood races in exhilaration. He's the best I've ever fought. I might live a thousand lifetimes without facing another warrior of his calibur.

Yet, he's still not a match for me. Perhaps his advancing years have slowed his reflexes and weakened his muscles. Perhaps a decade ago, I would not have stood a chance. As it is, I send his vibroblade flying and strike a vicious wound.

"Mandalore," I tell him as he lays dying. "You are one who is worthy of his title."

"And you of yours," he replies. "I had not thought to meet an outsider who could match us so thoroughly. And yet... you wear our mask, you fight like us, you use our tactics. You are as much Mandalorian as you are Jedi. I am honored to have been killed by you."

I chuckle softly. "I can handle that. Your people are honorable. But our own choices have put us on different sides of the battlefield."

"Had you joined us, we would have been unstoppable," he says.

"Perhaps, but for what?" I say. "Why did you do this? That's what I want to know. Was it all just for honor and glory, or was there something more?"

"There was... more," says Mandalore. "I was to have been the emissary of the Sith. They offered us to fight a worthy enemy in a battle that would be remembered forever. It was all any Mandalorian could hope for."

I sigh and look down at him as I realize the truth. "Mandalore, you were tricked. They were using the Force on your mind, twisting it with the Dark Side. They only sought to sow chaos and destruction, and to make certain that both the Republic and the Mandalorians were destroyed so as to be no longer a threat to them. They played us against one another, and we both fell for it."

Mandalore stares at me for a long moment before removing his mask, revealing the face of the Taung underneath, a reptilian face. "You are right," he says with a wheezy sigh. "I am a fool to have not seen it before."

"I'm sorry that it had to end this way," I say. "I would have been honored to fight at your side."

Mandalore chuckles softly. "There is no use in regrets. Take this mask, Revan. I hereby declare you to be a Mandalorian, and my successor by right of conquest. The fate of my people lies in your hands now, Mandalore. To rebuild or destroy as you see fit."

I take the mask from his dying hands, and swear an oath to the corpse, "I accept your charge, Mandalore. I swear I will rebuild the Mandalorians and lead them back to glory."

I wake, blinking up at the pale ceiling. What a strange dream. Not a nightmare. Not a failure. A victory, of sorts. And a terrible revelation. And... an oath. An oath that I now remember. An oath that
I am honor-bound to uphold at any cost.

I roll over with a grunt and go to write this down in my journal. This is important. By the Force, this is important. My hands are shaking a little as I enter the data.

"Awake already?" says a woman's voice, coming into the room. "What are you doing?"

"Journal," I reply, not looking up at Bastila. "Give me a moment, this is important."

Bastila takes a seat nearby and patiently waits for me to finish writing and lock up the journal again. "What were you writing about, if you don't mind me asking?"

"I had a dream, a memory." I say, then chuckle softly. "It's a good thing you told me that I'm Revan last night. I would have found out this morning anyway. I dreamed of my duel with Mandalore." I frown faintly. "I was still using a green lightsaber then."

"You hadn't joined the Sith yet at that point," Bastila says.

"The Mandalorians had been manipulated by the Sith into attacking the Republic," I say. "I was upset to find that out, and about how the Dark Side had been used to twist Mandalore's mind. Why did I ever join up with the Sith in the first place?" And why did I forsake the oath I had given Mandalore upon his death?

"Perhaps you went to investigate the Sith, and were manipulated and twisted to the Dark Side yourself," Bastila says quietly.

I let out a heavy sigh. "Maybe you're right." I shake my head. "I still wish I could remember more, even if part of me thinks that some things are best forgotten."

"Have you come up with any ideas for getting us off this planet?" Bastila says.

I give a thoughtful nod. "That dream gave me an idea, yeah," I say. "I'm going to go talk to someone who just might be able to help. I'll be back later. I should go alone on this one."

"Very well," Bastila says, nodding to me as I stand up and leave the Hidden Bek's base.

I head down the street to the cantina and glance about. The Dark Lord of the Sith walks into a cantina... I smirk faintly at myself. Most people would probably find themselves more disturbed by the idea. I just think it's kind of funny.

I'm in luck. I spot Canderous sitting over in a corner with his back to the wall, absently nursing a drink he doesn't seem to care too much for. I mull over just how to approach this for a few moments, then figure that a Mandalorian would probably appreciate a more direct approach. I go up to his table and take a seat across from him.

"Hello, Canderous," I say lightly. "What's up?"

"Lexen," Canderous says. "Or should I call you Stormseeker?"

I shrug. "Names. Titles. I've got a few more of them, if you're interested. Like 'Darth Revan'. And 'Mandalore'."

Canderous stares at me. I have successfully rendered him speechless.

"Rumors of my death have been greatly exaggerated," I say dryly.
"You..." he gapes for a moment, then closes his mouth and opens it again. "Are you serious?"

I proceed to describe to him, in detail, my duel with Mandalore, as well as repeating his last words to me, word-for-word in the original language.

"... That's proof enough for me," Canderous says, still clearly stunned. "I will follow you, Mandalore."

"There's something you must understand, though," I go on. "I have amnesia, you see. I don't remember much of my previous life. I've been getting it back little by little, in bits and pieces. Last night, that was what I dreamed of. I did not realize it when I spoke with you previously."

Canderous frowns. "Your skills are obviously intact, though. The way you handle a blade is unparalleled."

I give a nod. "To a point. Provided I remember I even have them, or where to start. I'm going to need a little tutoring on Force powers. What I don't understand is why I went off and joined the Sith rather than taking up the mantle of Mandalore... as I swore to him I would..." I sigh heavily. "I'm going to operate under the assumption that my mind got screwed with in some way shortly afterward, and will attempt to rectify that now. So I came to you."

Canderous nods. "I see. Well, I'm not going to hold that against you. And I'd certainly be happier to follow either Revan or Mandalore, than Davik Kang."

I chuckle softly. "I figured you might. I don't have much of an army at the moment, though. I don't even have a ship. I was also hoping you might have some idea on how to get us off this planet, too."

Canderous looks thoughtful for a moment. "Davik Kang has a ship, the Ebon Hawk. Fastest little ship in the galaxy, maybe. Done a fair few smuggling runs in its day. Locked down now because of the Sith blockade, though, but if anything could run that blockade, the Hawk could. Plus I hear your friend, Carth, won the big swoop race and shattered all the records in the process."

"Sounds like a great ship to steal," I say with a grin.

"Heh," Canderous says in amusement. "Indeed. Unfortunately, there's one hitch in that plan. We'd need the Sith launch codes or the automated defenses would tear us apart before we even got into space. I don't suppose they give freelancers or former Sith Lords access to the codes or the military base, by chance."

"Doubtful," I say. "Well, failing all else, there's always breaking and entering."

Canderous says, "You're the best warrior alive, Mandalore. If anyone could break into that base and steal those codes, you could."

"Slaughtering a few Sith sounds like fun," I comment lightly.

"You won't be able to just hack into the military base, though," Canderous says. "They've got it locked down tight. I've got an idea, though."

"Another one?" I say with a wry grin. "I'd have suggested high explosives, but given the Sith control of the planet, I doubt we could procure sufficient ordnance on short notice."

"I like the way you think, but no," Canderous says with a chuckle. "Davik commissioned a custom-built droid with high-level slicing capabilities. It could even be able to slice into the military base."
"So, we steal the droid from Davik, to steal the codes from the Sith, to steal the ship from Davik, and
steal ourselves away from the Sith?"

"Pretty much, yeah," Canderous says. "Although Davik doesn't actually have the droid yet. You'll
have to go pick it up at a shop in the Upper City. Just tell them Davik sent you to pick it up."

"Sounds like a plan to me," I say. "You coming along for the Sith slaughtering, or planning to just
wait for us here?"

"I hate to miss out on a good battle and the chance to fight by your side, but they know I work for
Davik and would crack down on him hard if I showed up there. We'll want to make sure their
attention stays diverted away from the Ebon Hawk for the time being. Once you get your hands on
those codes, though, I can get you into Davik's base."

"Understood," I say. "I'll tell you all about it when we get back, then. You'll get plenty more chances
in the future. Meet you back here later?" I flash him a grin and head out of the cantina, hoping that
no one overheard us who might actually care.

I return to the Hidden Beks base and gather up my little crew. Bastila's going to need a disguise, I
think. The rest of us shouldn't be a problem. It's a good thing Darth Revan always wore a mask. If
anyone were inclined to recognize me for that, they would have noticed and said something by now.

"I've got a way to get us off the planet," I tell them. "It's going to be dangerous, though. I'm going to
need to get into the Sith military base and steal their launch codes. And then steal a ship from Davik
Kang."

"Are you insane?" says Gadon Thek, looking over to my meeting. "You're going to steal the Ebon
Hawk?"

"It's a smuggler ship," I comment dryly. "I'm sure it's used to being stolen by now."

He stares at me. I think I'm getting used to this speechless effect I tend to have on people.

"Anyway," I say. "We're going to need to get you guys somewhere we can pick you up easily
enough. Perhaps hole up back at our original abandoned apartment to wait for us."

"Wait a minute," Carth says. "Who do you mean 'we'?"

"Canderous and I," I reply. "He'll get me into Davik's base once I've got my hands on those launch
codes."

"The Mandalorian?" Carth says, raising an eyebrow. "How did you get him to help?"

"Bastila can explain when I'm gone," I say. "Hey, Gadon! Can you fix up a disguise for Bastila?
We're going to need to get her past the Sith guards into the Upper City."

"Nothing a helmet shouldn't fix," Gadon says. "We've got some all-concealing armor laying around
here somewhere."

Once Bastila gets suited up, we head on out to the lift. The guard on duty glances over my papers
and lets us pass without question.

I bring my team back to the abandoned apartment. "Carth, Jass, I'd like you to stay here and guard
Bastila," I say. "Zaalbar, Mission, you're with me."
Bastila begins, "But--"

"If something happens to me in that military base, you're going to need to get out of here yourself," I say. "We don't want both of us to get captured."

"... You have a point," Bastila admits reluctantly.

She might have been put in command of this mission, but it doesn't seem like she has much real experience with dealing with people or command situations. Her Battle Meditation skill isn't real command. Even Carth didn't really seem thrilled at the idea of following her.

We head over to the shop Canderous mentioned. "You have a droid for Davik Kang?" I say. "I'm here to pick it up."

"Oh, finally he sends someone to get it," the Twi'lek shopkeeper says. "It was ready days ago. I was wondering how long it would be sitting around in my shop. You have the five thousand credits we agreed upon?"

Canderous didn't say anything about credits, but I'm not one to cheat an honest merchant, even if it is a tad pricey. "Here you go," I say, handing over the money. "This little droid better be worth it, though."

"Davik won't be disappointed!" she promises.

No, he certainly won't. T3-M4 whirs and rolls along after me as we head toward the military base. It doesn't look like much. Just a standard utility droid, boxy, angular, and clunky. But if it'll get the job done, I can't complain. Plus, it has two mounts for blasters, which I take a moment to install.

"So we're really going to do this, huh?" Mission says quietly, staring at the giant metal doors. The little droid approaches the entrance and gets to work on slicing through the codes.

"Be careful in there, Mission," I say. "Stay behind me and Zaalbar, and try not to get shot."

"You're always so worried about me," Mission says. "I can handle myself. If you were so worried, why didn't you take Carth along instead?"

"Because I'm not sure that after the recent revelations, that Carth will be fully trusting me for a while," I reply. "I'd rather have someone I can trust at my back in a situation like this."

"Well, I'm glad to know you can trust me," Mission says, beaming.

T3-M4 beeps, and the large doors open with a clang.

"Good job, T3," I say. "Let's go."

We head inside. The receptionist looks up in alarm and says, "Hey. You aren't authorized to be here. What are you doing here?"

"Are you really going to try and stop me?" I say.

"I'll sound the alarm," she warns.

"Do you think a Dark Jedi would have qualms about killing you if you do? You didn't see us. Run along now and I will spare you."

She thinks about that for a moment. "I think I have something very important to be doing somewhere
else right now. It's unfortunate that I did not notice this break-in." She flees from the room.

"Smart woman," I mutter, and continue on. No doubt alarms will be going off soon enough, but for now we have the run of the base.

Especially given the fact that I'm not holding back on killing any armed Sith I see. I cut a swath through them with my red lightsaber, letting the thrill of the fight and the kill power my swings. Innocent? These people chose the wrong line of work to be considered innocent. There's always a choice, and for one reason or another, everyone here chose to be here.

"I should be able to retrieve the codes from inside this room," I say. "Watch this door and make sure no Sith wander in to bother me while I'm searching the room."

Zaalbar and Mission nod to me and take up guarding positions, and T3 and I continue on inside. The only occupant is a man in black robes meditating in the center of the room. He looks up and stands, readying a vibroblade.

"A Dark Jedi, here?" he says. "My master will surely award me with my own lightsaber when I kill you!"

I look at him incredulously. "Are you really that stupid?"

He considers my words for a moment, and then says, "It is the way of the Sith. Kill or be killed!"

I sigh. "And that is why the Sith are stupid. Look, if you really want to die, I'll be more than happy to oblige. I just felt like pointing out your amazing stupidity in the process. I'm so far above your level that you're a child flailing your hands about trying to catch a spaceship in orbit. I could kill you with my hands tied behind my back, blindfolded, with my teeth!"

He thinks about that for a few moments more. "Well, so be it, then. Die!"

"Idiot," I growl, letting my rage flow through me. Anger at his stupidity. Anger at him not listening to my warnings. Anger at the wastefulness of the Sith. Anger at the pure foolishness of this all.

He's slightly better than I had given him credit for, but he's still nowhere nearly a match for me. I disarm him in moments, literally, as his right arm goes flying off to one wall. I don't hold back as I slice through his body again and again. Unnecessary violence. But it satisfies my bloodlust.

As I expected, I'm able to access the launch codes from this control room. But as I'm doing so, there's a call on the comm. A holographic image of a man with a metal jaw pops up. Malak. Damn it. He knows I'm here!

"Lexen Chelseer," he drawls mechanically. "I have been eager to speak with you since I learned of your presence on Taris."

Play ignorant. Maybe he doesn't know who I really am. Even though I fear he knows me better than I know myself. "Who are you?" I ask.

He pauses for a moment, consideringly. "I am Darth Malak. The Dark Lord of the Sith. I will forgive your ignorance, this once."

"Lord Malak," I say, bowing my head slightly. "It is an honor to speak with one of so high a stature as you." Or one so tall, at any rate. I have a feeling he does know my true identity, but he also seems to know that I have had memory problems. It would not surprise me to know that Revan had them as well.
"I hear you have been quite busy these past few days," Malak says. "Have you captured Bastila Shan yet?"

"She isn't with me," I reply.

"Let me ask you another way, then. Do you know where Bastila Shan is? And do not try to evade the question."

Yeah, that settles it. He does know me too well. I clench my jaw for a moment. "I do," I tell him.

"Bring her to me," he says.

"I won't do that," I say.

"You will acknowledge me as the Dark Lord of the Sith!"

"Well, that is your title," I say. He can have it. I don't really care. I don't think I particularly want it anymore, anyway.

"You will obey me," Malak says. "You know where Bastila is. Bring her to me. Now."

"I will not," I say coldly.

"If you do not, I will do to Taris what I did to Telos," Malak says.

Telos. That was Carth's homeworld. Is Malak insane? Does he really mean to bomb this planet into slag just because he can't find one Jedi? I don't think he's bluffing.

"It's not my place to surrender Bastila to you," I say. "But I can surrender myself in her stead. Will that be acceptable?"

Malak considers this for a few moments. "You will join me? You will serve me?"

I clench my fists in restrained anger. "If I must."

"Very well," Malak says. "You will board a shuttle at the back of the military base, and you will be brought on board my ship immediately."

"As you wish," I say. "My lord."

Sufficiently satisfied, Malak cuts the transmission. I sigh. This is bad.

"Lexen?" Mission says. "Did something happen? You look fierce."

"There's something I need to do," I say darkly. I pull out a datapad and write down a couple quick messages. "Get these to Carth and Canderous." The message for Canderous is encrypted with a password in Mandalorian, but it's the only place where I state the rendezvous point on Dantooine. I don't want Malak knowing where they're going. I don't even know if I'll be able to make the rendezvous myself.

"Where are you going?" Zaalbar says.

"Sorry, Zaalbar," I say. "Look after Mission. Get her out of here safely. I'll meet up with you when I can."

I part ways with them once I make sure they can get out of the military base on their own, and head
back to the landing pad Malak directed me toward. If I'm lucky, I'll be able to kill him and take control of the Sith fleet again, reclaim my mantle of Dark Lord of the Sith and get them to follow me.

I don't think I'm that lucky.

I board the shuttle and allow myself to be taken up to Malak's ship. Although I'm not restrained in any way, I don't think of myself in any way but as a prisoner. And to make matters worse, I can't be sure Malak won't still bomb Taris anyway. I must say, this is probably the dumbest plan I've come up with in quite a while. Too much is left to chance.

"So you are here, Stormseeker," Malak says, turning to face me. I crane my neck to look up at him. I'd forgotten just how tall this asshole is.

"Lord Malak," I say, giving a bow slight enough to be almost an insult.

"You will kneel before me," Malak says. "And you will swear your loyalty to me. Then I will permit you to live."

I clench my fists. There's no way he was fooled by my words that I would serve him if I must. I don't believe in 'must'. There are always choices. "No, Malak," I say. "I will do no such thing. Before these witnesses, I, Darth Revan, hereby challenge you for the title of Dark Lord of the Sith. Since you were too much of a coward to dare to face me before."

The officers around the bridge gape, and Malak seems both amused and angry. "So, you do remember after all."

I pull out my lightsaber. "Fight me."

"Captain," Malak says, half-turning to one of the officers on deck. "Commence bombardment of the surface now."

"But--" the man begins.

"Do it! I gave you an order!"

"Yes, milord," the captain stutters. Before I can stop them, they begin bombing the planet's surface.

I snarl in a rage. "Malak. You will pay for every crime you've committed."

I strike at him in fury. Maybe my friends will still manage to escape, if they're quick. That's my only hope, at this point. My only hope.
"Milord," says the captain. "We've detected a small ship leaving the planet's surface. It has the correct launch codes, but it appears to be a smuggler vessel. The Ebon Hawk."

"Destroy it," Malak says. "No one leaves the planet alive."

"Yes, milord. Dispatching fighter wings to intercept."

Malak looks at me as he beats back my attacks. "Bastila is on board, isn't she," he says. "Your friends are on board. You always were one to grow needlessly attached to things. It is your greatest weakness."

"I might have called you a friend at one point, you know," I growl. "A clear mistake on my part."

"The Ebon Hawk has been destroyed," the captain reports.

"Excellent," Malak says.


I don't even notice when he cuts me down like an animal.

I wake in a cold sweat. What a nightmare. Bad enough to dream of dying, but do I have to dream of my friends being killed and millions of innocents being needlessly slaughtered as well?

Nonetheless, I reach for my journal to write down every detail I can remember.

Bastila enters the room. "What are you doing?" she says quietly.


Bastila takes a seat and waits patiently for several minutes as I finish writing everything down. The disastrous premonition of today, as well as the previous dream, of my duel with Mandalore. As I finish up, I let out a heavy sigh and lean back. I almost feel as though I hadn't even slept at all.

"What were you dreaming about?" Bastila asks. "If you don't mind telling me."

"I had two dreams," I say. "Both of them very important. A memory, and a premonition. The memory was of my duel with Mandalore. The premonition... terrible. Taris was bombed into slag, you were all killed attempting to escape, and I was slain in a duel with Malak. I think he intentionally murdered millions and killed my friends in front of me just to enrage me to the point where I lost control."

Bastila frowns deeply. "Anger is the path to the Dark Side."

I smirk faintly. "I think it's a little late for me to merely be concerned about the path to the Dark Side."

"Was there more to this premonition?" Bastila asks.

I nod. "I'll tell you everything. Maybe together we can come up with a plan to avoid this fate."

I describe what happened, leaving out nothing important.
"I've never heard of a premonition of this sort being so detailed or extensive before," Bastila says. "You must have a very unique talent where this is concerned. Still, if this is accurate, we can use this to our advantage. Why would you surrender yourself to Malak and go up to meet him alone, I wonder?"

"I didn't want to put you in harm's way," I say with a sigh. "I was trying to protect everyone, and failed at that spectacularly, it seems."

"You might have done better if the rest of us had been with you," Bastila says. "Malak wants to get his hands on me. Perhaps we should give him what he wants."

"You can't be serious," I say. "That's too dangerous."

"Think about it," Bastila says. "Certainly, fighting him is dangerous, but fighting him alone is worse. He's afraid of you. You might have beaten him if you hadn't been distracted with concern for us."

"I can't believe you're even suggesting something like this," I say, shaking my head. "This is a terrible idea. I won't allow you to put yourself in harm's way like this."

"In case you've forgotten, I am in command of this mission," Bastila snaps. "And this is my decision to make."

I sigh. Stubborn, foolish girl. No use arguing. "Fine," I say. "I will obey. But remind me if we survive this to give you some pointers on your leadership skills. There are better ways to convince someone to do something than asserting your authority like a bludgeon." Insulted, she starts to protest, and I raise my hand and cut her off. "I mean no offense. It's a skill like any other, and one can't be expected to be an expert at everything right away. I'd just like to help if I can."

I head out of the Hidden Beks base and go down to the cantina. Canderous is sitting right where I expect to find him.

I approach and pull him aside. "We need to talk. In private."

"Alright..." Canderous says, following me in puzzlement as I take him to a location less likely to invite eavesdroppers. I can't be certain that having our conversation overheard contributed to the disaster in my premonition, but I'm not taking the chance.

Without wasting anymore time, I reveal my identity to him and describe my battle with Mandalore.

"I believe you," Canderous says. "I will follow you, Mandalore."

"Good," I say. "Now, I want you to help me steal the Ebon Hawk."

Canderous chuckles softly. "You don't ask for much, do you. I can get you into Davik's base, but we won't get very far without the Sith launch codes."

"I'll worry about the codes," I say. "I've got a plan. It's a terrible one, but I've got a plan." I like this plan even less than surrendering myself to Malak, but it seems like the best chance we have at the moment. I explain to Canderous exactly what we have in mind.

"Risky," Canderous says. "Well, we might just find out how many Sith we can take out before they bring us down. But it'll be worth it for the chance to fight at your side."

After Canderous goes off to make some arrangements, I head over to a terminal in the cantina. I try to send a message off to Malak, identifying myself as Lexen Chelseer. After a few minutes, his
"Ah, Lexen Chelseer," Darth Malak says. "I have been meaning to speak with you ever since your presence on Taris came to my attention."

"Lord Malak," I say, giving a bow. "I have news that will surely please you. I have Bastila Shan in my custody right now. Give me the launch codes and I will bring her up to you in short order."

"You have?" Malak says with a touch of surprise. "You will bring her to me?"

"I just said that," I say. "It is an honor to serve you, my lord. I assume I will be appropriately rewarded for my service?"

I was afraid that he would think it's a trick, but this seems to make him relax a bit. Make him think I don't remember anything.

"Oh, yes," Darth Malak says. "You will be quite well rewarded. I might even make you my apprentice."

"Really, my lord?" I say, putting on a mask of excitement. "I would be honored to be thought of so highly by one of your stature."

"I'm sending you the launch codes now," Malak says.

One Dark Lord neatly tricked.

I receive the launch codes. I look them over. I memorize them. Just in case.

I lead the others up top for a pick-up, and then meet up with Canderous in the Lower City again.

"The others are in position," I say. "Let's go steal that ship."

Canderous nods. "I've told Davik that I saw you as a candidate for working for the Exchange after being impressed by your combat skills."

"Alright," I say. "Lead the way."

"He'll probably want to do a thorough background check on you, giving us time to make a break for the Hawk."

I snort softly. "I'd be amused to see what a background check might actually bring up on me."

We come before Davik Kang, a man with a smile to make me want to punch out his teeth.

"Canderous, what's this? You generally work alone. It's not like you to take on a partner. And a Dark Jedi?"

"That's exactly why," Canderous says. "He's the best fighter I've seen in a long time. You heard about how he took down Bendak Starkiller in that death match."

"And the Sith don't exactly do anything for me," I add dryly.

Davik chuckles softly. "Well, working for the Exchange could be much more profitable for one of your calibur. Although this blockade is putting a bit of a damper on business of late. I don't suppose your former Sith masters gave you their launch codes by chance? I could give you a nice, big bonus right off the bat if you've got those."

"I was only working for them as a freelance mercenary," I reply, sidestepping the question. "I was
lucky they even let me travel through the city."

"Pity," Davik says. "Well, make yourself comfortable in the guest wing while I run some background checks on you. I'm sure everything will check out, but you can never be too sure."


Canderous leads me off toward the guest quarters. "Well, that went well enough," Canderous says. "Now for the tough part," I say. "Actually swiping that bird of his."

The Ebon Hawk has its own codes that we will need in order to get it out of lockdown. Davik isn't stupid enough to let just anyone show up and walk off with his ship, after all. A quick search of Davik's base reveals a torture room with the former pilot of the Ebon Hawk, who, after Davik's treatment of him, is all too happy to give the codes to us in exchange for his freedom.

Davik, however, is waiting for us in the hangar, with guards. "I knew there was something fishy about this. Why, Canderous? I've always been good on my payments. But this is one mistake you won't live to regret."

"Thank you, Davik," I say lightly. "For giving me the excuse and opportunity to kill you."

I whip out my red lightsaber and charge in. I block blaster bolts left and right, and Canderous backs me up with his own blaster. We're heavily outnumbered, but I neither notice nor care. With all I've heard of Davik, he's earned my raw hate. Murdering people who can't make their debts and enslaving their family members? Yeah, I've rage enough for this.

I cut a bloody swath through Davik's guards. I step up to him and slice off his head in one swift motion.

"One less asshole in the galaxy," I mutter, putting away my lightsaber and turning for the ship.

"Damn," Canderous says. "And I thought watching you fight Bendak was impressive. You didn't even seem to notice that you were going up against twenty guys. Did you even notice Calo Nord was among them?"

"Who?" I say, looking at him blankly.

Canderous snickers softly. "Well, no one important, now."

We board the ship and take off, and head over to collect the others topside. "Take the controls, Carth," I say. Canderous is a better pilot than me, but Carth's still the best among us.

"Alright," Carth says, taking over the pilot's seat.

Then I notice that he's set a course of the system and plotting the jump to hyperspace. "What are you doing?" I say. "We're supposed to be meeting up with Malak's ship!"

"Yeah, well," Carth says. "I'm not going to do that. That's crazy. This is our best chance to get out of here."

"You're violating a direct order, Carth Onasi," Bastila says.

"You can write me up on it later," Carth says. "We're leaving."

Actually, I don't really mind it that much. I didn't lie to Malak outright, but if Carth is going to take
matters into his own hands, I'm not going to try too hard to dissuade him. I suppose I could kill him and order Canderous to take the controls, but that would be foolish and wasteful, never mind dangerous.

"Fighters, incoming," Carth announces. "Looks like Malak's realized we're not coming in to play."

"Canderous!" I say.

"I'm on it," Canderous says, going to man the ship's guns.

"Malak's on the comm," Carth says.

"I'll bet," I say. "Patch him through."

Malak's image appears. "You! I knew you would try to betray me. You're not getting away now."

"Don't look at me," I say with a shrug. "My pilot is committing insubordination. If I were you, I'd probably Force-choke him until we crashed into the surface again. That seems like the sort of thing you'd do. Thankfully, I'm not you."

Malak growls mechanically in rage at me. Outside the ship, it appears that Canderous is making short work of the enemy fighters. "Don't be so smug, Revan," Malak says. "You're not getting away from me that easily." Malak's image vanishes as he cuts off the transmission.

"We've got a problem," Carth says. "We're caught in a tractor beam."

"Shit," I mutter. "So much for insubordination. I guess we'll be having to face Malak now after all."

"Wait, you were hoping I'd get us away from here?" Carth says.

I nod. "When I say I'll do something, I do it. Malak wouldn't have listened unless I told him outright that I would bring him Bastila. And I wouldn't tell him that if I didn't intend to do so. But I can't control your choices, only my own."

"I've never heard of a Dark Lord that wouldn't lie to people," Carth says.

I smirk faintly. "I'm a strange man, alright?"

This is going to be some fight. We ready our weapons as the tractor beam brings us in. We're not willing to surrender this easily today.


"That bastard," Carth snarls.

The tractor beam sets us down in a docking bay and we find ourselves locked in. Blades and blasters in hand, we head down the boarding ramp. We're surrounded by Sith. No help to it now. We fight. I let rage guide my lightsaber and cut down every Sith that comes close to me.

And then Malak appears before me, lightsaber in hand. "Did your rage blind you to the fact that your friends are dead, Revan?"

"What?" I say, and look to the floor beside him. I see Mission... Mission's body, blue and red, cut apart like a piece of meat. "You... fucking... bastard! You will pay!"

I throw myself at him in a furious rage. But I have no hope of winning now. All that matters is blood.
I wake with a gasp. *Fuck.* These nightmares are getting worse and worse. Mission, oh Force, *Mission*...


I pull out my journal and start to write with shaking hands. The door opens. "Give me a minute, Bastila," I say without even looking.

"Alright..." Bastila says with some puzzlement, sitting down to wait patiently for me to finish what I'm doing.

"Alright..." Bastila says with some puzzlement, sitting down to wait patiently for me to finish what I'm doing.

I finish what I'm writing and flop down on the couch with a sigh. "Sorry, just wanted to get that written down while it was still fresh. I'm not sure I want to think about it or look at it now, but I'm going to have to."

"What is it?" Bastila says.

"I had some very disturbing dreams last night," I say. "The last one ended with me staring at Mission's bloody *corpse* at Malak's feet. Right before I threw myself at him in a blind rage and got myself killed." I hold up my hand. "And don't bother lecturing me about anger and the Dark Side. I know. *Fuck,* I *know.*"

"Are these the premonitions you mentioned?" Bastila asks.

I give a nod. "I had two different premonitions of what might happen today. Both of them ending disarmingly."

"Two different ones?" Bastila says, frowning. "The future is never certain, but it does seem strange that you'd get different visions like that."

"And in both of them, I wound up killed because Malak punched my berserk buttons." I sigh. "If the Force is trying to tell me that I need to learn to control my anger, it could do so in a less disturbing way."

"Was there anything else?" Bastila asks.

I give a wry grin. "Well, the good news is that I know a way off the planet. And I might just be able to avoid drawing Malak's attention in the meantime, as well."

"You certainly brightened up quickly," Bastila says.

"Well, what should I do?" I say with a smirk. "Sit around moping about potential disasters until the opportunity to avoid them has passed and they're upon me? I can still stop these futures from coming to pass, and I'm going to do so, right now." I stand up. "I'll be back in a bit. I'm heading down to the cantina to talk to someone."

Sure enough, Canderous is right where I expect him to be. He glances up at me with a touch of surprise and a raised eyebrow as I approach and pull him aside.

"Canderous, let's talk," I say. "In private."
"Lexen? What is it?" Canderous says as we find a nice, quiet side room where we won't as readily be overheard.

"I'm actually Darth Revan," I say. "And I also happen to be Mandalore, apparently. Let me explain." I describe the memory that had arisen in my mind last night, from a dream within a dream within a dream, sparing no detail.

"You... really are, aren't you," Canderous says, staring at me wide-eyed. "I'll follow you, Mandalore."

"For starters, I want you to help me steal the Ebon Hawk," I say.

"Well, you make a good choice in ships to steal," Canderous says with a wry grin. "I can get you into Davik's base, but we won't get very far without the Sith launch codes."

"I have the launch codes," I say. Considering how accurate and detailed my premonition dreams have been, I'm not going to doubt that they're correct.

Canderous raises an eyebrow. "How did you pull that off?"

"Long story," I say. "I'll tell you later."

Canderous chuckles. "I look forward to hearing it. I'll see about making arrangements to get you into Davik's base. I'll meet you back here in two hours."

"Alright," I say.

I return to the Hidden Beks base to collect the others and smuggle them up topside for a pick-up, tersely explaining the plan to them. I don't bother trying to explain how I got the launch codes to them just yet, either. Especially given that "the Force told me" sounds pretty lame. Along the way, I stop by the droid shop to buy T3-M4, on a whim. A utility droid might come in handy if I'm going to have a (slightly stolen) ship.

I leave the droid with the others and return to the Lower City cantina to meet up with Canderous. "You told Davik that I'm interested in working for the Exchange?"

Canderous nods. "Exactly. I'll show you the way."

We head in and speak with Davik briefly, who sends us off to the guest wing to wait for the background check. I stretch and flop down in the guest quarters with a sigh.

"Not going to go get the ship yet?" Canderous says.

"Davik's probably just going to be standing around in the hangar waiting for us to show up," I comment. "Let him get bored waiting. Background checks, my foot. He just wants to see if I'll try anything."

Canderous chuckles in amusement. "You might have a point there, Mandalore."

"Besides, I've had one hell of a day, of sorts, and I could use a breather. I feel like I haven't slept in at least three days."

"That bad, huh?" Canderous says. "What's the problem?"

"Force premonitions," I explain. "I feel like I've just done this day three times now. And I'm kind of hoping that this isn't just another premonition or something so I can get this over with. I'll be glad to
get off of this damned planet."

"Those must be some premonitions," Canderous says with a smirk. "I'm afraid I don't know much about this Force business."

"Neither do I, to be honest," I reply with a chuckle. "I didn't mention that I have amnesia, did I? All I remember is bits and pieces, skills I don't remember learning. But it's coming back to me. That memory I told you about? That came back to me in a dream last night. Just as vivid and clear as if it happened yesterday."

"So you didn't remember that when I first spoke with you?"

"Exactly," I say. "I didn't even know who I was at the time. But considering the way things went down, I couldn't very well pretend it never happened. I don't swear oaths lightly." I snort softly. "And to make matters worse, I don't even remember where I left the damned mask."

Canderous frowns. "How much do you remember?"

"Of relevance? That one scene, out of context," I say. "I don't know what I did afterward. I don't know why I went and joined up with the Sith instead of rebuilding the Mandalorian clans as I swore to. I'm rather annoyed about the entire matter. Why? I don't understand why I did these things that history says I did. There was the suggestion that I went off to investigate the Sith and was manipulated by them myself..." I sigh. "I really don't like that idea."

"You're still the greatest warrior of the age," Canderous says. "If your match with Bendak was any indication, your skills haven't dulled in the least."

I sigh. "I even feel as though I've had this conversation before," I say, rubbing my temples. "It's enough to give a man a headache."

"There's times that I'm glad I'm not a Jedi," Canderous says. "We could head down the hallway and get a massage if you like."

"That sounds really good about now," I say.

Canderous leads me out down the hall to another room, and my heart sinks when I realize it's the slave quarters. Scantily clad women, and a few men, just waiting around to serve people's 'needs'.

"Canderous," I say, pulling his arm and dragging him out of the room again.

"What is it, Mandalore?"

"I don't like slavery," I say flatly.

"Ah," Canderous says. "I'm sorry. I didn't realize."

"Don't worry about it," I say, waving my hand dismissively. "But it's just as well. We're taking them with us. Are there any other slaves on the premises, or are they all kept here?"

"They should all be here," Canderous says. "They're not allowed to leave the slave quarters."

"I think we've waited around long enough," I say. "Let's go kill something."

Canderous chuckles in amusement.

"What's so funny?" I say, smirking at him.
"The fact that you can hardly rest for five minutes without wanting to go kill something," Canderous says. "Are you sure you weren't raised a Mandalorian?"

I snicker softly, and reply, "Not a clue. Amnesia, remember?"

"Right," Canderous says. "I think I'll just assume so until proven otherwise, and then be really confused if you turn out to have been a farmer from Dantooine or something."

We head on out of the guest quarters, weapons drawn, and proceed to kill any of Davik's guards that we run across. Enough subtlety. Davik's a despicable man who deserves to die.

And he's still waiting for us in the hangar when we get there, too. I don't even bother listening to what he has to say. I just cut a path with my red lightsaber and lop off his head. And I probably nailed Calo Nord in the process, too, whoever that was.

"We're going to need the ship's lockdown codes, too," Canderous says.

"Yeah, I know," I say. "The former pilot's being held in the torture room. He'll hand them over if we let him go."

"Another Force premonition?" Canderous says.

"They were quite detailed and vivid. But hey, they gave me the Sith launch codes, too, at least."

We go release the pilot and get the lockdown codes from him, and then return to the slave quarters. The slaves are rather confused and obviously have no idea about the fighting going on outside.

"You're coming with us," I say.

"But... we're not allowed to leave the slave quarters," says a female Twi'lek. "We'll be punished severely if we're caught outside."

"Your former master is dead," I say. "You're free now, and we're offering you a ticket out of here."

The former slaves seem terrified at the news. How long have they been slaves, I wonder? It's obviously been a long time since they've been outside.

"Please come with me," I say gently. "You'll be safe. I'll protect you. I promise."

They seem to relax a bit at my reassurances, and follow me and Canderous back to the Ebon Hawk. We get them on board, and Canderous takes the controls to fly us over to the pre-arranged pick-up location.

"Where'd the three Twi'leks come from?" Carth wonders as he climbs aboard and takes over the controls.

"They were slaves in Davik's base," I explain. "I decided to spring them. Carth, can you make the calculations for a hyperspace jump before we get into orbit?"

"I can do most of it from here, yeah," Carth says. "Why?"

"I want to give the Sith as little time as possible to react," I say. "Get ready, and then send the launch codes and get into orbit as far from Malak's ship as possible, then jump to hyperspace as quick as we can. Our destination of Dantooine."

"Good plan," Carth says.
Carth finishes the calculations, and I punch in the launch code. I about hold my breath as we fly into orbit, and I don't relax until the ship makes the jump and we're clear of the system.

"Good work, everyone," I say, letting out a heavy sigh of relief. "Now if you'll excuse me... I'm going to take a nap."
Chapter Summary

The dream in this chapter is from the Dragon Age universe.

The armored warrior pursues me relentlessly. I'm cornered in the storeroom of the castle. There's nowhere left to go.

"Surrender, apostate," he says, pointing his sword at me.

"Why, so you can drag me back to the Tower in chains?" I reply. "I'd sooner die than go back to that prison."

"I can happily oblige." He lifts his sword, ready to strike true.

Time seems to slow as dark whispers echo in my ears. I could still kill him. He has drained me of my power, but there are other sources of power that he can't touch. The power of life, the power of blood, the power of darkness.

Consumed by rage, I lift my hands, and before I can react, dark power slams into my enemy. Drops of blood swirl around me, and I look down at him in a haze of fury.

"Maleficar," he snarls. "Accursed demon, begone from this world!"

Even augmented by these dark, forbidden powers, I still can't hurt him. Damnable templars, how I hate them. How I despise them. How I would dearly love to destroy this stinging insect before me.

But despite my best efforts, his sword breaks through my defenses and pierces my chest.

I wake up, sweating. What is with these nightmares? In my dreams, I seem to die again and again, over and over. How can these be memories if I've died so many times? How can they be premonitions if I can't even imagine a future they might be from?

I'm so confused. With a sigh, I write down what I remember into my journal. If these are actually premonitions, I want to be prepared should I ever encounter these situations. Of course, they might just be normal dreams. My own messed up mind churning up morbid nightmares to plague my sleep. Why can't I just dream about meeting the Jedi Council without any pants, or something?

Absently, I skim over some of the previous entries in my journal, and find myself staring as I realize that I've already forgotten things that happened only a few days ago. I don't remember ever having been on a ship named the Endar Spire. I don't remember fighting anyone named Bendak Starkiller in a death match. Shit.

I can't lose what little I have as it is. I carefully re-read through my entire journal, and find that as I do so, my memories of the events recorded refresh themselves. I even remember the events I had forgotten.

I wonder if I'd kept any journals before, and if I had stashed them away somewhere safe to later retrieve them. It seems unlikely that I would just stumble upon such a thing. Knowing me, I'd
probably have put plenty of safeguards on them to make sure not just anyone could get into them, or likely even know that they contained journals.

"Master, would you like a massage?" says a female voice.

I jump in startlement, and realize that one of the former Twi'lek slaves is in my room, and I hadn't even noticed.

"I'm not your master," I reply. "You're a free woman now. You don't have to do anything you don't choose to do."

She seems confused. Poor girl. I guess she must have been a slave her entire life. She has no idea what to make of the concept of freedom. I sigh.

"What's your name?"

"Neeja," she replies.

"Neeja," I repeat. "My name is Lexen. If you'd feel more comfortable calling me by a title rather than my name, then call me Stormseeker."

"As you wish, Stormseeker," Neeja says.

"Now, Neeja," I say. "Have you been a slave your entire life?"

She nods slightly, looking to the floor. "I live to serve."

I sigh, shaking my head. "Neeja, what's your favorite food?"

"Um..." Neeja says quietly. "Collypods... I only ever tasted one, but it was the most delicious thing I've ever had... I was punished severely for it too, because I wasn't supposed to take it, or even be out of the slave quarters. I was just a little girl at the time."

I smile broadly. That's a good sign, I think. "Well, tell you what," I say. "How would you like it if I bought you all the collypods you want, when I get the chance?"

Neeja's eyes widen. "You would... do that?"

"Certainly," I say with a shrug. "But it wouldn't really help you. That would just be a gift. Take a seat," I say, gesturing to the bunk across from me.

Neeja sits down nervously. "I don't think I understand."

"Relax," I say. "You don't need to be nervous around me. I will never punish you for any reason, so say whatever you like, please." I sigh softly. "I'd like to try to help you break out of the slave mindset and teach you to be a free being. As a free being, you can do anything you choose to do. There is nothing in the universe more important than the power of choice. And there are always choices, even if it is merely a choice to do or do not, to accept or to refuse. And with every choice, there are consequences. We must make each choice, aware of the consequences that may come of such an action."

Neeja stares at me, listening intently, but I'm not sure how much of what I say she really understands.

"Do you have any questions, Neeja?" I say. "Is there anything you don't understand? Anything you'd like explained further?"
"Um..." Neeja says, hesitantly.

"Go ahead," I say, encouragingly.

"How do you know what the... consequences... might be?"

I smile softly. "Forethought, guessing, conjecture. Nothing is ever certain, but it may take a lifetime to comprehend how to weigh the consequences of one's choices. Up until this point, the only consequences you were probably concerned about would be what would get you punished, am I right?"

"Ah," she says. "Yes. I see. I think I understand."

"Good," I say, smiling. "Now, here's a choice before you. I'm probably going to be travelling a lot in the near future, but I won't mind having friends along for the journey. Would you like to continue travelling with me, or would you rather find your own way at our destination? I can help you find work if you like, so you could get money, live on your own... buy collypods, if you wanted."

Neeja thinks it over for a moment. "I would rather travel with you. You are very wise. There is much I could learn from you."

"Heh," I say with a grin. "I don't know if I'd flatter myself by calling myself wise, but then they say that only a fool thinks himself wise, I suppose." I give a shrug. "Alright. You're welcome to come along. It may be dangerous, but I'll try to keep you out of harm's way as much as possible."

"Thank you," Neeja says. "I'll try not to be any trouble and stay out of the way..."

I shake my head. "No need to do that. You're not confined to slave quarters anymore. I'll even give you an allowance so you can buy things you might want when we're in port. But feel free to come out and mingle with the crew, and don't hesitate to speak up if there's something on your mind."

I head out to grab something to eat. Mission and Zaalbar are currently hanging around the common area.

"Hey, Lexen," Mission says. "Care for a game of Pazaak?"

"No thanks," I reply. "I'm not much of a fan of Pazaak. Too much chance involved. I prefer games of strategy. Maybe later. I need to talk to Bastila a bit once I'm done eating."

Mission snorts softly. "Bastila keeps treating me like a kid. She's not even much older than I am!"

"Heh," I reply. "Everyone would always like to think they know better than the next person, whether they do or not. But you? I don't remember much of my childhood, but I hope that when I was your age, I was like you. You're competent, intelligent, clever and skilled."

"Well... thank you," Mission says, grinning.

"Anyway, regardless," I go on. "She may be a little rough, but she's a good person. I owe her my life, and more, I suspect."

After eating, I head to the cockpit, and find Carth and Bastila there. The atmosphere in the cockpit is quiet and calm, but I'm suspecting that Carth and Bastila would rather not talk to one another unless they have to. And also that if there were a conversation going on, it halted the minute Bastila sensed me approach. I don't really care, though.
"What's the ETA on Dantooine?" I ask.

"Three hours," Carth replies.

"I'm a little surprised that you decided on heading to Dantooine," Bastila says. "I would have thought that you might try to avoid the Jedi."

"Why would I do that?" I wonder, raising an eyebrow.

Bastila smirks. "Obviously, I seem to be more suspicious of you than necessary. What do you intend to tell them?"

"What do you?" I ask.

"I think there's more going on with you than they realize, or even suspect," Bastila says. "I will surely be reprimanded if they discover that I told you of your identity."

"I would have found out on my own anyway," I say. "Mandalore called me by that name in my dreams. And I'm not foolish enough to think I was just dreaming about Revan. Not when I saw everything through his eyes. How else could you explain that? Some bullshit involving a Force bond with you and echoes of Revan's memory due to your battle due to your battle with him or some other such nonsense?"

Bastila pauses thoughtfully for a moment. "You speak of Revan in the third person."

I sigh faintly. "Grammatically easier. Besides, what else am I to think? I barely remember being Revan. I've been called Lexen plenty of times in other dreams. I'm guessing that's my real name, anyway."

"The Council said your mind was too badly damaged to ever recover," Bastila says quietly. "That implanting you with false memories and a new personality was the best kindness they could give you. It's hardly your fault that the Force had other plans for you, apparently."

"I still don't like the idea of a former Dark Lord running loose," Carth mutters from the pilot's seat, not bothering to look over at us.

I sigh again. "I'm not a monster, Carth," I remind him gently.

Carth shakes his head and turns to examine me for a moment. "I don't know what to make of you, Revan. But I'll keep my damned mouth shut and go along with whatever you Jedi decide to do."

I give a nod, and turn back to Bastila. "What do you think the Jedi would do if they knew?"

Bastila thinks for a moment. "I'm not certain. They wouldn't kill you, certainly. Jedi don't kill their prisoners..."

"Might they try to make what they did to my mind stick this time?" I say darkly. "I don't think it would work, but I'm not sure that I want to risk it."

"They wouldn't!" Bastila says. "I don't think... Damn it, Revan, are you trying to make me doubt the wisdom of the Jedi Council?"

I snort softly. "I don't need to try to do that, and you don't need me for that, either. Look at things through your own eyes and draw your own conclusions."

Bastila sighs and rubs her temples. "If left to your own devices, what would you intend to do?"
"Me?" I say. "Well, recovering my memories is pretty high on my list of priorities. Beyond that, stopping Malak is of paramount importance. And I swore to take up the mantle of Mandalore and rebuild the Mandalorian clans."

"You what?" Carth says, almost falling out of his chair.

I smirk. "Why do you think I was able to convince Canderous to help us so easily?"

"You can't be serious!" Carth exclaims. "Those monsters butchered and enslaved millions of people!"

"And I don't like slavery," I say. "So if they tried that shit again, they wouldn't like my response."

"Still, you're a Jedi," Bastila says. "What would you do with an army of Mandalorians at your beck and call?"

I shrug faintly. "Stop Malak, perhaps?" I reply. "You asked me a question. You asked what I would intend to do if left to my own devices. I answered. That's my choice. If you choose to try to stop me or sway me to another path, that's your own choice."

Bastila sighs and puts her face in her hands. "Very well. I think we should tell the Jedi Council the truth. They would know if we tried to deceive them, regardless."

"I've considered that possibility," I say. "Of course, it's also possible to trick them. Force users aren't infallible." I look at her and cock my head. "Although I think I'd be better at that than you. I doubt you'd be able to deceive anyone." Bastila looks annoyed, and I put up a hand to cut off her retort. "No offense intended. I could teach you sometime, if you like."

"I won't be your Sith apprentice, Revan," Bastila snaps. "You won't turn me to the Dark Side."

I sigh and rub my head. "That was not my intent," I reply patiently. "And I have no desire to make you a Sith nor be one myself. Frankly, the Sith philosophy is, by and large, idiotic."

Bastila relaxes a little. "I'm sorry. I must seem paranoid to you."

"It's alright," I say dismissively. "I'd be wary in your position as well."

Bastila goes quiet again, her eyes flicking about in thought. I wonder what's going on in her head right now, but even if I remembered how to read her mind, I would not attempt to do so.

"I think we should tell the Jedi the truth," I say quietly. "Come what may."

"You..." Bastila begins, but is unable to form the sentence.

"Surprised?" I say, grinning crookedly.

"I-- well, yes," Bastila admits.

"If you like, we can tell them that my own dreams revealed my identity," I say. "It would be the truth, regardless."

Bastila gives a nod, relaxing a little. "Very well."

First, however, I have preparations to make. I make an addition to the information stored in my journal. I head back to locate the droid, T3-M4. This little droid will be my safeguard should the Jedi try anything. I carefully install a concealed copy of my journal into the droid's memory banks, with
instructions to provide them under specific circumstances. And for the droid to find me no matter what, should we become separated. The Jedi won't suspect anything of a simple utility droid.

Then I go to see Canderous, who is tending to the ship's armory. "Mandalore," he says respectfully as I enter.

"Canderous," I say, nodding to him. "We'll be arriving on Dantooine soon. I've something to ask of you." I pull out my journal and hand it to him. "After I've spoken with the Jedi, I want you to find me and bring this to me. They're too cowardly to kill me, but they might try messing with my mind again."

"Why would you put yourself in their hands in the first place?" Canderous says.

"I've made my choices," I say. "I'll face the consequences. I'm still a Jedi, more or less. Also... it's a test, on their part. I want to see what they'll do. I want to see if they're desperate enough to accept the help of someone like me." I grin wryly. "But I'd be a fool if I didn't prepare a contingency."

I don't tell him that I've given the same instructions to the droid. The Jedi might read his mind and find out about the secondary contingency. T3 is my ace in the hole, my final backup in case all else fails. If they'll stop Canderous from seeing me, that'll say something about them as well.

"I won't fail you, Mandalore," Canderous says, giving me a quick salute.

Soon, we arrive on Dantooine, and Bastila and I go to see the Jedi Masters. I tuck my red lightsaber away rather than wearing it on my belt openly. I can't deny that I'm nervous about the prospect. I don't know what they might do, and they might wind up doing something I hadn't planned on, like try to cut me off from the Force or something. They'll want me to return to the light, at best, but I have no intention of rejecting the dark, either. But despite the slight unease, I find no fear at the prospect of anything they might do to me. I'm calm. I'm in the eye of the storm.

"Thank you for speaking with us on such short notice, Masters," I tell them quietly.

"Not at all," says one of them, a Twi'lek whose name I have forgotten. "Thank you for coming to speak with us directly."

"I'm afraid some introductions are in order," I say. "I do not know your names."

"Ah, my apologies. I am Zhar. This is Vandar, and that is Vrook."

I nod to them, and reply with a crooked grin, "And I am Revan."

My talent for inducing speechlessness continues. Vrook says after a few moments, "I told you this was a bad idea."

"Be at ease, Master Vrook," Vandar says.

"I didn't come here to fight," I say. "And I still have amnesia. But my memories are starting to return, piece by piece."

"I see," Vrook says, glaring at me. "So why have you come here, then, Revan?"

"Malak needs to be stopped, one way or another," I say. "I don't think any of us can argue that. I'm offering my help."

"Why, so you can get revenge on your betraying Sith apprentice?" Vrook says. "Regardless, we do
not seek the aid of the Dark Side."

"Vrook," Master Vandar says calmly.

"I apologize if my offer seems out of line," I say diplomatically.

"If your intentions were true, you would be humbly begging forgiveness and asking us for help to guide you back to the light!" Vrook snaps at me.

I shake my head. "I cannot repent what I have forgotten. I cannot atone for what I do not remember. I cannot keep an oath that I no longer know I made."

"He has a point," Zhar says.

"However," I say, looking to the floor. "There is much anger and hate in me. I fear it will destroy me if I do not learn to control it. I no longer even remember how to use the Force, but I can still feel the Dark Side, ready and waiting for me."

"He is correct," Vandar says. "If we do not assist him, the Dark Side will take him again, regardless."

"And what if we should undertake to train him, and the Dark Lord should return?" Vrook says.

"Would you have us execute him, Master Vrook?" Vandar says. "He came to us freely and willingly, in good faith. If we turn him away now, the chances of him falling to the Dark Side again are that much greater."

My mind is not so weak as he seems to think it is. If I actively chose to reject the Dark Side, I could do so. But it's not so much a matter of temptation with me. It's a matter of choice. Why should I reject half of the Force, solely because the Jedi believe it is evil? But on the other hand, why should I reject the other half of the Force, solely because the Sith believe it is weak? Perhaps the best course lies in finding a balance.

But this is not for the Jedi Masters to know. Let them believe I am willing to fully return to the light. I will accept their teachings in fullness, and then when I am gone from here, I will find a new path to follow of my own. Perhaps I can even convince Bastila to become my apprentice after all. But not as a Sith, nor as a Jedi. I'll take a third option, even if I have to make it myself.

The Masters conferred, and agreed to take me on as a Padawan again. My identity as Revan would remain a secret known only to those who already knew and who I might choose to reveal myself to. To anyone else, I would merely be Lexen Skywalker.

Today, however, is nothing more than simple meditations. They want to make sure I can meditate and be calm, before anything else, before even considering trying to teach me much of anything. And my own meditation technique is working well. I can find the eye of the storm more easily with a little practice. Is this really what Bastila was trying to show me, or was this a technique I came up with on my own and since forgot about? I'm leaning toward the latter, honestly.

I'm heading out from my first short lesson since returning here, and to the quarters that had been assigned to me, when a Jedi woman stops me in the courtyard.

"Padawan!" she addresses me. "Why are you not wearing your robes? You disgrace our traditions!"

Self-righteous idiot much? I feel anger rise up in me at her daring to speak to me in such a way, but I remain in the eye of the storm, taking a deep breath and keeping myself focused. I've nothing against
wearing robes or anything, but it hadn't really occurred to me and the Masters hadn't exactly handed me robes and told me to put them on.

"Robes do not make a Jedi," I reply smoothly. "If you judge people on what they look like or how they dress, you will often find yourself making assumptions that may not be true."

The Jedi doesn't seem certain whether she should feel reprimanded or insulted at my words. She winds up merely being confused, and I take her momentary speechlessness for an opportunity to walk away. I don't really care to continue this confrontation.

I'm meditating alone in my quarters in the Jedi Enclave in the evening, when Canderous comes in. "How'd things go with the Jedi?" he asks.

"Better than I could have expected," I say, nodding to him to close the door behind him before going on. "I didn't think I'd be able to trick them so easily."

Canderous chuckles softly, and hands me my journal back. "Then I suppose I'll just return this to you, then. Just to be sure, you do remember who you are, right?"

"Lexen Chelseer Skywalker, the Stormseeker, Darth Revan, Mandalore. That about cover it?" I set the journal aside for the moment, but I'll be adding a thorough entry to it once Canderous leaves. "The safeguard was unnecessary this time, but who knows what the future might hold? My current memory spans a few days, and I've already started to forget entire days of those, if it weren't for keeping this journal."

Canderous frowns deeply. "I didn't realize it was quite so bad."

"Yeah, it's bad enough that I can't remember my past, I don't need to go forgetting my present, too." I sigh and lean back on my hands. "This journal's just a bandage to a badly hemorrhaging mind. I'm going to need to come up with a more permanent solution somehow."

"Well, if there's anything I can do for you, Mandalore, let me know," Canderous says.

I chuckle softly and say, "Perhaps there is. I'd like to hear some old war stories. I'm sure you've got plenty of them. Maybe that will help shake something loose."

"Heh," Canderous says. "You want to hear about planets getting wasted? Sure thing."

After listening to Canderous talk about assaulting a planet with Basilisk war droids, I mention to him the dream I had last night. Of a warrior with old-style medieval armor, who could apparently suppress Force powers.

"Have you ever heard of something like that, Canderous?" I ask, raising an eyebrow.

"Can't say that I have," he replies. "What kind of a backwater planet would still use armor like that? Though I've heard about things that could suppress Force powers, they're all rumor and legend, nothing substantial."

"Hmm," I say. "How about this one?" I pull out my journal and open up the entry to get the details, and describe to him what seems to be my earliest chronological memory, of being attacked by Sedder in a place with a weird purple sky.

"I don't know of any planet that matches that description," Canderous says. "Sorry. That might be the place you're originally from?"
"Possibly," I say. "I wish I could at least remember the name."

"That would make looking up information a lot easier, yeah," Canderous says.

"Well, thanks anyway," I say. "I didn't really expect much, though. We'll be staying on Dantooine for a bit. At least long enough for me to re-learn how to use the Force again. And then afterward... well, there's a lot to do and a whole galaxy out there, and I don't mean to be beholden to the Jedi for it."
"Malak, you fool!" I cry, the Dark Side bolstering my rage. "What in the Force do you think you're doing?"

"The Jedi hiding on Telos are no more, Master," Malak says with false obeisance.

"And the entire planet burns!" I snarl. "Wasteful! We're here to conquer, not destroy! We can't use ashes!"

"You've grown soft, Revan," Malak says. "You still care what happens to any of these worms?"

"I am not soft," I growl. "And you're doubly the fool if you think I am!"

In fury, I whip out my lightsaber and swing at him, but Malak manages to avoid a fatal blow, at the cost of his lower jaw. I rein in my anger carefully. I am the eye of the storm. I will not let my anger control me. Fury is my choice, not a compulsion.

I should kill him. He's too much of a loose cannon to trust. But he is still useful. And that I once considered him my friend still counts for something. It would be wasteful for me to kill him as well.

"Consider this your punishment for your actions, Malak," I say. "If you anger me in such a way again, I will not hold back."

I wake, anger burning through my veins anew. I should have killed him right then. I should have finished him. Just gone through with it and ended it.

No. There's no sense in reproaching myself over the past. What's done is done, and all I can do now is rectify my mistakes. My anger is a storm. I center myself in the eye of the storm, where it can rage all it likes but cannot harm me or control me.

I focus myself and go to write in my journal. As seems common, however, when trying to write in my journal, the door to my quarters opens. The annoyance at the interruption joins the storm swirling around me, but I firmly remain calm.

"Malak's destroyed Taris," Bastila's voice says.

"He what?" I snarl, whipping my head up to stare at her. That definitely shakes my calm.

"Bombed the surface into rubble just after we left," Bastila goes on.

"That bastard," I say, clenching my teeth. The storm around my mind burns to hurricane force. I must remain calm. Even if Malak were within reach to kill right now, my own blind rage would do me in.

"You're doing better at staying calm," Bastila says. "I'm impressed."

"Malak certainly does his best to test that," I say with a snort. "How's Mission doing? Has she learned the news yet?"

"Not yet," Bastila says. "I was hoping you could break it to her. She seems to trust you more for some reason."

"Maybe because I don't treat her like a little girl?" I say with a wry expression. "I'll talk to her."
Mission takes the news better than Bastila would have given her credit for. She's young, but she's also strong. She's had to be tough, growing up as she did.

I take my morning lessons. My Jedi instructors are pleased with my progress and improving control. It's still not perfect, though. I have the feeling that I had not even perfected the technique yet before I lost the memory of coming up with it. I don't tell anyone that I'm not using quite the same technique that they're teaching, however. They want me to suppress my anger, not channel it like this. The Dark Side is powerful, but power is nothing without control.

Master Zhar approaches me during lunch. "Lexen, we have a small issue that you might be able to help with."

"What is it?" I ask.

"Do you, by chance, remember rescuing a young Cather slave girl on Taris, years ago?"

I shake my head. "No, but it sounds like something I'd do."

"Her name is Juhani," says Zhar. "She was brought here for Jedi training, but she's still very... emotional. When she learned of what happened to Taris, she flew into a rage and injured her teacher during lightsaber practice. Although Master Quatra sustained only minor injuries, Juhani fled from the Enclave, perhaps believing she had slain her teacher in her anger."

I frown. "That's unfortunate." These foolish Jedi have no idea how to really deal with anger. It's as alien to them as light to a man who keeps his eyes clenched shut. "Do you want me to talk to her?"

"I think it would be a good test for you both," Zhar says. "You've been doing well with regaining your previous training on how to control your emotions. And you, perhaps, understand the lure of the Dark Side more than any of us."

I give a nod. "I'll go find her. Do you know which way she went?"

"We suspect she went out to an ancient grove to the east of the Enclave," Zhar says.

I nod to him, and head out, collecting Canderous to accompany me along the way. As good as I am in combat, I feel more at ease having a burly Mandalorian watching my back as well. I also feel more comfortable putting on light armor than the flimsy robes the Jedi favor. I bring my red lightsaber with me as well, tucked away in a pocket. I haven't let the Jedi other than Bastila know that I even have it, but once out of sight of them, say on the open plains, I may be able to use it freely.

"I hear there's been some honorless scum raiding the farmers out here," Canderous comments. "Are we heading out to take care of them?"

Mandalorian raiders. "That's not the primary purpose, but if we should run across any along the way, I'll hardly be averse to discouraging them from their current course of action. Violently."

Sure enough, we spot sight of a small cluster of Mandalorian speeders out on the hills. There are humanoid armored figures moving around amongst them, perhaps a small camp. They've no doubt already spotted me and Canderous. There's not a lot of cover out on these rolling plains.

"I count six," I say. "Let's go say hi, shall we?"

I wish I had that mask, or even had any inkling of where I might have left it. Somehow I doubt these men would respect it, regardless. I have a feeling only a show of strength will get through to them, even if I have to kill every other Mandalorian on the planet to make my point.
The Mandalorians don't immediately attack as we approach, perhaps recognizing us as kindred due to our boldly striding up to a group of heavily armed and armored warriors without flinching or showing fear. Instead, they look us over, assessing us curiously.

"Mandalorians?" asks one of them, perhaps their leader, glancing at Canderous's tattoo. I tilt my head at him in a half-nod. "I am Sherruk. If you're looking to join up with our clan, we'd welcome more."

"I appreciate the gesture, but no," I reply, speaking to him in Mandalorian. "You're going to stop attacking the settlers."

"What?" Sherruk says. "Why are you protecting these toothless kath hounds who can't even defend themselves?"

"Why are you preying upon them like common scavengers?" I retort. "This is beneath you. Mandalorians reduced to bandits and thugs? It's disgraceful. You should be conquering this world, or if you don't have the strength or numbers to manage that yet, conquer someplace you can, or gather the strength needed first."

I can almost feel Sherruk's glare through his helmet. "Who are you to lecture us like that?"

"Me?" I reply. "I'm Darth Revan."

The Mandalorians laugh heartily at my apparent joke, until they realize Canderous and I aren't laughing. "Revan is dead, more's the pity," Sherruk says. "What next, will you claim to be Mandalore as well?"

"Yes, in fact," I say with a smirk.

"You don't even have the mask!"

"Not physically, at the moment, but I did take it from its previous owner's corpse," I reply. "I doubt it would matter to you if I did, though. You're not going to be convinced unless I beat the snot out of you, so let's get to it."

The other Mandalorians chuckle softly, no doubt appreciating my directness, and back up to give me and Sherruk room to duel. I pull out my red lightsaber, and face off with Sherruk and his vibroblade.

"I've killed plenty of Jedi before," Sherruk says. "And I don't believe you're really Darth Revan. You'll die like the rest." He has several lightsabers hanging from his belt like trophies, I see.

I call up the storm and let it build around me like a rain of blood. *I am the eye of the storm.* I focus anger upon the fight, carefully controlled, honing it like a blade. Strength and control. This is the power that took down Mandalore, not blind fury.

Wherever Sherruk's blade tries to strike me, my lightsaber is there first. Sparks fly as our weapons clash. Thrust, parry, strike, dodge. I've no interest in outright killing him rather than merely teaching him a lesson, but he holds no such compunction toward me. That's alright. I can beat him anyway. He's not even half as good as Bendak Starkiller. He's used to fighting weak farmers, or Jedi who prefer diplomacy over combat. I come down upon him like a tornado.

Sherruk's vibroblade flies away, planting itself in the ground twenty feet away. My foot on his chest, my blade at his neck, I say, "You are beaten. Yield to my superior strength, or die beneath my blade."

"I-- shit, you really are Revan, aren't you?" Sherruk says incredulously.
"That is what I told you, isn't it?" I reply. "I don't make a habit of lying."

"I yield to your strength... Mandalore." Now there's a strange emotion to hear in a Mandalorian's voice. Sherruk is terrified.

I step off his chest to let him up, but as I do so, I also grab the lightsabers from his belt. "Your crimes or glories are forgiven or forgotten," I tell him. "Sherruk is dead now. If you wish to reclaim your honor, then follow me. If you'd rather slink off into a hole and live forgotten in dishonor, that's your choice."

"That's a choice?" Sherruk says, almost squeaking.

I smirk. "There are always choices. Even the lowest slave has the choice to obey or fight back, try as you might to beat the possibility of choice out of their mindset. There are trillions of beings in this galaxy with no honor who seem perfectly content with their lot. You could go work for a Hutt instead."

"You mock me," Sherruk snarls. "You disgrace me!"

"You disgrace yourself," I say coolly. "I'm just letting you know exactly where you stand. And I'm being quite generous in giving you an opportunity to reclaim your honor in life, rather than demanding your death as is my right. But that would be wasteful. Your honor is clearly, in some way, still important to you, or you would not be so offended by my words. Choice is the most powerful force in the galaxy. You have the power to choose your own path. This is the path you have chosen up until this point. Where are you going from here?"

Sherruk clearly has no idea what to make of me. The other Mandalorians present probably want me to kill him. By sparing him, I risk losing face, making myself look weak in their eyes. But that's my choice, and I'll face the consequences as necessary.

"I... I will follow you, Mandalore," Sherruk finally says reluctantly.

"I'm glad to hear that," I say. "It's good to meet you, recruit. What's your name?"

The Mandalorian is silent for a few moments longer before replying, "Zar. I am Zar, Mandalore."

I nod to him, and glance toward the others. "Who is the leader of your group?" I ask.

They exchange looks and seem to come to a silent agreement, and one of them steps forward. "I am, Mandalore. I am Reeza."

I nod. "Reeza, gather your clan and regroup on Dxun with whoever you can bring. Be discrete, if you can. I don't want the Jedi to learn of this until we are ready."

"Yes, Mandalore," Reeza says, snapping a salute at me.

We part ways, and Canderous and I continue across the yellow-green plains toward the old grove again. "I'm surprised you didn't just kill him, Mandalore," Canderous comments.

"He wasn't worth it," I reply, snickering softly. "A quick death would be an honor he didn't deserve."

"You make a good point," Canderous says.

"So, Canderous," I say. "What's on Dxun?"
Canderous stares at me as if I've just said something silly. "You don't remember?"

"Nope."

Canderous smirks. "Why'd you send them there if you don't remember?"

"It just seemed like the right place," I say.

"Heh," Canderous says. "I'll trust your blind instincts more than most people's calculated plans. Dxun was the very place I would have sent them, myself. It's a jungle moon, and was once a headquarters of our people, from which we launched attacks. A bloody battle was fought there during the war, but there's still no doubt plenty of hidden weapon caches left that the Republic never bothered to remove."

I seem to vaguely remember that. I wish my instincts would be more verbose when subconsciously suggesting courses of action or providing bits of information without context.

We approach the grove, and have to put down a number of aggressive wild animals along the way, who seem to be driven in an unnatural fury to attack us for some reason. The grove in question contains a ruin that's been here longer than humans have been on Dantooine, and I can sense darkness within.

The Cathar in the center of the grove sits stewing in a black pit of anger and despair. She snaps into a combat stance as she senses us approach. "You violate my place of darkness? I shall slay you!"

My red lightsaber is in my left hand in an instant to counter her blue one. "You must be Juhani," I say dryly. "Nice to meet you." Without bothering to pause in the fight, I casually call back, "Canderous, watch the entrance to this area and shoot anything that decides to be stupid. I'll handle this."

"Right," Canderous says, backing off to take a watchful position a ways away.

"What is a Dark Jedi doing here?" Juhani says, realization of what she's fighting finally percolating through her fury.

"Well, I could be recruiting," I say lightly. "You need a lot more training before you can handle that rage of yours. Training that the Jedi have clearly failed to manage."

Juhani frowns at me. "Who are you?"

"I believe we've met before," I say. "I'm Darth Revan."

For all the Jedi Council agreed to keep my identity quiet, I seem to be openly introducing myself to everyone I've met today.

Juhani stares at me silently for a long moment. "I would not believe you, but I sense the truth in your words. I had believed you dead!"

"The Jedi Council lied, Juhani," I reply. "They didn't kill me. They took me prisoner. And they tried to take advantage of my state to force a false set of memories upon me. A new personality that would fall in line with their wishes."

"How could they do such a thing?" Juhani snarls.

I shake my head. "I'm sure they believed they were doing the right thing. Thankfully, my mind
rejected the false personality, but I've still forgotten much. I'm now undercover, under the name of
Lexen Skywalker, working to regain my mastery of the Force. They believe me reformed, under
their thumb, and under their control, when I am none of these things."

Juhani pauses, examining me thoughtfully. "Why did you come to me? If you would seek a new
apprentice... I will follow you, Lord Revan."

"I would," I reply. "But not as a Sith. I've come to believe that both the Jedi and the Sith are fools.
Needless to say, this doesn't put me in a position with many allies, but that means nothing, as I had
few enough after Malak's betrayal, regardless. My first order of business is to strike back against
Malak, and for that I will need allies." I look at her assessingly, considering her agile, feline form.
"I'll teach you how to control your rage that it need not control you. I'll show you how to turn it into
a weapon to turn against your foes."

"I am eager to learn, my lord," Juhani says.

"Imagine your anger as a raging storm, swirling with terrible winds and flashes of lightning," I say.
Juhani closes her eyes, nodding and focusing upon my words. "Now center yourself. Find the heart
of the storm. Seek the calm spot in the middle. Seek the eye of the storm. The winds still rage around
you, but you are in the center, untouched, calm, and in control."

Juhani's breathing slows, and she seems to gain a slight measure of control over her anger. She's still
tense, but it's the tension of a wild animal ready to pounce, rather than a rabid one blindly attacking
without regards to intent or opportunity.

"Good," I say quietly. "Good. You learn well. It will take practice, as with all things, but this
technique should serve you better than the foolish Jedi notions of trying to suppress all emotions.
Emotions are what give us strength. They are not things to be discarded lightly."

Juhani opens her slitted yellow eyes to look at me again. "Thank you, Master. I already feel more
powerful."

I grin. "We will need to return to the Jedi Enclave for the moment, but rest assured that we will not
need to remain there long. I want you to act repentent and contrite. Keep this conversation quiet. The
Jedi must not learn of my intentions. Can you do that?"

Juhani gives a slight nod. "I believe so. I fear the Jedi will punish me, though... I fell to the Dark Side
in my rage and slew Master Quatra..."

"Quatra will be alright," I say. "She wasn't actually badly wounded. And the Jedi will forgive you.
They're big on the whole forgiveness thing." I smirk in amusement.

"As you say, I shall trust in your word, Master," Juhani says.

"You won't need to keep up the charade for long," I say. "I intend to be out of here in a week or two,
tops. Keep your anger in check with the eye of the storm technique, and if you need advice, come
speak to me. Ready to head back?"

Juhani nods, and we exit the grove. I heard some blaster shots in the distance while talking to Juhani
and ignored them. A few kinrath corpses down the hill indicate what Canderous had been shooting
at.

"Target practice, Canderous?" I say.

"It'd be dull to come all the way out here and not kill anything," Canderous replies lightly.
"We did kill a few kath hounds on the way over," I point out.

"True."

We return to the Jedi Enclave, and Canderous heads back to where the Ebon Hawk is docked, muttering something about doing weapon maintainance. Master Zhar meets us when we arrive, looking over Juhani placidly.

"Master Zhar," Juhani says, looking at the floor. "I must beg forgiveness for my actions. I gave in to my rage and looked to the Dark Side in anger. I am a failure as a Jedi."

I have to wonder if she's just a really good actor, or if she's really at least partially feeling guilty over the matter still. I will need to determine that. Still, Zhar takes her apparent sincerity at face value.

"You would only be a failure if you did not return and admit to your mistakes," Zhar says. "Much as some might believe, we Jedi are not infallible. Many of us struggle with temptation our entire lives."

"It's sometimes a perilous road back to the light," I comment vaguely.

"Indeed," Master Zhar says. "And I'm glad you were able to guide young Juhani back to us, Lexen. It speaks well of your character and heart. I will inform the others of what has transpired, although I imagine that they have already sensed it."

I smirk inwardly as he walks off, and walk Juhani back to her quarters before speaking again. "He speaks of temptation, but knows nothing of it," I mutter. "The Jedi and Sith each have their own code. Here's mine. *There is no temptation, there is only choice.* Do not be merely *tempted* by things. Make a choice. Do, or do not. Embrace that choice, and be ready to face any consequences that may come of it, but never regret it or claim that you had merely fallen to *temptation.*"

Juhani thinks my words over for a few moments before nodding. "I believe I understand, Master. You are most wise."

"That's the danger in uncontrolled anger," I go on. "Impulses may make you act without thinking, without making a deliberate choice. Do not let anything take from you the power of choice."

I head back out again, leaving her to her meditations, and return to my quarters to record the day into my journal. I've accomplished a lot today, I think. I gained the support of a clan of Mandalorians, and I have a promising new apprentice to train. Now if only I didn't need training so badly myself.

Days pass, full of quiet study and relearning skills I had forgotten I even knew existed. The skills are still there, of course. All it took was opening the way, and the knowledge came back to me like it had never left. In no time at all, I'm levitating things with my mind again.

All the while, I maintain my calm. It's a constant test of my control, as I fight a burning desire to destroy them all. They're still distrustful of me, especially Master Vrook. I would dearly love to kill him. But I send the emotions into the storm, and keep myself firmly in the eye. I will not let down my guard, and I will not let them see the truth in me. They see only what they wish to see, and I keep that mask up, to let them see only what I wish them to see.

Juhani is able to keep her cover as well, and I'm pleased with her discretion. She comes to see me every evening, and we speak at length, or merely meditate. Although she does seem to have genuine guilt, she was also sufficiently swayed by my words to follow me and obey my wishes.

T3-M4 comes to see me every couple of days, examining and questioning me to ensure that I still...
have my memories. I diligently reassure the droid, and update his copies of my journals with new entries each visit, then send him on his way before the Jedi can grow suspicious. Not that I think they're likely to, but I'd rather not take any chances.

And I have dreams. Strange dreams, of things that I can't identify. Fighting creatures I cannot name. Giant winged reptiles, floating eyeballs with tentacles, terrifying horned humanoid figures. Nightmares of injury and death, over and over again.

"Maybe they're just normal dreams," Bastila suggests when I tell her about them.

"I don't know," I say. "They feel just as vivid and real as the dreams that I know are memories, even moreso than the dreams that are obvious and immediate premonitions."

"And you haven't had any premonitions lately?"

I shake my head. "Not since leaving Taris." I shrug. "That probably means nothing, though. The ones I can be certain were premonitions, never appeared more than a day in advance, and it's been pretty calm around here lately. I imagine that'll change once I actually get into danger again."

"Perhaps you're right," Bastila says. "The Jedi Masters want to send you out to stop Malak, but they don't dare do so until they know you're ready for it."

In other words, until they're reasonably certain that I'm not just going to fall back into my Dark Side ways the minute I'm out of their sight.

I look at her thoughtfully for a moment. "You don't trust them anymore, do you." It's not a question.

Bastila sighs. "Your paranoia is starting to bleed off on me. You're always so suspicious of everything."

"Not suspicious," I correct her. "Prepared. And besides, I'm not paranoid of everyone and everything. I trust you, after all. And Canderous, and Mission, and Zaalbar, and Neeja, and T3."

"Not Carth?" Bastila asks.

"Not right now," I say. "If he doesn't trust me, I can't trust him. Trust is a thing that can only ever be mutual. One-sided trust can only end in disaster. He might have trusted me at one point... Perhaps that bridge can still be mended or rebuilt."

I should tell him about how I took off Malak's jaw for bombing Telos. I'm sure he would appreciate that.


"There is no emotion, there is peace. There is no ignorance, there is knowledge. There is no passion, there is serenity. There is no chaos, there is harmony. There is no death, there is the Force." I repeat the lines dispassionately, carefully centering myself to keep the disgust out of my voice.

"I believe you are now ready for your own lightsaber, Padawan Lexen," Master Zhar tells me.

I had my own lightsaber once. I wonder what ever happened to it. Who knows? Lost somewhere in space and time, along with untold amounts of other flotsam and jetsam that passed through my hands over the years. A new lightsaber for a new life, I suppose. I think I'd like a green one again.

"There is a cave to the east of the Enclave that is strong with the Force," Zhar says. "There are many
crystals within. I want you to travel there alone, and find a crystal that seems suitably in tune with you, and bring it back here. You will construct your new lightsaber with this."

"Yes, Master Zhar," I reply, giving a short bow.

I don't like the idea of traveling alone, but I'm comfortable enough with it. I do, however, wear light body armor rather than a Jedi robe, and take along my red lightsaber, vibroblade, some grenades and mines, and a small blaster just in case I might need to shoot an inanimate object or something. Oh, and a thermal detonator. Why? Well, I'm not really sure, but every contingency I can think of makes me want to have a thermal detonator on hand, just in case.

I politely fail to inform my esteemed Jedi Masters about how heavily armed I prefer to be at all times and the amount of explosives I'm usually carrying on my person. They would probably disapprove. I don't really care.

So, I head out for a casual stroll across the peaceful, rolling hills of Dantooine. Along the way, I'm attacked by a number of random kinrath, and whip out my red lightsaber to dispatch them handily. I don't think this is quite how this test is supposed to go. I don't really care about that, either.

I arrive at the crystal cave Master Zhar told me about. Big shock, there's more kinrath inside, and they're even more aggressive than the ones outside. As I head deeper into the cave past their sliced-up corpses, the reason for this quickly becomes clear. Among the crystal formations, I see a number of large eggs. Great, my wise Jedi Master would have sent me unarmed into a kinrath nest.

Well, far be it from me to disrupt the natural ecology of the planet. I leave the clutch of kinrath eggs alone, so that the next person hapless enough to wander in here unarmed can get eaten instead.

Now that I'm the only thing left alive in this cave, I search through the place, opening my senses to the Force. This place is strong with the Force, but neither to the Light Side nor the Dark. It's the natural state of the Force, both life and death, order and chaos, together as one. I feel alive here, far moreso than I can ever remember being, not that that's really saying much. The ebb and flow of raw energy moving around me, untouched and untamed by the hands of sentient beings.

At the center of it all, I feel something drawing me in. The crystals in the cave are many and varied, each of them distinctly different. But this one seems in tune with me. Singing with my soul in perfect harmony. I reach out and touch it, and then open my eyes to look at what is in my hand.

What a strange looking crystal. I've never seen one like this before. It's milky gray, but iridescent with rainbow colors swirling upon it like an oily sheen. It looks more like mother-of-pearl than a crystal. I think it's beautiful. A perfect match.

Carefully, I pocket the soothing crystal and head back toward the Jedi Enclave. After putting away my adventuring supplies, I return to Master Zhar.

"Have you found what you sought, Padawan Lexen?" Master Zhar asks me, looking at me carefully.

I pull out the opalescent crystal from my pocket and show it to him. "This crystal... seems in tune with me."

"Interesting," Zhar says, examining it thoughtfully. "Most interesting indeed. I had feared that you might return with an implement of the Dark Side to indicate that your heart still lies in shadows, but this crystal is no dark relic. The peace and harmony in this crystal reflect that within your heart."

I snort inwardly, but stay quiet. If that's what he wants to think, so be it. I can tell otherwise. This crystal isn't attuned to the Dark Side, but neither is it to the Light. It's both, and neither, the raw Force
in its purest form. This crystal doesn't represent peace and harmony exactly, but the balance of the Force.

Under Master Zhar's instruction, I build my new lightsaber, setting in the opaline crystal for power and a simple green crystal for color.

"Excellent work, Padawan Lexen," Master Zhar says. "You set the crystal perfectly on the first try."

Well, of course I did. This is hardly the first time I've done this. I may not remember it, but my fingers still know the movements.

I activate it and hold it up, giving it a few experimental swings. It feels good in my hand. Just holding it makes me remember the feeling of being in that cave, surrounded by the living Force. It almost makes me feel like a Jedi again.
I walk among the dim cavern. No, not a cavern. An ancient ruin, older than the Republic, that had been here longer than humans have been on Dantooine.

Malak follows at my side as we search the place. There's something important buried here. I can feel it. Perhaps this will prove to be the key to our victory.

I wake. Damn it, why couldn't I have stayed asleep for a few minutes longer? There was some great revelation right on the edge of consciousness there, but it failed to come.

Muttering in irritation to myself, I quickly record the dream into my journal, and then go to see Bastila. I don't care if the sun isn't even up yet. This is important. She can do without a little sleep.

"Just a minute," Bastila calls when I ring her door. After a few moments, she comes to the door. She was obviously still asleep when I rang. "Lexen? What is it? Did something happen?"

"I had a dream," I explain. "Can I come in? I don't want to talk out in the hallway."

"Alright..." Bastila says hesitantly.

I come inside and let the door slide closed behind me. "I dreamed of a cavern on Dantooine. An old ruin. Malak and I were there, and we were looking for something. I don't know what, but it was important. Old, powerful."

Bastila frowns at my words, any hint of weariness vanishing from her eyes in an instant. "Do you know where it might have been?"

"I think so," I say. "I think I could find it again."

"We should tell the Jedi Masters about this," Bastila says. "We must investigate this."

"They're probably not even awake yet," I say. "Let's just head out ourselves right now."

"I'm not sure that that's wise..." Bastila says hesitantly.

Perhaps not, but I'd rather not tell the wise Jedi Masters about this until I know what's there. I don't need to be chided for chasing shadows of my imagination. And I'm not sure that I want to tell the Jedi Masters about this even if I do find out what's there.

"Perhaps not, but this can't wait," I tell her.

"Very well," Bastila says reluctantly with a sigh. "Let me get ready and I'll meet you at the gates shortly."

I nod, and head back out to prepare myself. Armor, weapons, explosives. That should do the trick. I don't know what to expect in this ancient ruin, so I come prepared for anything. And to me, being prepared for anything involves having sufficient high explosives. Well, that might defeat the purpose of actually finding anything in this ruin, but hey, if I determine that it needs to be destroyed quickly, I want to be able to do so.

Maybe that should be the second line in my new code. There are many things that diplomacy can do. For everything else, there's explosives. Hmm, I don't know.
I meet up with Bastila at the Enclave gates and head out in the pre-dawn light. It's a quiet morning, very beautiful, with a gentle breeze rustling the yellow-green grasses of Dantooine, and the occasional random kath hound attack to get the blood pumping.

Following memory and instinct, we come to the cave in question. It's tucked away behind rocks and foliage, sufficient to keep any random person from just wandering inside. I might not have even realized it was here if I didn't sense it and know what to look for.

"This place is... ancient," Bastila says, looking around in awe.

I nod in agreement, heading inside. I don't know what sort of people built these ruins, but I have a feeling that I should know. I hate the constant feeling of thinking I should know something but not knowing it. It bothers me in a way that itches at the back of my mind that cannot be scratched.

We come upon a droid that looks as though it's been here as long as the ruin has, but is still somehow in working order. It makes some sounds at us, speaking in an unfamiliar language. Well, that's a new one. Coming across a language that I don't immediately understand.

"A droid?" Bastila says. "What language is that?"

"I didn't understand it," I say. "Maybe it's the language spoken by the people who originally built this place?"

The droid switches to another language, and then another, until it hits upon one I can make out.

"That sounded like... Selkath?" I say, raising an eyebrow. "Why would a droid on Dantooine speak a variant of ancient Selkath?"

"I speak the languages spoken by the slave races who serve the Builders," the droid replies.

Well, that doesn't speak well of whoever built this place. "Who are the Builders?" I ask.

"The Builders are the great and powerful masters of the Infinite Empire, which spans the entire galaxy," the droid replies.

"How long has this place been here?" I ask.

The droid gives me a reply, and I frown and do some quick math to figure out the length of time in standard years.

"Maybe my math is wrong," I mutter, and ask Bastila to look over my calculations.

"Or its memory is wrong," Bastila says, affirming that my math was correct. "Twenty-five thousand years? It can't be that old!"

"Maybe it is," I say thoughtfully. "What was the function of this place?" I ask the droid.

"This is the administration center of this planet," says the droid. "Here is where slaves are overseen and information is kept."

"What sort of information was kept here?"

"I am permitted to provide access to those who prove themselves worthy," replies the droid.

"Does proving oneself worthy involve destroying something?" I say dryly.
"Revan!" Bastila snaps at me.

"What?" I say.

We head into one of the side passages. There's a terminal at the far end of the room, but I don't get much of a glance at it. Several battle droids stand between us and it. They begin shooting at us, and I quickly pull out my green lightsaber to deflect their attacks.

"I had a feeling that was going to happen," I say. "It's the whole 'proving yourself worthy' thing. Something tells me that this phrase almost invariably leads to combat."

"I say you just provoked them!" Bastila says, desperately fighting with her own double-bladed lightsaber.

There's too much to fight here. Bastila is good in combat, and I'm excellent, but these droids are tougher than I had anticipated. It's difficult just to block this many shots at once, and when I do get a chance to make a clean strike against them, it hardly seems to have any effect. Their defenses are too strong. I wish I had brought the others along for this.

"It's no use!" Bastila says. "We have to retreat!"

"They're behind us, too!" I reply.

"What, more of these things?"

The addition of the new droids from the other side seals it. We're doomed. I can't hold them off much longer. Their attacks are ripping through my armor, searing my skin, tearing me apart...

I wake with a groan. Damn, another painful premonition. That never bodes well. Fumbling around with my left hand, I find my journal and pull it toward me to write down everything I've seen.

So Malak and I found something in these ancient ruins near the Jedi Enclave. Most likely information, as it didn't sound like anything of any real importance was actually kept there, and if it were, it would have either been removed from the planet, or Dantooine would have been conquered if it were unable to be moved.

I massage my temples. I have a feeling that the Force is also telling me that impatience will be the death of me. There's no need to rush. The ruins have been there for ages. They'll still be there waiting for me when I arrive.

I'm still leery of telling the Jedi Masters about this, though. But thinking on it a bit more, I believe they'll probably be more suspicious of me if I don't tell them, or keep it to myself until after I've already run off and investigated the place on my own. Whereas if I tell them, and then explore the ruin on their request, they'll think that I'm obeying them and serving their wishes.

But there's no need to rush. I take some time to meditate and glance through my journal again. Wait, what's the Endar Spire? Oh, hell, I've forgotten something again, haven't I. I open up this entry and read through it again, silently apologizing to the memories of Trask Ulgo and Kara Vir that I forgot they even existed again.

Dawn comes, and I head out to tap with Bastila first and briefly explain the situation, and she comes along with me. I find Master Zhar readily enough.

"Master Zhar," I say to him, bowing politely. "I have information that I would relay to the Jedi
Council. I've had a dream that points toward what Revan and Malak may have been doing..."

"Interesting," Master Zhar says. "I will bring Master Vandar and Master Vrook. Force willing, this may be able to give us a way to stop Malak."

The three Jedi Masters convene after breakfast, and I and Bastila come before then. "Tell us about this dream you had, Padawan Lexen," Master Vandar says.

"Very well, Master Vandar," I say, nodding to him. "Revan and Malak found a cave east of the Jedi Enclave here on Dantooine containing some ancient ruins, that might well be twenty-five thousand years old, dating from the time of the Infinite Empire."

"I have never heard of such an organization," Master Vrook says disdainfully.

"Let him continue, Master Vrook," Vandar says.

"The ruins contained primarily information," I go on. "I am not certain what they sought there, but they seemed to believe that it would lead them to great power and ultimate victory. My vision also warned me that the place is well-defended by powerful battle droids."

"Hmmm," Master Vander says thoughtfully. "You should go to investigate this cave, and discover, if you can, what Revan and Malak were seeking there. Take Padawan Bastila along with you, and whoever else you feel you may need to penetrate the location's defenses. Will the companions you brought with you be sufficient?"

"May I take Padawan Juhani along as well?" I ask. "She's good in combat, and I'd trust her at my back."

"Very well," Master Vandar says.

"We should not allow him to go there," Master Vrook says. "How can we be certain that this isn't some Dark Side plot to allow him to reclaim his power?"

"Be at peace, Master Vrook," Vandar says. "He is not going alone, regardless."

Master Vrook's paranoia and suspicion would be more suited to one of the Sith, I think. But I diplomatically keep my mouth shut. I don't need to raise the ire of these Jedi Masters today.

I stop by Juhani's quarters, and leave her and Bastila to get ready. I head out to the Ebon Hawk, where the others have been staying for the most part during our time here. Neeja's still afraid to leave the ship, even though I assured her that the Enclave is perfectly safe. Carth has been trying, unsuccessfully, to keep Mission from getting herself into too much trouble, and to keep Zaalbar from eating everything on the planet. Canderous, on the other hand, has been gathering up any remaining Mandalorians on the planet and shipping them off to Dxun.

"Hey guys," I say. "Are you ready for some action?"

"Sounds good," Canderous says. "I haven't gotten to shoot nearly enough people around here."

Carth looks at me suspiciously and says, "The rest of you can go along. I'm staying here." He turns to head for the cockpit without a further word.

I send Canderous, Mission, and Zaalbar off to get ready and meet me at the gates, before going to speak with Carth. He doesn't exactly appear to be actually doing anything important. Just making busywork to keep himself occupied. He doesn't seem too happy to be here, all in all.
"What do you want, Revan?" he says flatly as I approach.

"Is there a problem, Carth?" I ask.

"No," Carth replies. "Don't worry, I'm not going to betray your big Jedi secrets to anyone, but you'll forgive me if I don't care to go hanging around with a Dark Lord."

I sigh. "If it's any consolation, Carth, I didn't order the attack on your homeworld. In fact, I was so pissed off about it that I removed Malak's jaw with a lightsaber for his actions. And he's lucky he moved quick enough, or I would have happily taken off his entire head."

Carth gives me a long look. "That may be so," he admits generously. "But I'm still not eager to spend a lot of time with you at the moment."

"It's going to be dangerous," I say. "You're good with blasters. If nothing else, could you come along to make sure Mission doesn't get hurt?"

Carth sighs and puts up his hands in resignation. "Fine. I'll come. But I'll have you know I'm doing it for Mission, not for you."

I quirk a grin at him. "Thanks, Carth. That's good enough for me."

I go off and get ready myself, putting on my armor and outfitting myself with weapons. I feel more comfortable with a full squad around me, as eclectic as it is. But in my mind, those tend to make for the best teams. I meet up with them at the Enclave gates and briefly explain what we're looking for along the way.

"What do you suppose they were looking for here?" Mission wonders as we enter the ruins.

"I don't really know," I admit.

"We'd best be on our guard," Juhani says.

I approach the overseer droid and address it in my best Selkath, "I'm here to prove myself worthy of the knowledge of the Builders."

"Very well," says the droid. "You may proceed."

"What's this about?" Mission says.

"And what is that droid speaking Selkath?" Bastila wonders, raising an eyebrow.

"I speak the languages of the slaves of the Builders," the droid replies.

"Who are the builders?" Bastila wonders.

I sigh inwardly and patiently wait while my companions question the droid. There's no sense in being impatient with them just because I already saw the answers in a premonition. When they're done thoroughly asking it things, we head off down one of the side passages.

The battle droids are still rough, but with so many of us, we find a way to bring them down without taking any serious injuries ourselves. Panting a little and brushing aside the debris, I go over to examine the terminal at the far end of the room.

After some fiddling with the terminals and destroying another group of droids, we manage to gain access to the central chamber. And within, we find what appears to be a glowing, three-dimensional
holographic representation of the galaxy.

"A map?" Mission says, staring at it wide-eyed.

"A Star Map," I say, frowning. "The data appears to be incomplete. It seems to be giving a route to something called the Star Forge. But not all of the relevant information has survived through the ages. I'm surprised as much survived that did, really."

"What's a Star Forge?" Mission wonders.

"I have no idea," I reply. "Maybe some sort of workshop or factory or something, I suppose. Whatever it is, it's obviously what the Sith Lords were looking for here, and it's in Malak's hands now."

"And his current upper hand may well be due to his possession of it," Bastila adds. "I think we're going to need to find this Star Forge in order to stop Malak."

"And to find it," I say, "we're going to need to piece together information from these Star Maps. There's more of them, and they may be able to plot a complete route to where the Star Forge is. Tatooine, Manaan, Korriban, Kashyyk... I have a feeling we've got some travelling ahead of us."

"Sounds great," Canderous says. "When do we start?"

We head back out to where the overseer droid is stationed. "Droid, what is the Star Forge?" I ask it.

"The Star Forge is the great work of the Builders," it replies unhelpfully. "With it, the Infinite Empire shall rule the universe forever."

"Yes, but what does it do?" I ask.

"It will allow the Infinite Empire to rule the universe forever."

I sigh. Obviously, artificial intelligence has come a long way in however many millennia. "Never mind. Let's go, guys. We've got what we came for."

We head on back out of the ruins and return to the Jedi Enclave. The Jedi Masters are waiting for our return. Have they been standing around here doing nothing else the entire time we've been gone? I suppose if that's true, I could give them props for practicing what they preach with regards to patience. Of course, I get the feeling that what they've really been doing is arguing down Master Vrook, the paranoia hound.

"Padawans Lexen, Bastila, Juhani, you return," Master Vandar says. "Have you found what Revan and Malak were seeking in the ruins?"

"I believe so, yes," I reply. "The ruins contained fragments of a Star Map which gave partial directions to something called the Star Forge. We believe that Malak may currently be using this Star Forge against the Republic."

"But only partial directions?" Master Zhar says.

"The data was incomplete," I say. "No doubt degraded through time, as it was very old. But it also showed other worlds, which might also have Star Maps that could provide additional information. Manaan, Kashyyk, Tatooine, and Korriban."

"Interesting," Master Vandar says. "Given the state of the war against Darth Malak and his Sith, I
believe we must make it a priority to find this Star Forge."

"Even if what he says is true," Master Vrook says, "can we trust this one to do the job? And we should not send half-trained Padawans on a mission of this importance!"

"Master Vrook, calm yourself," Vandar says. "You cannot deny that Lexen here is the best one for this task. His premonitions regarding this matter make him uniquely suited for this. Anyone else would be stumbling around blindly in the dark."

Why is Vrook even a Jedi at all, never mind a Jedi Master? Why do I get the feeling that Master Vandar only keeps him around just to have someone to argue with?

"That may be so," Vrook says. "But we should send an experienced Master with him. He cannot be allowed to gallivant about the galaxy on his own."

I'll gladly kill a Jedi Master just like any other if they should prove a hindrance to me. Watching their entertaining discourse comes to an end, however, as Master Vandar turns to me decisively.

"Padawan Lexen," the tiny Jedi Master says. "You may choose who you take with you on your journey, but I will request that you bring at least Padawans Bastila and Juhani along with you, if you would."

"Of course, Master Vandar," I reply graciously. "I would be more than happy to have them along."

"He hasn't even completed his training," Vrook argues. "He should receive more training before he goes, or at least have someone accompany him who can do so."

"I do not believe that is necessary, Master Vrook," Vandar says. "These three have proven themselves capable. They can learn from one another and support one another's weaknesses."

"But--" Vrook begins, but a raised hand from Vandar silences any further protests.

"Padawans, you must prepare for your journey," Vandar says. "Procure whatever supplies you believe you will require. I believe the ship you came in on will be sufficient?"

"The Ebok Hawk will be perfect," I say.

"Very well," Vandar says. "Should you require any further guidance or assistance, return here. Dantooine will be a safe haven for you during your adventures. May the Force be with you."

We head on out of the meeting room, and I send off Mission and Zaalbar to gather food and supplies for the journey, and Carth off to get weapons and explosives. You can never have too many explosives.

"Jedi Masters," Canderous snorts. "Arrogant pricks, if you ask me. They acted as though none of the rest of us were even present."

"At least we won't have to deal with them again anytime soon," I say. If ever.

"And that's just as well, Mandalore," Canderous says.

Juhani stares at me. "You're a Mandalorian?"

Canderous says, "I am."
"No, I meant Lexen," she corrects him.

"I killed Mandalore," I reply.

"So that entitles you to his position?" Juhani says. "I suppose that makes sense. But I hope that you will not be like the previous one..."

"Don't worry, Juhani," I say. "I'm not going to tolerate slavery or the like."

"I'm glad to hear that," Juhani says, relaxing again.

"And many of them appear to have forgotten what honor means," I go on. "But they will learn, if I have to beat it into their faces myself."

Canderous chuckles in amusement. "You see why I like him?"

"Violence is not the Jedi way," Bastila says.

"Diplomacy is a handy tool," I say. "But if it's the only weapon in your arsenal, you will inevitably fail. You should know well enough by now that there are many situations that cannot be readily solved by diplomacy." I chuckle softly. "And Mandalorian diplomacy frequently involves violence. They've more respect for those who are willing to show that they're not all talk."

Bastila sighs. "Perhaps you have a point. Still, it should never be a first resort."

"Because you were awfully willing to try talking to Brejik after what he tried to do to you?" I point out. "There's no need to be ashamed of it."

"I will not turn to the Dark Side," Bastila says firmly.

"Who said anything about the Dark Side?" I say, raising an eyebrow.

"I apologize," Bastila says. "I jump to conclusions."

"Relax, Bastila," I say. "I'm not a Sith Lord. And I don't exactly plan on turning into one, either."

We gather up our little crew aboard our ship and make preparations to leave. Neeja is staying with us, but Jass and the other two former slaves are going to be left on Dantooine. I don't trust Jass even as much as I trust Carth, and I don't want to think what he might do if he were to discover who I am. He might just do something silly like contact the Republic about it, and that might be problematic. Perhaps I'm just being overly paranoid again, but I tend to prefer erring on the side of caution with things like this. You can't untell someone something, and I'm hardly going to start using the Force to try to make people forget things. I'm still not entirely convinced that the Jedi didn't fuck with my mind even more than I think they did.

I still can't even be certain that they didn't do more to me here on Dantooine than I think they did, too. They could have done any number of things to me during my retraining and I might not realize it. What if they had secretly placed some sort of compulsions on me to do their bidding? Impulses that might only arise under specific circumstances to force me to perform prearranged actions against my will?

I can't be certain that this is all just paranoia. I don't trust the Jedi and their supposed good will. It may not have been a good idea to even come to Dantooine at all, never mind submit myself to their will and see what they might do to me.
I head over to the ship's workshop and take out my red lightsaber to poke at it a bit. It's done better than I might have expected for me despite not having been created specifically for me. I open it up and examine the crystal inside, focusing upon it curiously to determine its nature.

It's not quite what I might have expected. There's nothing outside Dark Side about this crystal, but it's as much an instrument of war as the opaline one is of peace. It seems to have attuned itself to me because I slew its previous master. Power and control earned by right of conquest. Interesting. I close the saber up again and step away from the workbench.

"I don't know what the Jedi see in those things," Canderous comments. "Give me a good old blaster any day."

I chuckle softly, flicking on the red lightsaber. "I prefer to get up close and personal with my enemies."

"I can appreciate that," Canderous says with a grin.

I pull out my green lightsaber in my right hand, and turn that on as well. It's something of an interesting sensation, feeling these two lightsabers in each hand. They're of very different natures, and I acquired each in very different ways, and yet there's something that feels right about this. A balance.

At the same time, it feels completely unfamiliar to me. Actually, that's really refreshing. It's not unfamiliar in a way that makes me think I should know more than I do, like skills that I knew once and have since forgotten that I ever learned. I have never used a two-weapon lightsaber style. I have used a green lightsaber, and I have used a red one, but never both at the same time. Likewise, I have used both the Light Side and the Dark Side at various points, but I've never tried both at once. I've never walked the middle path.

"I think I want to learn this style," I say, swinging my blades about experimentally.

It will take a lot of focus and concentration to use two blades effectively, and doubtless this will require a lot of practice to master. But I think I want to learn it precisely because it's entirely new to me. It's actually a little exhilarating, rather than frustrating like relearning things has been. I don't have a trainer, but I can practice with Canderous, as well as two Jedi who use very different styles themselves. I can do this. I can learn this. I can actually learn something.

It's time to walk a new path, and not merely retread what's come before.
A young Cathar girl, mewling like a kitten. Alone, frightened. I can't leave her like this. I can sense the Force in her. Strong. She could be a great Jedi one day, given the appropriate training.

"I'll buy her!" says a purple Twi'lek male. "I'll pay well for her." He licks his lips disgustingly.

That seals it. I've got to get her out of here. "Why are you interested in her?" I ask, trying to sound casual.

"I do so love the Cathar females," he replies. "The males are too violent, though. Too hard to control. I killed one not long ago."

"That was my father, you schutta!" the Cather girl hisses, overhearing our conversation.

"Oh, this one's got a mouth on her!" the Twi'lek says. "I'll enjoy beating that spirit out of you, kitten."

"I don't think so," I say.

She was sold into slavery to pay off her parents' debts, it seems. Which were far less than her selling price. It's seeing things like this that test draw anger up within me. How can the Jedi stand by, seeing things like this, without falling to the Dark Side purely from righteous fury?

I'd dearly love to simply kill that Twi'lek, but that would prove nothing. Instead, I pay off the debts and get her released.

"I'm free?" says Juhani. "You've saved me? Please, tell me your name, so I know who to thank!"

"I'm Revan," I tell her. "I'm a Jedi. And I can sense the Force within you. The Force is strong with you. I'd offer to train you myself, but I'm going to war against the Mandalorians, and the battlefield is noplace for a little girl. You should go to Dantooine instead, and learn to use the Force from the Jedi there. You'll be safe there. No one will ever be able to make you a slave again."

"Thank you, Revan. I'll take your advice. I'll never forget what you've done for me."

I wake, smiling a little at the memory of having done something good for once. I haven't always been a monster. I reach over and quietly write down this dream in my journal, and stretch.

My last night on Dantooine. There's a lot of work ahead of me, and I'm glad to be going. I take one last look around my quarters before heading out to the Ebon Hawk. There's nothing here to take with me. I didn't keep anything personal here, or even much of utility. It wouldn't do for the Jedi to start questioning my explosives stash.

"Everyone on board and ready to go?" I ask.

"About time you got here. You slept in," Canderous replies. "We've been here for hours."

"Heh," I say, smirking. "Sorry. I was having a dream where nothing horrible happened to me for a change."

"What's the fun in that?" Canderous says with a chuckle.
"It might not seem so bad at first, but you try dying several times a night in such vivid detail that it seems more real than reality," I say. "And then waking up feeling like you haven't slept in days."

"Right, glad I'm not a Jedi again," Canderous says.

"So where are we heading?" Carth asks.

"Set a course for Kashyyyk," I order.

"You finally decide to get on board with things?" Canderous says to Carth.

"I don't know what you're talking about," Carth replies, not looking back as he sets a course.

Canderous snorts softly. "Don't play dumb, although I know you're good at it. You've been acting suspicious of Revan ever since Taris. I don't get why you wouldn't want to follow the greatest warrior of our time."

Carth glares at him. "It doesn't even matter to you that he practically destroyed your race?"

"It seems like Mandalorians are the only ones who don't hold grudges over something like that," Canderous says. "We respect our enemies. During the war, many of us weren't sure whether to fear him, fight him, or bow down before him. Even the best of us could not beat him."

"Speaking of which," I say lightly. "Care for a chance to shoot at me, Canderous?"

"What, wanting to practice your new lightsaber style?" Canderous asks.

Carth says, "You know, most people just use training remotes for that sort of thing."

"Bah, droids," I say, waving a hand dismissively. "It's just not the same. Want to join us, Carth?"

"I'll pass," Carth says with a snort.

We head off to practice blocking blaster bolts. It doesn't go particularly well at first, as my lightsabers wind up confusing one another, but I do manage to block some of them. It's a good thing Canderous is using a 'low' setting that just stings really bad rather than actually causing physical damage.

After a bit, Bastila and Juhani come in, perhaps drawn by the sounds coming from this room. "What are you doing?" she asks.

"Practicing," I reply, not bothering to stop what we're doing to turn and look at them.

"I thought you got rid of that red lightsaber," Bastila comments.

"Nah," I say. "I think I'll keep it."

"You're trying to learn Jar'Kai?" Juhani says, raising an eyebrow.

"I don't really care what you call it," I reply, blocking another bolt. "It's new to me, and I want to learn it."

The two Jedi stand back and observes my actions for a few moments. "You're left handed, aren't you?" Juhani says.

"Yeah," I reply.
"You're trying to block everything with the blade in your left hand," Juhani points out. "That'll keep you from attacking with it effectively. Try blocking with the other blade."

"Hmm," I say thoughtfully. "Good idea. I'll try that."

"Although using two full-sized lightsabers might prove more difficult than using a shorter blade in your off-hand, it could also have its advantages," Juhani says. "Given sufficient practice, it means you could switch which weapon performs what role at will."

"I thought you used a single-blade style, Juhani?" I say, attempting and failing to block a shot with my right blade. I wince as the sting hits my chest.

"I do have some training with dual blades as well," Juhani says. "But I'm by no means an expert with it."

"Let's spar, shall we?" I say.

I take a break from practicing blocking bolts to do some sparring with Juhani, with Bastila looking on and watching our techniques. Practicing with live lightsabers might be dangerous, especially with an untrained new technique, but I don't care. It makes me feel alive.

"Your style is too aggressive, Revan," Bastila says. "You're leaving yourself open. If Juhani were actually trying to hurt you, she could have taken off a hand by now. Or your head."

Juhani says, "It does make it difficult to get an opening when too busy countering every attack, though."

"There's... too much anger in you," Bastila says, frowning. "In both of you. It's like I'm watching a couple of Sith dueling."

I snort softly. "We're not Sith."

"How did you manage to hide this from the Jedi Masters?" Bastila says.

"Control comes in many forms," I reply. "I learned what I needed to from them. But from now on, I'll walk my own path."

"I was afraid you'd go right back to the Dark Side again," Bastila says.

"It's not my intention to reject the Light Side," I tell her.

Bastila frowns again. "Then what do you intend to do?"

I put my lightsabers away and take a break, and gesture to her and Juhani to come and sit with me. Now that we're safely away from Dantooine and away from the Jedi Masters for the moment, it's time to describe the path I've decided to follow.

"The Jedi reject the Dark Side," I say. "The Sith reject the Light. I've seen the flaws in both of their views, and I've started to think that both of them are foolish."

"I don't understand," Bastila says.

"I seek a third option," I say. "One that does not involve casting aside half of the Force. I seek the balance of the Force."

"You would become a Gray Jedi?" Bastila says.
"Something like that," I reply. "I can't agree with the things the Jedi Council has done. I will not forgive them for their attempts to mess with my mind. And I will not be so short-sighted as to try to stand on the sidelines while the galaxy dies around me."

"I am with you, my lord," Juhani says. "Whatever path you choose, I will follow."

Bastila casts a suspicious look toward Juhani. "I thought you were redeemed, and turned back from the Dark Side."

"I chose to follow Revan's path," Juhani says. "He showed me a new way."

I wonder absently if I'm going to have to kill Bastila after all. But her faith in the Jedi seems somewhat shaky at the moment, and I can exploit that with the proper impetus. I just need to say the right things to her, and if I'm lucky, I might be able to acquire a second student.

"The Jedi would have us suppress our emotions," I say. "But that's unnatural. We're inherently emotional beings. We're not droids. It's our very emotions that allow us to use the Force at all. It's what makes us alive."

"But one can only access the Light Side of the Force when calm and at peace," Bastila says.

"That is, itself, an emotion, you realize," I say. "Not merely the lack of emotion. The Light Side of the Force thrives on positive emotions. Love, happiness, joy, hope. The Dark Side thrives on negative emotions. Anger, hatred, fear, despair. But when the Jedi teach you to be calm all the time, they're stifling your ability to use the Light Side as well. The greatest healing powers come of love, and yet they would teach you to avoid that at all costs."

Bastila frowns thoughtfully. "How do you know all this?"

"I don't know," I admit with a sigh. "I don't remember ever learning it, but now I understand it intuitively, between the dreams and the practice I've had with it recently."

"Why would you seek to embrace negative emotions as well?" Bastila asks.

"There's nothing inherently evil about aggressive emotions," I say. "Would you call someone evil for feeling angry at the mistreatment of a slave? And yet the Jedi do this very thing. They turn away from even the most righteous of anger and try to make themselves out to be droids. But anger is the weapon of the Force. You would not equip a ship solely with shields and expect it to win a war by itself."

Bastila thinks over my words for a few moments. "You... may have a point there." She shakes her head slowly. "But no. I will not doubt in the wisdom of the Jedi Code. I won't turn you in to the Jedi Council, but I will not follow your path. I will adhere to the Light Side."

"That's your choice," I say, giving her a small smile. Bastila stares at me. "What, are you surprised?"

"I... well, I expected you would try to make me follow your path and wouldn't let up until I turned," Bastila says.

"No," I say. "I will not do anything of the sort. Neither the Jedi nor the Sith would give you a choice in the matter. But to me, the power of choice is the most important force in the galaxy. Light or dark, both or neither, that's your choice. Follow me, betray me, help me, walk away completely, that's entirely your choice."

"You won't get many followers with that sort of attitude," Bastila says quietly.
I chuckle softly. "Perhaps not. But I would rather have a single person at my side who has willingly chosen to be there and is loyal to me of their own choice, than worlds upon worlds of slaves."

I stand up and nod to them, and let them be for the moment. I'm going off to speak with Zaalbar. We'll be arriving on his homeworld by tomorrow, and I'd like to confer with him before we get there.

"Zaalbar," I say. "May I speak with you for a bit?"

"If you wish," Zaalbar replies.

"We'll be arriving on Kashyyyk shortly," I tell him.

Zaalbar rumbles a little at that. "I knew we would be going there eventually to find these Star Maps, but I did not realize you would choose to go there first."

"Will there be a problem with that?" I ask.

"I did not choose to leave my homeworld," Zaalbar says. "I was exiled, years ago."

"Why were you exiled, if I may ask?" I prod gently.

"I discovered that my own brother, Chuundar, was selling my people into slavery," Zaalbar says, and a flash of anger boils up inside of me at his words unbidden. "I attacked him in a fit of rage. I attacked him with my claws. It was a dishonorable thing to do, and I was branded a madclaw for my crime. My father would not listen to my words and believed my brother over me."

"I understand," I say quietly. "And I'm sorry for what happened. Would you prefer to stay on the ship during our stay on Kashyyyk?"

"No," Zaalbar says. "Perhaps it is time that I face my family again and resolve things once and for all."

"You intend to kill your brother this time?"

"I do not wish to," Zaalbar says. "But I fear he will leave me little choice."

"There is always choice," I reply calmly. "It's just that the consequences of letting him live may be worse than taking the weight of his death upon you."

Zaalbar nods. "Perhaps I should have killed him, back then. Maybe then my exile would have had some meaning."

"One way or another," I say, "I won't abide by slavery. Anyone who would enslave another being deserves to die."

Zaalbar looks at me appraisingly for several moments before saying, "Then there are many on Kashyyyk who are going to die soon."

I grin darkly. "I look forward to it."

The prospect of dishing out a well-deserved slaughter to those who would rob others of their freedom fills me with a sadistic glee. I really am looking forward to this. Here, I'm free to call on the Dark Side again without arousing any undue suspicion. The only Jedi around here are Juhani and Bastila, and Juhani is on my side, and Bastila will let me follow my own path.

She doesn't have to agree with it, but I'm grateful for that. I'm confident that she will see the wisdom
in this course in due time. Bastila is young and emotional, and not so set in her course as to never be swayed. But I won't push it. I will lead by example, and show her the strength in this path. If I cannot persuade someone to follow me of their own free choice, then I do not deserve to lead.

I head over to the crew quarters to meditate for a bit, and find Neeja there. "Hello, Stormseeker," she says.

"Neeja," I say. "How are you doing?"

"I am well," Neeja replies with a faint smile.

"I see you haven't spent any of the allowance I gave you," I comment. "Did you even leave the ship at all during our stay on Dantooine?"

"No," Neeja says, looking to the floor. "I was afraid to go outside."

"Well, it's alright," I say. "We're en route to Kashyyyk right now. That won't be as safe as Dantooine, and it would probably be best if you stayed on the ship while we're there anyway."

"What's on Kashyyyk?" Neeja asks.

"It's the homeworld of the Wookiees," I tell her. "Zaalbar's people."

"Oh," she says. "Are they dangerous?"

"No more so than anyone else," I say with a shrug. "But I fear there's slavers at work on the planet. So I'm going to be killing some people."

"You're going to kill the slavers?" Neeja says.

I nod. "All of them, if I can."

"You really believe in what you do, don't you," Neeja comments.

"I wouldn't be able to do it if I didn't," I reply. "I'd just be a psychopath then. Killing people solely for pleasure, or because they got in my way."

Sometimes I wonder what the difference is. Is a psychopath who does something good any less of a psychopath? I don't really know. I would be lying if I claimed that I get no pleasure from killing people. But that's not the only reason I do it. Some people just deserve to die. Well, if killing slavers makes me a psychopath, then I'm alright with that.

"Well..." Neeja says a little uneasily. "Good luck, Stormseeker."
The giant trees of Kashyyyk stretch high into the air above my position on the forest floor. It's dark down here, among the dirt, among the earth. The sounds of wildlife echo all around me.

I've been working on this machine for several days now. Another safeguard to add to my myriad of others. I can't trust my own memory, and so I must trust in devices like this to help me should the worst happen and I lose everything again. If I should lose it all, I will likely be needing to find these Star Maps again. And so I'm putting in another safeguard here, with detailed journals to refresh my memory. There are things, important things, that I must not forget.

I take a risk with every journal I place that it will be discovered by the wrong people. So I protect them with safeguards that I'm not even certain I will be able to decipher. A DNA check, a personality test, a neural scan, a passcode. If I can succeed at all of these, the full information will be made available. If only some of them match, it will at least open partial access in hopes that something will be knocked loose enough to make a full match.

The personality test includes trick questions. If I know me well enough, I should realize that they're a trick, and that nothing is ever as simple or straightforward as tests like this make them out to be. And the passcode is something only I would truly understand, and if I lose sight of that principle, I have to wonder if there's any hope for me at all.

"There is no temptation, there is only choice," I murmur aloud.

I wake. Reflexively reach for journal and write down this dream, still half-asleep. A quick glance down the list reveals no unexpected holes in my memory this morning, at least. I head out to grab some breakfast and check on our ETA.

Bastila, Mission, and Zaalbar are currently in the main operations area of the ship. "Good morning, guys," I say. "What's our ETA?"

"About an hour," Bastila replies without looking. "Do you have any idea what we're looking for? This is going to be a long trip if we have to search the entire planet."

"I do," I reply. "I had a dream last night that should point me in the right direction."

"I've never heard of any ancient ruins on Kashyyyk like those we discovered on Dantooine," Zaalbar says.

"It's down on the surface," I say. "Beneath the trees, on the forest floor."

"In the Shadowlands?" Zaalbar says. "I suppose that would make sense. There certainly wouldn't be anything like that among the canopy villages."

"We won't be able to just go down and land directly there, of course," Bastila says. "Czerka Corporation controls the airspace around the planet. There's only one place we'll be allowed to land, it looks like."

"Well, I'd hate to disappoint them," I say dryly. "We'll land there, then, and from there we'll scout the place out and gather information. Find out what we need to, and... see who needs to die."
Bastila looks at me with a touch of fear. I think the expression on my face must have been a scary one at that moment. It's no wonder I took to wearing a mask as Darth Revan. I find myself wearing figurative ones enough, why not a literal one?

We come in for a landing when the Czerka Corp traffic controller gives clearance, and set down on a platform high in the trees. Sprawling walkways reach between the giant trees, making it easy for humans to travel among the area.

"Canderous, Zaalbar, Mission, you're with me," I say. "Carth, Bastila, Juhani, I want you to stay here and guard the ship for now. I don't trust these Czerka goons further than I can throw them. Discourage anyone from inspecting the ship, too. We're not exactly hiding anything at the moment, but I don't want anyone poking around on my ship, regardless. Keep in touch by comm if needed."

"They will not violate this place while I stand watch, Master," Juhani says firmly.

My team heads out onto the walkways of Kashyyyk. We're immediately set upon by an Ithorian demanding that we pay a docking fee.

"We don't need to pay the docking fee," I say boredly. Using the Force like this feels almost beneath me.

"You don't need to pay the docking fee," repeats the Ithorian dumbly.

As we walk off, Mission says quietly, "I kind of wish I had Force powers. That's a cool trick!"

I snicker softly. "I'm not giving one credit to Czerka Corp if I can help it."

From the looks of things, Czerka is definitely in control of this place. The Wookiees I see look miserable, and I have to wonder why they put up with their servitude. How many of them have been enslaved here? I'm guessing that most of the people will immediately assume that Zaalbar is my slave, and maybe even Mission too.

Along the way, we come across a small group of guards standing over a fresh Wookiee corpse. They look very nervous as we approach. I suspect that they killed the poor Wookiee themselves, but for the moment I carefully put on a neutral mask.

"Is there a problem here?" I ask courteously.

"This furball was getting a little too rebellious," says one of the guards. "We had to put it down. I hope this doesn't cut into our profits too much. Our superiors might dock the price of it from our pay."

Their words enrage Zaalbar, who growls at them, "How dare you? You will not kill or enslave another of my kind!"

"Hey, you'd better keep control of your slave or we'll have to put it down too," says the guard.

There's rage in me as well, but I can control it a little better. The storm around me swirls with greater intensity, however. I quietly hold up my hand to Zaalbar and weigh my options, glancing about for a moment. There's no one else nearby. No witnesses.

"We're here to liberate Kashyyyk from Czerka Corp," I say lightly. "Congratulations. You're our first victims. Kill them."

I pull out my dual lightsabers and attack. Four on four, it's an easy fight and a good opportunity to
test out my new lightsaber style in a real combat situation. It takes a lot of focus, and I need to be extra careful not to accidentally lop off Zaalbar's arm as well. I'm not very good with this style yet, but I think I like using it.

The Czerka Corp guards are slain in short order, and I look down at the corpse of the unfortunate Wookiee. "I'm afraid I don't know what to do with a dead Wookiee," I say quietly to Zaalbar.

"Leave him," Zaalbar replies. "There's nothing we can do for him now. But at least we've avenged him."

I carefully search the corpses of the guards for valuables and toss them over the side of the walkway, leaving them to tumble from the treetops far down into the Shadowlands below. No evidence.

"Hey, what are you doing?" calls a voice from nearby.

So much for no witnesses and no evidence. Another group of guards is heading this way. I turn to them and pull out my lightsabers again.

"What are you, a Dark Jedi?" says one of the latest group of guards. "We're not going to let you get away with causing trouble here, even if you are a Dark Jedi!"

"Fine," I say. "You can die, too."

This is a slightly larger group of Czerka Corp guards, but they die just as readily as the last. Damned slavers. If they're going to be assholes like this, I might as well just kill every one of them on the planet right now and be done with it.

As it is, all pretense of subtlety has been lost, as the last group raised an alarm. More armed men are closing in on our position. I hope that B-Team can hold off anyone that tries to cause trouble with the Ebon Hawk, because it looks like we've got plenty of trouble here ourselves.

"Let's get back to the ship and regroup with the others," I say.

"Good plan," Canderous says.

We fight our way back toward the docking platform we came in on. It's not all that far, but there's too many of them, and they've surrounded the ship. I cut a path through them with my lightsabers, enjoying the thrill of battle even if it has gone a little further than expected.

"Status report!" I bark.

"Not good," Carth replies. "They have us pinned down here."

"We're not leaving without what we came for!" I say, clenching my teeth determinedly. "We'll leave a pile of corpses all the way there if we have to! These slaver scum deserve only death regardless!"

My heart pumps and my blood boils, and I lose myself in the exhilaration of the fight. They'll die. They're all going to die. I'll leave none of these scum alive. I will kill them all.

The swath of blood comes to a swift end as reinforcements arrive, and I realize too late that we're far too heavily outnumbered and outgunned. I can't block all their shots, and one gets through my guard, then another, and another. Gravely wounded, I stumble off the edge of the walkway and fall to my doom far below.

I wake with a groan. Blaster wounds followed by prolonged falling death... not a pleasant way to
wake up. I rub my eyes and go to write down everything I've seen here.

Obviously, the Force is telling me not to try to wipe out a planet full of Czerka goons with just my own small crew. I'd always heard that interpretation of Force premonitions is supposed to be difficult, but every one I've seen so far has been very clear about what it's telling me.

Glancing through the journal, I notice that I appear to have forgotten my first day on Taris this time. I refresh my memory of fighting in the dueling ring, and wonder if any of those I met there that day made it off the planet. Maybe Sarna made it, if Malak bothered to evacuate any of his own troops beforehand, but I wouldn't put it past him to just trash the place and throw their lives away without regard for the wastefulness of the act.

I sigh and head out for some breakfast before we arrive. Zaalbar, Mission, and Bastila are in the main area of the ship.

"Morning, Lexen," Mission says brightly. "You're up just in time. We're arriving within the hour."

"Do you have any idea where to find what we're looking for?" Bastila asks.

I nod to her. "Yeah. It's down in the Shadowlands. I should be able to find it without any trouble if we can get down there. Czerka's only going to let us land in one spot. Let's try not to cause too much trouble with them until we're ready to go to war. We can't fight them all off by ourselves."

They don't argue with the sentiment. We head down for a landing, and I split my crew into the same teams as in my latest premonition. Guarding the ship isn't a terrible idea, even if I don't go and piss off the entire planet.

"I don't need to pay the landing fee," I tell the guy at the landing platform before he can even say anything to me. "You don't need to search my ship for contraband."

I walk on before even bothering to wait for his monotone reply. I'm going to have to make sure that Zaalbar doesn't pick a fight here yet, either. I know that I can control myself, even though I'd love to just slaughter all these assholes, but I need to make sure he can restrain himself long enough to not get us killed.

I spot the location where the four Czerka guards have recently killed a Wookiee, and pause to say to Zaalbar quietly, "Remember, no fighting yet, no matter what they've done. I promise you, we'll slaughter as many of them as we can before leaving this planet. We just need to restrain ourselves for the moment."

Canderous and Zaalbar reply acknowledgement, and we approach the Czerka guards. We need to pass by them to get where we're going, regardless.

"Well, I don't know what we're going to do with it!" says one of the guards to another. They haven't noticed us yet.

"Ah, crap," another says, looking to us. "Witnesses."

"We're just passing through," I say flatly. "We didn't see anything."

"Good," says the guard. "Move along, then."

Zaalbar is growling quietly as we pass by the spot. Once out of earshot of the guards, I tell him, "They'll get what's coming to them. Patience."
We continue on, and come to their village to meet with their chief. The Czerka Corp men standing guard in his hall make it clear what his position here really is. I'm itching for a fight still. I'm thirsty for the blood of every Czerka goon on this planet. But I will be patient. I'm not leaving this planet in this state, but right now, I'm still gathering information. I will keep a mask of civility for now.

"You. Offworlder," growls the Wookiee chieftain. "Why have you brought this madclaw before me again? Did he not tell you he was exiled from this world?"

"Chuundar," says Zaalbar. "Why am I not surprised to see you here? What's happened to our father?"

"Father is dead," Chuundar says tersely.

"Zaalbar is none of your concern right now," I say. "You're dealing with me."

"Fine," Chuundar snarls. "What do you want, offworlder?"

"I'm looking for something on this world," I reply. "A long-forgotten ruin built by a forgotten people, down in the Shadowlands."

"I have never heard of such a thing," Chuundar says. "But you are welcome to waste your own time searching if you wish. I will allow you to enter the Shadowlands if you will do something for me in return."

"What would you ask of me?"

"There is a madclaw down in the Shadowlands," Chuundar says. "A crazed Wookiee, causing trouble by blindly attacking anyone that comes near. I want you to slay him while you're down there looking for your imaginary ancient ruins."

I'm guessing that the Wookiee in question is a political enemy who disagreed with Chuundar's actions and was subsequently cast out of the village. Sounds like someone I'd like to make a friend.

"I'll look for this madclaw," I reply. Strictly true. I just don't tell Chuundar what I intend to do when I find him.

"Also, you will leave Zaalbar here while you are below, to ensure your good behavior," Chuundar says.

"You think I'll leave him in your custody like that?" I say.

"It's a reunion long in coming," Chuundar says. "We have a lot of catching up to do. Do not worry. He will be unharmed, so long as you do nothing to compromise the stability of the planet."

Nothing to compromise his position, he means. I restrain myself for the moment, however. Much as I'd like to just pull out my lightsabers and start the slaughter, I want to meet this Wookiee he wants me to kill first.

"Zaalbar?" I say, looking over at him.

"I will remain here for now," Zaalbar replies. "Go do what you came here for."

I give a nod, and say, "Mission, keep him company, will you?" I give her a look that leaves unspoken the hint that she should watch for trouble and make a break for the ship if things go south.

"Will do," Mission says.
I nod to Canderous, and the two of us make our way as directed toward the lift down into the Shadowlands. It's a long, long way down into the dark. It's a little eerie, down beneath the trees, where little sunlight can reach. I find it kind of comforting in a way, though. It's wild, chaotic, and alive.

Canderous and I don't get far before spotting a green light moving nearby. A lightsaber? An old man with a lightsaber is fighting several wild beasts. By the time we get close, he's already downed them all.

A Jedi? Here, of all places? And if he's that old, he's probably fairly powerful, too. And here I'd just been glad to be out of the sight of the Jedi, and I immediately stumble into another one. If he sees my red lightsaber or notices me using Dark Side powers, he might disapprove and need to be killed. He's too old to readily be convinced of another way.

"It's not often I get visitors down here," he says. "The name's Jolee Bindo. Be careful, there's more beasts hiding in the underbrush."

"I'm Lexen Skywalker, and this is Canderous Ordo," I say.

"Nice to meet you," Jolee says shortly. "If you want to talk, come visit with me in my cabin."

"Lead the way, Jolee," I say, moving to follow after him warily.

Jolee heads off through the darkened woods to a makeshift cabin underneath a gigantic tree root. It actually looks comfortable enough, and I wonder just how long he's been living here.

"I didn't expect to see a Jedi out here," I comment.

"Oh, I'm no Jedi," he says. "I'm just an old man who got lost in the woods."

I smirk and look at him dubiously. "An old man with a lightsaber?"

"That's right," Jolee says. "Quite a handy thing to have around, after all, with all the dangerous beasts around. They aren't normally quite so aggressive, though."

"So, how long have you been down here, old man?" I ask lightly.

"Oh, many years," Jolee replies. "Perhaps I've been down here long enough, though."

"Why did you come here in the first place?" I ask.

"It made for a nice vacation spot," Jolee says. "Someplace nice and peaceful to come after the war."

"Which war?" I wonder.

Jolee chuckles softly. "There've been a lot of them, haven't there? It was that business with Exar Kun. Nasty business, that. Some memories you just want to forget, you know?"

I nod thoughtfully, and say, "Sometimes I can't decide whether it would be better to remember everything, no matter how bad it is, or to just start over... I tend to lean toward the former, but sometimes I wish I could do the latter."

"So what brings a kid like you to Kashyyyk, eh?" Jolee asks. "Looking for something you lost down in the dark?"

"You could say that," I reply. "Do you know anything about any ancient ruins around here?"
"Oh, yes," Jolee says. "I know the ones you're talking about. But you won't get there without my help, and before I help you, I want you to do a little favor for me."

I smirk faintly. "What would you have me do?"

"Czerka Corp has been disrupting the place of late," Jolee says. "They've got poachers down here in the Shadowlands killing animals indiscriminately, threatening some of them with extinction. They have a camp not far from here. I'd like you to make them go away."

"Killing Czerka?" I reply. "No problem, just point me in their direction."

"Now, now," Jolee says, raising a hand. "I didn't say anything about killing them. If I wanted them dead, I could have done it myself."

"Why would you want to spare them?" I wonder. Too late reminding myself that he's a Jedi, the words are already out of my mouth.

"You don't need to solve everything by bloodshed, kid," Jolee says. "If you've any talent with tricks or diplomacy, you could get them to leave without hurting any of them."

"Fine," I say with a sigh. "I'll make them leave peacefully. But I won't guarantee their safety if they don't get off the planet immediately."

"What, are you planning a war?" Jolee says.

"I won't stand by and allow Czerka Corp to continue to abuse the Wookiees like they have," I say. "And I promised my Wookiee friend that I would fix this and get Czerka off the planet. Violently if need be. Do you have a problem with that?"

Jolee chuckles softly. "Oh, no, not at all. But you might have better luck if the Wookiees helped to free themselves."

"That's what I was hoping for," I say. "Chuundar wanted me to come down here and kill a 'madclaw'. I don't trust Chuundar, and I get the feeling that the one he wants dead isn't nearly as crazy as he claims, and might actually be a threat to Chuundar's power."

"Ah, I know the one you speak of," Jolee says. "And I think you're more perceptive than perhaps you realize."

"Heh," I say. "That's good to hear. I was half worried that I'd go to all the trouble of tracking him down, only to discover that he really was just frothing at the mouth insane."

"No worries about that," Jolee replies. "He's only crazed with grief, that one."

"I suppose I'll just go say 'boo' to those Czerka goons," I say with a sigh.

Canderous and I head off in the direction Jolee indicates. "That's a rather strange Jedi," Canderous comments when we're out of earshot.

"Yeah," I murmur in agreement. "I'm not really sure what to make of him. But maybe we won't wind up killing him."

We find the Czerka camp where Jolee said we would, set up in the midst of several mechanical pylons. Being near them causes an itching sensation in the back of my brain, and I think they're what's keeping the large predators away. Their leader is gazing off into the mists thoughtfully,
rubbing his chin in a rather villainesque gesture.

"Greetings," I say as I approach the camp.

"I am Dern. I'm in command of this outpost. What are you doing here?"

"I'm here to warn you," I say. "You should abandon this outpost as soon as possible."

"What?" Dern says. "Why? It's been a very profitable venture here. We're collecting tach glands. With the destruction of Taris, they're more in demand than ever."

I snort softly. "You know, it would be more profitable in the long run to capture some and breed them so as to have a steady, permanent supply of resources for years to come. But you're obviously just here for some quick credits. So let me just warn you. This isn't worth your life."

"What, are you threatening me?" Dern says, looking offended.

"No," I reply smoothly. "I'm warning you that things are likely to get heated up on this planet shortly. Something's going on with the Wookiees, and you don't want to get caught in the crossfire when things come to a head. You should consider an immediate transfer to somewhere safer. Like, say, Tatooine." I smirk at him.

Dern visibly pales at the suggestion. "You think the Wookiees are planning a revolt? That's preposterous."

"I know more than I'm going to tell you right now," I say. "Do you really want to take the chance? This place is a time bomb waiting to go off. Do you expect anything else from a world where giant walking carpets have been enslaved?"

"You may have a point," Dern says reluctantly. "Hmm. I'll move us out of here, if you bring me a breeding pair of tachs."

"How am I supposed to know the males from the females?" I say with a snort.

"Don't look at me," Dern says. "You're the one who suggested it. If this planet heats up in addition to Taris's destruction, the prices on those glands will skyrocket. So I'll pay you well for live tachs."

"Fine," I say. "I can't argue with credits. I'll go see about capturing a few, then."

I go off to gather up some of the cute little monkey-like creatures. I consider keeping a few of them myself as pets. I wonder if anyone would terribly mind them hanging around the ship. We have to fight off several of the larger predators along the way. I have a feeling that they're being affected by those pylons in the Czerka camp. Maybe that's what's making them so aggressive outside of the camp.

I bring in half a dozen of them that I'm reasonably certain include a male and a female back to the Czerka camp. I've subdued them with the Force for the moment so that they don't become skittish and try to flee.

"Very good," Dern says, going to tie leashes to them so that they won't flee, since their group didn't come equipped with cages. "Here is your payment. I'll get these up top immediately and be gone from here. Whatever might be going on on this planet in the near future, I hope it can wait for at least an hour or two."

There's a good chunk of cash for not really a lot of effort. Well, without the Force, that might have
been considerably more difficult, but I'm not above using the Force to subdue harmless woodland animals for money. Once the Czerka goons are gone, I go to pick up a pair of tachs for myself. I calm them with the Force, and encourage them with a bit of food.

"So, what do you think, Canderous?" I say. "Can I keep it?" I hold up the adorable little tach.

Canderous looks at me like I've said something insane. "Are you planning for a steady supply of Tarisian ale in the future, or do you just think they're cute?"


"At least they're not gizka," Canderous says, shaking his head and snickering. "Do what you want. I'm just here to shoot things."

Soon enough, I have a pair of tachs riding along in my backpack, poking their heads out curiously, but ducking inside to hide whenever large beasts come near. I hope that the extra weight won't hinder me too much.

We return to Jolee's cabin. "Welcome back," he says. "Hmm. I can sense that the Czerka employees are gone. And I don't sense any blood about you. You didn't kill them?"

"I did not," I reply. "You said that you wanted it dealt with without bloodshed, so I respected your request."

"And you apparently picked up a couple pet tachs along the way," Jolee says in amusement.

"Hey, they're cute," I say with a grin.

Jolee chuckles softly. "Alright, a deal's a deal. I'll show you the way to the ruin you're looking for. And I'd like to travel with you when you leave Kashyyyk as well."

I raise an eyebrow. "Tired of the forest, old man?" I ask lightly.

"I think I've seen quite enough of giant trees for one lifetime," Jolee says. "There's only so much you can learn down here, and I think I've been here long enough."

"In other words, you're bored," I say, grinning. "No promises."

Jolee leads the way through the forest, and we come upon a large forcefield situated between a pair of trees. It was apparently intended to control the movements of predators throughout the forest. Jolee goes over to deactivate it.

"That's the silliest idea I've seen in a while," I comment. "This is a forest, not a fortress. You can't just toss up a few forcefields and expect to be able to control it."

Jolee chuckles. "What do you expect from Czerka Corp? There, the way's clear to the ruin."

"Jolee," I say as we head through the place where the forcefield was. "If you're going to be traveling with us, there's something you should know."

"Oh?" Jolee says. "What might that be, young man?"

I turn and face him, watching him carefully, alert for a fight. "I'm Darth Revan."

"Oh, I know," Jolee says lightly.
"You... know," I say, deflating a little. "And you don't have a problem traveling with a former Sith Lord?"

"Kid, I've seen my share of the dark and the light," Jolee replies. "And it seems to me like everything is really shades of gray. Some aren't as good as they think they are, and some aren't as bad as they're feared to be."

I relax, and smile at him. "Well, in that case, it's good to have you on board. I'm not planning on being a Sith again, but neither am I falling in with the Jedi, either. I've seen too much of the flaws on both sides."

"Wiser than some would give you credit for," Jolee says, and then chuckles again. "Besides. The Dark Lord of the Sith has a pair of pet tachs. That's prime comedy, right there."

I laugh aloud at that. "You're right, that is pretty funny."

Further down the path, we come upon a Wookiee being harassed by what appears to be a trio of armored Mandalorians. Great, more honorless scum. Even worse than the ones on Dantooine, I'd say. I pull out my lightsabers and my tachs duck away out of sight.

I shout to them in Mandalorian, "Hey, cowards! Why don't you fight someone who can actually fight back?"

They turn to look at us, probably with alarm underneath their helmets. Suddenly going from fighting an unarmed Wookiee to two guys with lightsabers and a Mandalorian with an oversized blaster? Yeah, suddenly the fight doesn't look so one-sided. To their credit, at least they don't retreat. Then I'd know their honor is truly gone. My blood boils at the thought of preying upon the helpless like this, though. I show them no mercy, and strike them down in anger.

I squat down next to the wounded Wookiee. "Hey," I say gently, examining him. "Are you alright?"

"He's hurt real bad," Jolee says. "He's going to need medical attention, and soon."

I take a deep breath, and call upon the Force. I don't know that I was ever a great healer or anything, but I know I can do this. Not like the Jedi. Not through suppressing emotions. Compassion. Love. Hope. I care about this Wookiee, this stranger. I don't want to see him hurt. Be better. Be well. Live.

The Force flows through me, like a conduit of light, surrounding the injured Wookiee with warmth and cradling him in love. His wounds begin to seal up, and he breathes easier.

"You... you saved me. I am Grrrwahrr. Thank you for your timely intervention."

"Happy to help," I say with a grin, standing up again. "What the hell are these honorless scum doing here?"

"They attacked my hunting party," Grrrwahrr says. "They slew my companions. They hid in stealth fields, waiting until our weapons were away and our guard was down before striking out of nowhere."

"These bloody cowards were among the first to flee when the war turned against them," Canderous says, spitting. "They have no honor."

"I will avenge your companions, Grrrwahrr," I say. "By my honor, these scum will not get away with their actions."
I search the corpses of the three Mandalorians for valuables and claim their weapons. I also find a datapad with recent communications between the Mandalorians. They've apparently been ordered to test out some cloaking devices, but even the soldiers are questioning their commander over this behavior. Maybe I can still reason with some of them.

We leave the relieved Wookiee behind and head off further into the forest. Now, in addition to looking for the ruins and the so-called madclaw, we've got honorless scum to hunt down, too.

"Mandalorians turned into bullies," Jolee says. "What's the galaxy coming to?"

"Shameful," Canderous agrees. "Let's kill them all, Mandalore. We don't need this stain on our people."

"I intend to," I say with a wicked grin. I've relaxed around Jolee now, knowing that he's not going to judge me.

"I won't argue with that," Jolee says. "Watching you is funny. Seeing you go from Dark Side bloodlust in combat to Light Side healing in an instant. I can't imagine there's many people that can do that. Most Darksiders would just use Dark Side style healing... which is far less pleasant."

I give a nod. "I don't care to reject either the Dark Side nor the Light. They both have their uses."

"True," Jolee says. "I like the way you think, kid."

We arrive at the ruins containing the Star Map. Everything is still pretty much like I remember it from before. Although the edges of the ruins are overgrown, something is keeping the vegetation at bay around the primary machines.

"Mind you, I've never been able to actually get this thing to talk to me," Jolee says. "Maybe you'll have better luck."

I approach the hologram. "Access data."


"Match found?" Jolee says, snorting softly. "Figures. Why does it like you but not me?"

"Because I programmed it to," I reply with a smirk. "Computer, begin verification test."

"Initializing test," the hologram says. "First question. You and a companion, Zaalbar, are both accused of a crime. Unable to determine the true culprit, you are both given the same ultimatum. If one of you accuses the other, the accused will spend five years in prison, while the accuser will go free. If both accuse the other, both will spend two years in prison. If neither accuses the other, both will spend one year in prison. What do you do? Do you accuse Zaalbar, expecting that he will betray you? Or do you keep quiet, expecting that he will be faithful to you?"

"Neither," I reply. "I'll be insulted at this sham of justice and kill everyone involved in attempting to imprison us. They're clearly corrupt, and we obviously didn't commit what we're being accused of anyway."

"Correct," the hologram replies.

"How is that even a correct answer?" Jolee wonders. "You didn't even answer the question at all."

"It was a trick question," I tell him. "And I programmed this thing, remember? I know what sort of
answers I was expecting. Even if I don't remember all of the specifics."

"Bah," Jolee says. "Damned amnesiac Dark Lords."

"Computer, how many times did Jolee Bindo attempt to access this terminal?" I ask out of curiosity.

"One hundred and fifty-two times," replies the computer.

"What?" Jolee says innocently. "I was bored."

I snicker softly. "My apologies for not thinking to put in an entertainment routine for bored semi-Jedi hermits. I will be certain to include procedurally generated animated comedy skits in my next secret information stash."

I continue the test. After successfully completing the personality test with satisfactory results, the computer unlocks access to the Star Map. But I'm not done there.

"Computer, unlock full authorization," I say. "Passcode: There is no temptation, there is only choice."

"Passcode accepted," says the hologram. "Authorization recognized. Full access granted."

I download the data inside my personal files on the computer into my datapad, as well as updating it with the information in my current journal. Just in case. I'll peruse them later to see just what sorts of memories I recorded within them. For now, I just take a copy of the Star Map data and lock down the terminal again. There's more work to be done here first.

"That's that," I say. "Let's go hunt down some cowards and see if we can find that Wookiee."

We lure in the Mandalorians by pretending to let down our guard and make camp. As we're faking relaxing, they materialize around us, only to discover that we're not quite as helpless as we look.

"Well, hello there," I say with a crooked grin, speaking to them in fluent Mandalorian. "Now that you're here, care to explain your dishonorable actions? I'm sure that things couldn't possibly be as bad as they look. Mandalorians wouldn't behave this way."

The Mandalorians hesitate, and see that we're only defending ourselves and not actively trying to kill them at the moment. "Our... commander ordered us to," one of them replies.

"Your commander is hereby relieved pending execution," I reply smoothly. "The rest of you are to stand down immediately."

"Who are you to order Mandalorians around?"

Canderous says, "He's Mandalore."

"What? But he's wieldling lightsabers. Isn't he a Jedi?"

I smirk. "I'm Darth Revan."

"What? Seriously?"

Jolee says, "Yup."

"Oh. Shit." He stares at me. "You have a pair of tachs on your back."
"Yup," I reply lightly, and chuckle softly. "You see the problem in attacking apparently helpless foes? It makes you complacent. You're the ones who let down your guard instead."

"It won't happen again, Mandalore."

I nod shortly, and say, "What is your name?"

"I am Tagren, sir."

"Very well, Tagren. Consider yourself promoted. Now take me to your former commander. I must deal with him."

"Yes, Mandalore," Tagren says, saluting me.

Tagren leads us back to where their swoop bikes are parked, and sends out a signal to call in the remainder of the Mandalorians in the vicinity. I carefully set aside my pack containing the two tachs, and pat them on the head reassuringly. Sure enough, the commander and several others arrive on the scene shortly.

"What's going on?" the commander says. "Who are these people?"

"I'm Mandalore," I say. "And I'm going to give you a generous opportunity. I'm going to let you die with honor. Fight me, one on one." I pull out my dual lightsabers.

"You're an imposter," he replies. "You don't even have the mask. Men, kill them."

"Afraid to fight me yourself?" I taunt him. "Show your men what a coward you really are? It doesn't matter who I am. Fight me."

The other Mandalorians, seeming less inclined to follow his kill order, step back to give us room to fight. Reluctantly, the commander brings out a pair of vibroblades and faces off with me. I grin eagerly and fall into combat mode.

I bring up my anger against him like a storm of blades. The fire of rage burning in my blood. The desire to kill. Slash. Parry. Thrust. Block. This might be a new, unfamiliar style, but I'm focused and determined. If anything, the style forces me to stay even more focused than usual. Every movement is deliberate. My mind is crisp and clear in the midst of my rage.

No mercy. No diplomacy. Not with this one. I strike him down, ending his life without ever finding out his name, nor caring. The Mandalorians watch on with fear and respect. If there was any doubt in their minds about who I claim to be, I've no doubt it's gone now.

"I will follow you, Mandalore," Tagren says, saluting me. "What are your orders?"

I glance to the others and say, "Tagren is your new commander. And do note that I will not tolerate such dishonorable displays as was shown upon this world. Neither do I have any use for warriors who will break and run at the first sign of trouble. If you feel that you're inclined to do so, then run off and leave whatever is left of your honor behind. But if you're interested in reclaiming your honor and rebuilding our people, then gather your clan and go to regroup on Dxun with the others."

"Yes, Mandalore," Tagren says. "Understood."

"Oh, and," I say. "Who wanted you to test these cloaking field generators, by the way?"

"I was not privy to that information, Mandalore," Tagren replies. "My apologies."
"Ah, well," I say. "Go on and get ready to leave, but stick around a bit longer. I'm going to kick Czerka off this planet before leaving. I'm sure you'd hate to miss out on the fight."

"Yes, Mandalore," Tagren says. "We'll fight for you."

"Good," I say. "Move into a good position to strike from and wait for either my signal, or Wookiees starting to attack Czerka employees."

After making sure that I'll be able to contact them, we part ways, and I head off into the forest to tell Grrrwahrr what happened. Relieved that the former Mandalorian commander is dead, he heads back topside again. We continue on to see if we can find the lost Wookiee next.

Sure enough, a bit of searching later, and we're attacked by an enraged feral Wookiee. I hold up my hand to Canderous and don't draw my own weapons. I take off my pack and set it aside safely out of the way where the tachs won't get hurt.

"Freyyr!" Jolee says. "Don't you remember me? It's me, Jolee Bindo!"

Freyyr doesn't listen, blindly attacking at us with his claws in a mad rage. I frown, hoping that Chuundar is wrong about this Wookiee actually being insane.

"Freyyr, calm down!" I say commandingly, putting the Force into my voice in trying to soothe him and bring some sanity back to his addled mind. "You are not insane! You are not a madclaw!"

"Slavers!" Freyrr snarls, not listening to me. "I will not submit to your filth!" He swipes at me with his claws, almost cutting through my armor.

"We're not slavers, Freyyr!" I tell him. "We're friends! We're here to help! We came here with Zaalbar, and we want to stop Chuundar and get rid of Czerka Corp!"

"Zaalbar is dead!" Freyyr roars. "How dare you mock me with the memory of my lost son?" He almost knocks me over, ripping and tearing at me. I think I'm going to need to replace my armor when this is done.

"Listen to him, Freyyr!" Jolee says, trying to restrain the Wookiee.

Freyyr isn't listening, though. He roars and knocks me over the head with his next attack.
"This ship's fast, alright," Han Solo says. "She'll get you where you're going right quick. Those Imperial Star Destroyers in orbit won't stop us."

"I need to get to Alderaan," I say. "As quickly as possible. Can you do that?"

"Sure thing," Han says. "Ten thousand credits."

"How about I just buy your ship and hire you and Chewbacca on as crew?" I smirk.

"She's not for sale," Han replies.

"One million credits," I say.

Han stares at me. "Are you serious?"

I shrug. "She reminds me of a ship I used to have once. Although that one I kind of killed the previous owner and stole it... And to be honest, I like you better than the pilot I had back then. He had one hell of a stick up his ass. I even had a Wookiee along, too, for that matter."

"He wasn't a slave, was he?" Chewbacca growls.

"No, of course not," I reply. "I can't stand slavers. Actually, I saved him from slavers and he swore a life-debt to me."

Chewbacca looks at me with new respect. "I'm surprised that you understand my language. And that you would do that for one of my kind."

"I like Wookiees," I say. "They tend to be more honorable than most humans I've met."

"You know, hell with it," Han says. "Let's get the credits I owe over to Jabba the Hutt, and you've got a deal."

Nngh. Was that a memory, or a premonition? I don't know. And why does my head hurt?

"Revan, can you hear me?" a voice is saying. "Revan? Lexen?"

"Mandalore?" says another voice.

"I'm so sorry," a Wookiee says. "I've done a terrible thing."

"Ungh," I murmur.

"He's waking up," says the first voice.

I open my eyes slowly. Jolee Bindo is kneeling over me. I'm laying on dirt and moss, staring up at trees. Where am I? Oh, right, this is the Shadowlands on Kashyyyk.

"I'm alright," I say. "I think." I rub my head. It still hurts a little.

"I healed you up best I could," Jolee says.
"Thanks," I say, standing slowly, wobbling a little from dizziness.

"Careful there," Jolee says. "Take it easy. You had a bit of a concussion."

Freyyr is standing nearby, looking at the ground repentently. "I should not have hurt you. You only meant to help. I thought you slavers lying to me to torment me. But I've done wrong in attacking you and harming you."

"Don't worry about it," I say. "It's not like I was unarmed or helpless. I just chose not to fight back." I snort softly. "To be honest, it's partly my own fault for not wearing a helmet."

"You said... You said you came here with Zaalbar? He's alive? He's well?"

I nod. "He's fine."

"I'm glad to hear that," Freyrr says. "If only I had listened to him. Chuundar betrayed me as well when I became inconvenient for him..."

"That doesn't surprise me," I say. "I take it by the fact that he still wants you dead that you could still pose a problem to him, politically?"

"Perhaps so," Freyrr says. "If I had Bacca's Blade, I might be able to challenge him for leadership. But it has been lost to my people for some time. It was broken in the hide of a legendary beast, and from then on we had only the hilt."

"So if we can go kill this beast and retrieve the blade, we might be able to oust Chuundar and Czerka Corp from power?" I say.

"Maybe," Freyrr says. "It's a faint hope, but it's more than I've had in a long time. I'm sure there are those who will still follow me."

"Alright," I say. "It's worth a shot. Let's go find this beast."

I toss Freyrr a spare vibroblade, and the four of us head off into the forest to hunt down the creature in question. Although when we find it, I almost wish we hadn't. It's as big as a rancor, and looks twice as nasty. I recognize it. It seems familiar. I can't quite remember its name, however.

"Terentatek," Jolee helpfully supplies.

"That's a mouthful," I mutter. "No wonder I forgot what it was called."

"Be wary," Jolee says. "They feed off the blood of Force users."

I tuck my pack safely behind a nearby tree and pat the tachs on the head before pulling out my weapons and closing in on the beast.

The four of us surround the creature and strike it from all angles with lightsabers, blaster, and vibroblade. It's one hell of a fight, and I let the Dark Side loose within me to strengthen my blows with rage. The Dark Side seems particularly strong in this area, and I lose myself in it. I am the raging storm. I strike at the monster aggressively with both sabers. A storm of blades hailing down upon my enemy.

Then for an instant, I come face to face with the beast. Looking at me. Hungrily. And then I feel its teeth upon me.

"Lexen, can you hear me?" Jolee Bindo is saying.

"I'm so sorry..." Freyyr is saying.

"Yeah, I'm alright," I groan. "It's alright. I just had a premonition."

"You get premonitions from being hit over the head by Wookiees?" Jolee says. "We could use that. You could solve everything that way!"

I smirk. "I don't think that's quite how it works. Anyway, I saw a terentatek, and the lost blade of Bacca stuck in its hide."

"Bacca's ceremonial blade?" Freyyr says. "If I had that, I could challenge Chuundar for leadership..."

I give a nod. "Yeah. Let's go kill it and retrieve that blade, shall we?" I hand Freyyr my spare vibroblade.

Freyyr looks at the weapon I've given him. "You would arm me, after the way I attacked you like that?"

I chuckle softly. "Don't worry about it. I'm fine."

We head off to track down the terentatek. I'm going to have to be careful to make sure the fight doesn't go the way it did in my premonition. I shouldn't lose myself in the thrill of the fight to the point of letting down my defenses. This is still a dangerous creature that can and will kill me if I give it the opportunity to do so.

The four of us engage the terentatek. I focus my fighting stance carefully. I am the eye of the storm. I'm surrounded by the Dark Side here, but I must not lose myself in it entirely. I mustn't lose my head in bloodlust. I call on the Dark Side to strengthen my attacks, but I do not neglect my defense.

When the creature lunges at me, I nimbly dodge out of the way, and take advantage of the opening to strike at its neck with my red lightsaber. The massive beast stumbles, stricken by a fatal blow, and finally falls.

Freyyr pulls Bacca's ceremonial blade out from the thick hide of the terentatek. "It's here..." Freyyr says, examining the blade. "I hadn't thought this much of a hope. I feared we would be walking into our deaths to fight the beast. But here it is..."

"There's always hope, Freyyr," I tell him, going over to collect my tach pack again. "Sometimes it just needs a little help."

"Thank you, my friends," Freyyr says. "I will begin climbing back up to the village to confront Chuundar."

Canderous, Jolee, and I head back to the lift and back up to the village level. I wonder how long it will take Freyyr to climb up.

It appears that Freyyr managed to arrive just ahead of us and entered the main hall of the village.

Chuundar is incensed. When my group enters, he snarls at us, "You! Offworlders betrayed me! You agreed to kill this madclaw for me!"

"You'll note that I did nothing of the sort," I say. "I agreed to find him. I said nothing about what I
might do after finding him. And really, who are you to speak of betrayal, Chuundar? You betrayed your brother, your father, and your entire people."

"Father?" Zaalbar says, looking over toward Freyyr.

"Zaalbar," Freyyr replies. "I wronged you, my son, and I paid the price for not believing you. But now! I have brought back Bacca's blade. I hereby challenge Chuundar for leadership!"

"I still have the hilt, father," Chuundar says. "The hilt is the important part! I still hold claim over the title of chieftain."

"Lexen," Zaalbar says, turning to me. "I don't know what to do. Chuundar has been telling me many things while I've been here waiting for you to return."

I snort softly. "And you listened to him? You should know well enough by now just what kind of a person Chuundar is. Make your own judgment."

Zaalbar looks at me, and gives a nod. "You are right. Mission tried to warn me as well, and I should have listened to her. I cannot trust anything Chuundar says."

Chuundar says, "Enough of this! I am the chief here! I will not allow this madclaw to challenge me! I have the real power. Czerka Corporation has given me much strength!"

Freyyr says, "You're insane, Chuundar. My people! Will you continue to follow one who has sold out our kin into slavery?"

Chuundar roars, and attacks Freyyr. Freyyr defends himself with the vibroblade he'd borrowed from me. The Czerka guards start shooting, and I pull out my lightsabers to block their bolts and cut them down. A bloody fight in the village hall ends in Chuundar and his sycophants dead, as well as several Czerka guards. Freyyr sighs as he retrieves the hilt of Bacca's sword from his dead son's body.

"I have slain my own son," Freyyr says. "But I cannot deny that this was the correct course of action. I can only hope that this makes up for the mistake I made years ago."

"I forgive you, father," Zaalbar says. "You fell in for his lies, just as I almost did."

"Zaalbar, I want you to have the reunited sword of Bacca," Freyyr says, offering the pieces to him. They'll need to be properly repaired, but they're together again.

"Father?" Zaalbar says. "I am... honored by your offer. But I am obligated to follow Lexen still. He is on a noble mission to save the galaxy, and I owe him a life debt still."

"Go ahead," Freyyr says. "There is much to be done here yet. Return one day when you are ready."

"Very well, father," Zaalbar says, taking the hilt and blade. "I shall do so."

We head out, and Freyyr tries to rally a rebellion against Czerka Corporation. I grin with bloodlust as I pull out my lightsabers and dive into the fray, determined to slay as many slavers as I can myself. But the Wookiees are disorganized and demoralized. Furthermore, when the Mandalorians join in, the Wookiees mistake them for enemies, and large numbers of Wookiees die before I realize what's going on.

"You're not supposed to be killing the Wookiees!" I bark into the comm.
"They attacked us, Mandalore!" Tagren replies.

"Kill Czerka Corp!" I snap.

The Wookiees are enraged at the Mandalorians for killing so many of them now, however, and won't take the excuse that it was an honest mistake. And then, to make matters worse, it appears that word has gotten out that I'm commanding the Mandalorians. I'm set upon by angry Wookiees in addition to the small army of Czerka Corp guards.

"Damn it all," I mutter. I don't want to hurt them, but I've got to get to my ship if I'm to escape without inadvertently causing more bloodshed than necessary.

I can't make it, however. I'm cut off with too few allies, surrounded on all sides by hostiles. And one angry Wookiee picks me up and tosses me off the side of the walkway, to plummet to a long death in the Shadowlands below.

I groan softly and rub my head, blinking up at the canopy of trees high overhead. My head hurts. Did I somehow manage to survive the fall?

"You're awake!" Jolee Bindo says.

I stare at him. Jolee, Canderous, and Freyyr. What happened? Oh, I'm back here. I must have had a premonition. It's really bad when I can't tell the difference between them and what's actually happening around me.

"I'm alright," I say. "I just... ugh." I sigh. "Freyyr, no need to apologize. I let you attack me. We're going to go kill a terentatek to retrieve Bacca's blade so that you can challenge Chuundar for leadership now."

I stand up, rubbing my eyes, still a little disoriented. I pull out my spare vibroblade and toss it to Freyyr, then walk off in the direction of the terentatek without so much as sparing half a glance back to make sure that the others are following.

"Lexen?" Jolee says. "What's going on?"

I sigh. I shouldn't get short with people just because I feel like I've had a conversation before. And I could swear I've had these thoughts before, too. "I had a premonition," I say. "I frequently have premonitions of disaster, and they're so vivid that I feel as though I'm there."

"Strange," Jolee says. "I've never heard of anyone having such an ability to that extent before."

"Bastila said the same thing," I say. "She thought I must have a unique talent for it. I don't really mind much, honestly, but I kind of wish it didn't just repeatedly show me dying every time I encounter something that could kill me."

"Hmm," Jolee says. "I've also heard of those who could see visions of the future, but were limited in that they could never see their own deaths. But you say you can only see your own death?"

I give a nod. "Pretty much, yeah. Every premonition I've had that was clearly an immediate premonition has ended in my death. For instance, I just saw myself being killed by the terentatek, and being overwhelmed in a disaster of a battle up top."

I don't care to mention that that was because of my own mistakes. I'd gotten overconfident in my odds, and failed to employ any real strategy. By the time I realized something was wrong, it was too
late to fix things. But I can fix things now.

We come to the terentatek. I know how I need to fight this thing now. I need to maintain focus and control, and not lose myself entirely in Dark Side rage. It feels a little weird having gotten more "practice" of words in two-weapon fighting than I actually have, but not half so bad as not remembering practicing something at all. At least I have clear memory of all the times I've used it, even if they haven't all actually come to pass.

We slay the terentatek, and Freyyr begins climbing up top. I pull out the comm. "Mandalore here. Tagren, are you in position?"

"Yes, Mandalore," Tagren's voice replies. "We're ready."

"We're on our way back," I say. "Stand by. The fighting might start before we get there, though. Try not to kill any Wookiees if you can help it. Chuundar might still have some supporters, but let them sort that out themselves. Focus on the Czerka guards."

"Understood, Mandalore."

Then I second out another call. "Lexen to Ebon Hawk," I say. "Status report."

"Bastila here. Things are quiet here at the moment. Is something wrong?"

"No," I reply. "But things are about to heat up. I want you to be ready with your Battle Meditation to assist us, the Wookiees, and the Mandalorians against Czerka Corporation. Can you do that?"

"Will do," Bastila says.

I nod to Canderous and Jolee, and we head back toward the lift leading out of the Shadowlands. We return to the walkway level and make our way back toward the village. Freyyr arrives just before us, and goes in to confront Chuundar, and battle ensues, resulting in the death of Chuundar and his guards.

With that, we head out of the main hall. Freyyr and Zaalbar rally the Wookiees, and the rebellion takes off. The Wookiees are encouraged and heartened, full of hope and spirit. They revel in their newfound freedom, and cast off their oppressors like a waking giant.

I'm not so worried about these guys now. They're only dangerous to me because of their numbers, and now I have a lot of allies. And it seems like my crew, the Wookiees, and the Mandalorians are working together like a closely coordinated team, each augmenting the others and shoring up their weaknesses without any gaps. Bastila's Battle Meditation is at work, and it's truly a wonder to behold. Czerka Corporation doesn't stand a chance.

When the dust settles, some of the Czerka employees managed a hasty evacuation of the planet, but they left almost everything behind in a panicked attempt to save their own hides. With the battle over, the Mandalorians come and salute me before packing up to head off to Dxun themselves.

Freyyr approaches me. "You have done much for my people this day," he says. "We will not be so welcoming of outsiders for some time, I think, but you and your companions, and your Mandalorian followers, will always be welcome here with open arms."

"Thank you, Freyyr," I say. "And good luck. If you ever have need of assistance, you can always call me. I or my followers will come to your aid. I would be remiss to have assisted you, only to have the slavers return in greater force at a future date."
"I thank you for your offer," Freyyr says. "We will not be so complacent, and the slavers will not find us such easy prey in the future, I think. Do not hesitate to call on my people as well, if you have need of us."

We part ways, and I head onto the Ebon Hawk. "Well, we got what we came for, and then some. Everyone on board?" I ask. "Set a course for Tatooine."

I head into the crew quarters to relax a bit and record the day’s events in my journal before getting dinner. It's late and I'm hungry. I can read over the data from the computer tomorrow. After I finish writing down today's entries, I glance over the list and realize that I've forgotten several days worth of memories. I sigh and rub my eyes, and diligently go to re-read those sections. It's becoming quite the effort just to keep my mind from falling apart. I need a better solution.

"Stormseeker, is there a problem?" Neeja says. "You look distressed. Would you like a massage?"

I sigh. "No thanks. It's just memory problems, as usual. It just feels as though my mind is constantly in danger of slipping away from me, even as I try desperately to hold onto it. I think I'll just go to sleep. It's been a long day, and I picked up something down on the planet that might give some hints to help me out."

"Good luck, Stormseeker," Neeja says. "Let me know if you need anything. I'll be happy to help if I can."

"Thanks, Neeja. Good night."
This broken rock is what's left of Malachor V. It was never a pleasant place, at least to someone who realized how deep the Dark Side ran within it. But the activation of the Mass Shadow Generator turned it into hell. The twisted hulk of a planet, surrounded by crackling lightning, barely held together by warped gravity. Surrounded by the husks of millions of ships and their crews. A mass graveyard standing testament to the folly of this war.

I left this battle in the hands of General Surik. I knew that this would be the likely result. But it's still chilling to see the results. Not that it wiped out the dark secrets still lurking in the depths of Malachor V.

But all those deaths, enemy and ally. I see how it affects Surik. The haunted look on her face that no amount of training can suppress. Empty eyes, reflecting an empty soul, cut off from the Force.

"Are you sure about this?" I ask her.

Surik nods distantly. "There's nothing left for me here, Revan. Maybe they'll know what to do with me."

"If that is your choice, I won't stop you," I say.

I can't blame her for wanting to stumble back to the Jedi to face judgment. The Republic will hail us as heroes and saviors, but at what cost? A generation of promising warriors on both sides, dead from a weapon of mass destruction. Victory at too high a price.

Two armies dead by my own blade in a single stroke. And it's still not enough.

I wake with a soft groan and rub my eyes. How can victory be such a nightmare? I sigh and pull out my journal to record the latest nightmare to add to the list.

We're still a ways out from Tatooine, so I go and get some breakfast before setting in with my datapad. Time to look through the information I downloaded from the computer on Kashyyyk. Maybe there's something enlightening or useful in there.

The formatting and organization is exactly like that in my current journal. I find it a little eerie that I unconsciously find myself doing the same things in the same way without realizing it.

Well, I can stop wondering why I didn't fulfill my oath to Mandalore. I didn't remember it. The journal is fragmentary, with entire days, months, years missing. Sometimes there are sections where every day is diligently recorded, but this only makes the gaps all the more striking. I get the feeling that I must have gone through several journals over the years, and some of them were lost along the way.

I stand on the bridge of my flagship, gazing off into the swirling nothingness of hyperspace. Some people are disturbed by the sight, but I find it strangely comforting.

I can't trust Malak anymore. He's a loose cannon. I should have killed him. Friendship? What foolishness. I am the Dark Lord of the Sith. Sith don't have friends.

Maybe I shouldn't read this. These memories are dark and disturbing. But what if they just come
back on their own anyway? And there might still be useful information contained in here. I can't pass up this source of knowledge, even if it bothers me to relive these things. My mind is not so weak as to be twisted merely by reading this. I'm stronger than that.

Another world conquered. Another world brought under my sway. I look out at the buildings, my soldiers marching in the streets, subduing the populace. Not too much damage done to the infrastructure. Good.

The Republic is weak. It will never be able to stand against what is to come. The True Sith are a threat that they cannot comprehend. And so I will break them that I may rebuild them stronger.

What twisted logic. Destroy the Republic to save it? And who the hell are the True Sith?

He stands before me, a powerful Force-user, attuned to the Dark Side. This is not a man. His skin is red, and his expression bears the feral look of a predator who knows that he's at the top of the food chain. There's nothing human in him.

I've looked into the heart of evil, and I can't unsee what I have seen. My resolve crumbles in his presence. I have never thought myself weak, but this makes me feel weak.

I curl up in a fetal position, journal dropping to the floor with a clatter, as memories come flooding back unbidden.

You will serve me. You will spread my name across the galaxy.

The Sith Emperor's power reaches into my mind across time and space, trying to bend me to his will. How can I stand against this? How can I withstand something that the mere memory is enough to corrupt my mind?

Submit to my will. The power of the Sith is eternal.

No. No. No. I will not submit. I will not submit. I'm stronger than this. I will not fall for these tricks. I am not this weak. I will not submit.


I.

Will.

Not.

Submit.

I lay panting, eyes clenched shut, arms held protectively over my head.

I must go. I must return to the Republic. But what am I to do? They won't listen to me. The Jedi are weak. They won't be able to stand against power of this sort. I need a new army. I must fight darkness with darkness. I cannot counter this threat with the Dark Side.

Did I do it? Did I fight it off? Did I manage to push it out of my mind? Is my mind still my own? Am I fighting the Sith Emperor, or am I serving him?

I will build a new Sith Empire. I will be the Dark Lord of the Sith. To serve the Sith Emperor. To fight the Sith Emperor. I will fight him by serving him. I will serve him by fighting him.
Side will make me strong.

I think I only half resisted that dark spell. My mind is broken and confused. No. No. I will not be a slave. I will not be a slave. Don't do this to me, damn it.

I am the Master here, not the slave. I am the Dark Lord of the Sith. No one can control me. I am in control. I will break them to save them. I will destroy them to protect them. They won't understand what I do. They will think me evil. But they don't know evil. I have seen the face of evil.

I'm shaking. My body is trembling. I feel cold. A dark chill passing over me. Passing through me. I open my eyes, but the light is no comfort. The light can't hide from the dark. I can't hide from the dark. He knows I'm here. He still knows I'm here. He will find me. He will always find me.

The Republic will fall. The Sith will thrive. And through this, I will save them. I will save them all. I will sacrifice the light to save the light.

I sacrificed myself. I sacrificed my mind. I sacrificed my soul. And in the end, I lost everything. I did not even save what I set out to save, in my own twisted way.

Absolute terror. The sort of fear that makes your muscles freeze and your brain stop working. I thought myself strong. I thought myself in control. But how can anyone stand up to something like this? I'm only human. Well, more or less human. I was completely unprepared for this.

I have seen the face of evil.

"Lexen? Lexen, can you hear me?"

If I can't trust my own mind, what can I trust? And I stopped being able to trust my own mind a long, long time ago.

"He's completely catatonic."

"What's wrong with him?"

"Wait, this datapad. Look what he was reading."

"Oh, hell. He must be caught up in Revan's memories."

"What can we do to help him?"

I hear voices. I hear words. But to my ears, they only seem like random sounds that don't manage to percolate their way into my brain.

"There's got to be something we can do."

"Lexen, we're here for you. Please come back to us."

Please come back to us.

Please come back to us.

Who said that?

Warmth. Light. Hope. What is this?

The light does not have any place in the darkness. Darkness is the natural state of the universe. It's
the light that's the aberration.


*What foolishness. Love is a delusion.*

Save me. I'm drowning. I can't make it on my own.

*If you can't save yourself, you don't deserve to live.*

I'm not this weak. Damn it all, I'm not this weak.

*Then die, or submit to serve the darkness. You can still make a useful tool.*

No. I won't submit. Not now, not ever, not ever again. I fell for your tricks once. I won't submit to you again.

*Come back to us.*

Darkness is not inherently evil. Darkness can be comforting. But evil is not simply the absence of light. It clings to a being. It clings to my very soul. It clutches at me with its tendrils, with its claws. This is a dark beyond darkness.

Help me.

*Help me.*

Help me. I can't save myself.

*I can't save myself.*

Hands. There are hands, reaching out to me. Reaching out into the darkness. *Take my hand.* Offering salvation. Hope. Compassion.

"Come back to us, Lexen."

I grasp the hand. Solid. Warm. Caring. I'm no longer falling. The darkness no longer seems quite so deep. Fear itself no longer seems so terrifying.

My eyes begin to focus. The blurs of light and color in front of me start to take shape again. Figures. People. *My friends.*

"My... friends..." I whisper, staring at them for a moment, then blinking several times.

"Lexen, are you alright?"

"We thought we'd lost you there for a moment, kid."

It's Bastila, Juhani, and Jolee Bindo. Behind them, I can see others, poking their heads in the door or pacing nervously outside.

"Bas... Bas... ti... la...?" I say numbly. "Ju... hani...? Jolee? What... what happened? Where I am?"

"You're on board the Ebon Hawk, remember?" Jolee says. "It looks like you were reading Revan's journals, and then something happened. We heard you screaming."

"I was screaming?" I say.
"Maybe some memories are best forgotten," Jolee says, setting the datapad down beside me. "But I won't make that choice for you."

"Thanks, Jolee," I say quietly, picking up the datapad without looking at me. "I just... I should be strong enough to handle this, shouldn't I? I'm not weak..."

"Strength and weakness has nothing to do with it," Jolee says. "You were dealing with some bad things there that could have long-reaching effects. A man can't be called weak just because he can't stand up to a black hole, kid. And you fell right into one, from the sounds of things."

I sigh. "Maybe you're right."

He's still out there. Waiting outside this little circle of light. What a pathetic little campfire, thinking to drive away the night itself. I'm not afraid of the dark. But I'm afraid of this.

"I don't want to lose myself again," I murmur.

"We're with you, kid," Jolee says. "You don't need to face the darkness alone."

"I didn't face it alone the first time," I say quietly. "Malak went with me. My friend. I trusted him with my life. We went there together. And we gazed into the abyss. And the abyss gazed back." I sigh. "I wish I could get my friend back. But it's far, far too late for that now."

Will I drag these three down into darkness as well? I can't do that to them. I should leave them behind, for their own safety. I won't lose another friend to the abyss.

I glance down at the datapad in my hands. The last entry I was reading still on the screen. I could erase this now, and I would likely forget it again sooner or later, provided it doesn't re-emerge on its own. But is that really the right thing to do?

"A man's own strength can't hold up to a black hole," I say quietly. "But the Force can. With the Force, even a man who seems otherwise weak, can move mountains."

This calls for the Light Side of the Force. Hope. A ray of brilliant sunlight to pierce the darkness. Drive away all thought of fear. No matter how terrible things may seem, there is always hope. I let the light of hope cradle me and give comfort to me.

Now, I look to these memories. They are only memories. They can't hurt me anymore. I won't let them tear my mind apart.

I did not choose to follow the Sith Emperor. He took that choice away from me. He tried to make me his slave. But I resisted. I fought back. And in the process, my mind was broken. I didn't know what I was doing. I came back to fight against him, but I was really doing what he wanted me to do, regardless.

How can I fight this? Let the Force shield me. Give me hope even when things seem hopeless.

"Master?" Juhani says gently. "Are you going to be alright?"

I give a faint nod, smiling weakly at her. "I'll be fine now, I think. Let me meditate on this for a bit."

The three Jedi head out of the room, reassuring the others that the emergency is over for the moment and there's no need to panic.

I take a deep breath, and, shielded by the Light Side of the Force, I go back to reading Darth Revan's
journal. There's not nearly so much here as I had hoped for. It doesn't even tell me where I left Mandalore's mask.

But at least I discovered one important thing. I learned why I turned on the Republic. It would be one thing if it had been my choice, but it was not. I did not choose to betray my former comrades-in-arms. I was tricked and my mind was enslaved against my will, whether I realized it or not.

But using the Dark Side? That was always a choice. There was no temptation, no weakening resolve, no contest of will. I simply chose to turn to the Dark Side, because I rationally believed that it would work better for what I wished to do.

So. It looks like I'm going to need to kill this Sith Emperor at some point. That thought isn't a pleasant one. There is always hope, but right now, I don't know how I could win that battle.

Well, that's a concern for later. Right now, there are other, more immediate, things that need to be dealt with. Stopping Malak is high on my list of priorities at the moment.

And yet I can't shake the nagging fear that my mind is not my own even now. That everything I do is at the whim of some dark power whose name I no longer remember. And that scares me far more than the prospect of failure, or even death.
My father's name is Anakin Skywalker. My mother, Anara Chelseer, told me about him. About how he was a powerful Jedi Knight. But she left with me when I was still an infant, and I'm still not sure why.

I look about my father's homeworld of Tatooine. I came here under cover, searching for any evidence of him. I don't know why I bother, though. What would he say to know that his son had turned out to be a Sith Lord? An unrepentent Darksider? A mass murderer?

Tatooine's two suns beat down from the sky above Anchorhead. Even the very air seems sandy and suffocatingly hot. I've searched, but I haven't found any trace of my father. I haven't even found any possible relatives with the name Skywalker. Could it be that I have the wrong planet? I was sure that my father originated from here.

I kind of wish that the Jedi and their records were still in better shape. But they probably wouldn't want to help me at this point even if they were. And back when I still had access to that sort of information, I didn't yet remember my father's name to think to look it up.

I pass the swoop race track and think for a moment. Hmm. My mother mentioned that my father was an excellent pilot and loved racing. I head inside to see the one in charge of the racing here, a Hutt by the name of Motta.

"If you're not here about racing, don't waste my time," Motta tells me.

"If you want a bribe, I'll give you a bribe," I say with a smirk. "I'm just looking for information." I'm not feeling patient enough at the moment to even bother trying to use the Force on him. Besides, credits tend to work better on Hutts than Force powers, anyway.

"Fine, fine," Motta says. "What do you want to know, Jedi?"

"Do you know about a racer by the name of Anakin Skywalker?"

"Hmm," Motta says. "Can't say it sounds familiar."

"This would have been some decades ago," I go on. "He was my father."

Motta grunts. "For the sake of your bribe, I'll take a moment to look through the records."

I fork over some credits. More than this slug is worth, but nothing I would miss, regardless, plus I'm eager for any information I might be able to find on my father. He returns a bit later.

"I found no record of any racer by that name on my course, or anywhere else that I have records of for that matter," Motta tells me. "Are you certain that this is the correct name?"

"Positive," I say with a sigh. "Maybe it was longer ago than I thought it was."

"I have records spanning back centuries," Motta says. "Do even Jedi humans live that long?"

"I don't know," I admit.

"Perhaps he raced under a different name," Motta says.
"That could well be," I say. "Unfortunately, if he did, I have no way of finding out what it might have been. Well, thanks anyway. Here's a little bonus for your effort."

"Great," Motta says. "You and your credits are welcome to come back anytime if you have any more questions or you find out your father's stage name."

I wake, and reflexively go to write down this dream. Well, it seems I've found out my parents' names, at least.

But is this a memory, or a premonition? No, it has to be a memory. I was still a Sith Lord at the time, still firmly on the Dark Side. I don't understand my thoughts on the state of the Jedi, though. I seemed to think that they had been destroyed? Maybe I'm just misinterpreting something. I must have come here while I was Revan, asking about my father.

"You awake?" Canderous says, poking his head in. "We're about to drop out of hyperspace in a minute."

"Ah, yeah," I reply, standing up and putting my journal away. I head up to the cockpit. "Bring us in to land in Anchorhead when we arrive at Tatooine," I tell Carth.

"Right," Carth mutters.

"Did you have a dream about Tatooine?" Bastila asks.

"Yeah," I say. Admittedly, it wasn't a dream about the Star Map, though.

I go and get some breakfast first and wait while Carth brings us in for a landing. I wouldn't consider this place to be as safe and quiet as Dantooine, but I doubt there's anything immediately deadly in the town itself.

"Mission," I say. "Why don't you and Zaalbar take Neeja out shopping? She's too scared to leave the ship on her own, but maybe she will be less skittish if there's a Wookiee around to protect her."

"Alright," Mission says with a grin.

I say. "Okay everyone, do what you like for the moment, just make sure at least one person is guarding the ship at all times. T3 might be able to hold off potential thieves on his own, but it would be just embarrassing to be shown up in combat by a utility droid." I grin at them.

I head off into town by myself. I doubt that there's anything too dangerous here that I won't be able to handle on my own. I didn't have any dire premonitions this morning, after all. My current objective is locating the swoop race area and finding Motta the Hutt.

As I head down one of Anchorhead's sandy alleyways, I sense danger only an instant before I find myself surrounded by a trio of Dark Jedi. Great, where did these assholes come from? My lightsabers are in my hands in an instant.

"Did Malak send you?" I ask.

"He offered to make the one who brings him your head his apprentice," one of them replies.

"Shouldn't you be killing each other first, then?" I say lightly. "That's what dumbass Sith do, isn't it?"

The three Dark Jedi ignore my taunting and come at me from all sides. I parry with my lightsabers. Damn, maybe I shouldn't have come out alone after all. I wasn't prepared for fighting Dark Jedi.
They quickly force me into the defensive.

"Why don't you be my apprentices instead?" I say.

"Why would we do that?" one says. "You're nobody. You can't even fight us off."

"I'm Darth Revan!" I say, growing annoyed.

Dark Side give me strength. Let me be the raging storm. Let me fight off these interlopers. I attack with a flurry of blades, trying to fight the Dark Jedi off. But I leave myself open. I scream as my left arm drops into the sand and I lose my red lightsaber.

"Darth Revan is dead," says the Dark Jedi who is holding his lightsaber to my throat. "But even if you're him, you're dead now."

He cuts off my head.

I groan as I wake up, and rub my neck self-consciously. Dreaming of decapitation, never a pleasant subject. I roll and write down this dream in my journal. And a quick scan of the topics indicates that I have forgotten the Endar Spire. Again.

Strange. Perhaps there's some connection. I didn't have any premonitions during most of my stay on Dantooine, and didn't forget anything either. But it seems that every time I have one, I forget something else. That's no good.

"Are you awake, Mandalore?" Canderous says.

"Yeah," I reply. "We're dropping out of hyperspace soon? Tell Carth to land us in Anchorhead."

"Yes, Mandalore," Canderous says, heading out again.

I sigh as I re-read the last premonition, though. I was being so stupidly complacent. I didn't think there could possibly be any danger here. Ironically, this was in part because I hadn't had any premonitions about it. Now I'm having premonitions about being stupid because I didn't have premonitions. This makes my head hurt.

I go out to grab some breakfast. I really should just be more careful, and not rely on my premonitions or lack thereof quite so much. Especially if the price of my premonitions is losing my memories.

"Alright, everyone," I say. "Be on your guard. Malak might have sent assassins or Dark Jedi to track us down."

"Do you really think he could have tracked us here?" Mission says.

"Remember, Malak does know where the Star Maps are, too," I point out. "If he realizes that we're after them, he'll send people to try and stop us."

"A wise precaution," Bastila says, nodding approvingly.

"Canderous, Bastila, Carth, you're with me," I say. Carth might not like it, but I need to earn his trust, one way or another, and that's hard to do if he's sitting on the ship all the time. "The rest of you, guard the ship for the moment. Contact by comm if need be."

The four of us head off the ship and into the town of Anchorhead. I feel better with blasters and another lightsaber at my back. I should not be so complacent. Damned visions. Why do they feel less
like visions and more like things I actually did? I feel all the pain, and all the shame for my mistakes, regardless of whether they really happened or not.

I head down the same alley toward the swoop race area, and the same Dark Jedi come out to try to ambush us. But this time, it's they who are outnumbered. I grin at them as I pull out my lightsabers. I'm going to avenge my own death that didn't really happen.

"Kill them," I say calmly to my companions.

I leap into the battle, red and green lightsabers whirling. Blood pumping, enjoying the fight, Dark Side giving strength to my blows with controlled rage. We cut them down, black-clad bodies dropping to the hot sand.

"Dark Jedi," Bastila mutters. "Did Malak send them?"

"Probably," I reply, searching the bodies. I collect their lightsabers and credits, and find a datapad on one of the corpses confirming our suspicions. "Alright, gratuitous ambush out of the way, I've got some personal business with a Hutt. Watch my back."

I'm not sure that I really want them along to talk to Motta the Hutt, but I don't have anything to hide. I don't mind having them know what I'm after here. Motta isn't particularly difficult to locate, but then Hutts rarely are.

"You are Motta, I presume?" I ask.

"I am," the Hutt replies. "Do you have business with me?"

"Just a question," I say. "Do you remember meeting me a few years ago? I offered you a hundred credits to look up information on a swoop racer by the name of Anakin Skywalker?"

"I remember no such thing," Motta says. "And I would remember if someone had offered me that many credits for simple information retrieval. Is this some sort of Jedi trick?"

I frown faintly. "I'm not intending to trick you, Motta. I just wanted to know if any new information had come up in the meantime. And wanted you to look up the name 'Stormseeker' as well. I'll give you another bribe if need be." I smirk.

"Fine, I'll take your credits and look for the information, but I'm not going to pretend I've met you before!" Motta the Hutt says.

When Motta goes up to search, Carth says to me, "What's this all about?"

"Anakin Skywalker was my father," I explain. "I've been trying to track him down, with no luck. It's like he never even existed." I frown. "And it's strange that Motta doesn't remember me. I distinctly remember coming in here and speaking with him about this..."

"Your father was a swoop racer?" Bastila says.

"No, he was a Jedi Knight," I say. "But he apparently did some racing when he was young, or so my mother told me, at any rate."

"I don't know of any Jedi named Anakin Skywalker," Bastila says. "But that might have been before my time. We could look it up in the archives next time we visit Dantooine if you like."

"Good idea," I say, nodding. "When I came here, I wasn't really in much of a position to ask
anything of the Jedi. Heh."

Motta returns momentarily, and says, "I didn't find any records of anyone named Anakin Skywalker, or anyone with the last name Skywalker at all. Nor did I find any Stormseekers. Although I did find a Stormbringer. And a Stormrider."

"Thanks anyway," I say, and pass over a hundred credits.

"You and your credits are welcome back here anytime," Motta the Hutt says.

We head on out onto the streets of Anchorhead again. I'm still quite puzzled about that encounter. I'm the one that's supposed to have memory problems here. Am I now remembering things that didn't actually happen?

But wait. I remember lots of things that didn't actually happen. Could that dream have been a premonition rather than a memory? I frown at that thought. I was clearly fully on the Dark Side at the time, and what was up with what I was thinking about the Jedi? I don't understand. This just gets more and more confusing. Was that premonition trying to show me returning to being the Dark Lord of the Sith and destroying the Jedi or something?

"Something wrong, Lexen?" Bastila says, looking at me.


"Maybe you used the Force to make him forget about it afterward," Bastila suggests.

"Perhaps," I say. It doesn't fit with the scene in my memory, though. But maybe I came back and wiped his mind later? Why would I do that, though?

A female Twi'lek approaches us, and I find myself reaching for my lightsabers reflexively. "Excuse me," she says. "You wouldn't happen to be Bastila Shan by some chance, would you?"

"Who wants to know?" I ask defensively, putting myself between Bastila and the stranger.

"I mean no harm," the Twi'lek says. "I only ask because she bears a resemblance to an acquaintance of mine, Helena Shan, and I'd been told her daughter is a Jedi. My apologies if I'm mistaken."

"I'm Bastila Shan. Not that I'm concerned with what my mother wants. Have you seen my father?"

I relax a bit. Family business, not assassins. Still could get ugly, depending on the circumstances, but might not automatically be so.

"Your father..." the Twi'lek says, then shakes her head. "You should take this up with your mother. You can find her at the Anchorhead cantina."

The Twi'lek walks away, and Bastila sighs. "Can we spare the time for another detour?"

"You indulged me in coming to look for my father," I reply. "Let's go see about yours as well. We've already had better luck -- at least someone knows yours exists."

The four of us head on over toward the cantina in Anchorhead. It seems like a strange coincidence that Bastila's parents might be in the very town that we came to. I think I might as well just stop believing that coincidence exists. There's no such thing. It's just the Force's way of messing with people, I'm sure.

Sitting in a corner of the cantina, we find a middle-aged human woman clad in simple desert robes. I
don't see anyone else in here that seems likely to be the one we're looking for. Bastila nods toward her, assuring me that I have the right person, so we approach.

"Are you Helena Shan?" I ask.

"That's right," the woman says. "And who might you be?"

"I'm Bastila, mother. Your daughter, remember?"

"How should I be able to recognize you?" Helena says. "You were just a little girl when they took you away from us! And who are these people you're with? Is one of them your boyfriend? Or husband? Or even more than one of them? It would figure that you'd fall in with such seedy-looking types."

"No!" Bastila snaps.

"Hey," Carth interjects. "I am not seedy-looking. I can't speak for Canderous, though."

Canderous snorts softly and refrains from comment.

"Mother, where is Father?" Bastila asks.

Helena sighs. "We came here hunting treasure. He was searching for krayt dragon pearls. But he went off into the Dune Sea... His companions, the ones who survived at any rate, said that he'd been killed by a krayt dragon in a cave southeast of town."

Bastila looks at her mother angrily. "Always treasure hunting! You were always pushing him to go on these dangerous treasure hunts, and now you've gotten him killed!"

"I did nothing of the sort!" Helena snaps back at her daughter. "I tried to tell him it was too dangerous! But he insisted in coming. We've been hard up for money enough as it is, trying to pay for treatments for me."

"Treatments?" Bastila says. "There's nothing wrong with you!"

"I'm dying, Bastila!"

I sigh and rub my forehead. Do I really want to step in here? Well, they're getting nowhere with this yelling at one another, and raising the ire of the other cantina patrons. At this rate, they're going to get us all thrown out. Provided the cantina owner cares about anything less than actively trying to kill one another, at any rate.

"Ladies, is this really necessary?" I say smoothly. "It won't do for family to be at one another's throats."

Bastila takes a deep breath. "I am a Jedi. There is no emotion, there is peace."

"There's plenty of emotion," I reply. "You just need not to let it get the better of you."

Bastila sighs. "And what would you do?"

"Objectively, there's no logical reason for Helena to want her husband dead," I say. "That would be wasteful and counterproductive, even if we discount the very real possibility that she might, you know, have actually cared for him."

"It's just reckless greed," Bastila says. "She's not really sick. She just wants more money, like she
always did."

"If she weren't sick, why would your father be doing dangerous things to pay for treatments?" I say. "That would, again, be counterproductive to the cause of greed. And if, say, your father did truly care for her as well, he would be more than willing to do dangerous things for the sake of helping her."

Helena looks to me and says, "Are you Bastila's Jedi teacher, by chance?"

"My name is Lexen Skywalker," I say, giving her a bit of a bow. "And I would like to be her teacher, but she isn't willing at this time to accept me as her Master."

Helena turns to Bastila and says, "You should listen to this man more. He's got good sense in his head."

I smirk and say, "Perhaps you shouldn't say that. She might decide to become all the more stubborn just for the sake of contrary, just because you said it."

"Lexen!" Bastila snaps. "I just learned that my father is dead. Show some respect."

"My apologies," I say smoothly, although my lips quirk in a bit of a grin. "Should I step out and leave you and your mother to grieve for your father and husband in peace as family?"

Bastila looks at me, opening her mouth to say something, but then snaps it shut again and turns away.

Helena says, "I realize this may be a bit much to ask, as it's probably going to be dangerous... but if you're going out into the Dune Sea, I would appreciate it if you could retrieve my husband's holocron from his remains."

"Not at all, madam," I say. "I doubt that it's far out of the way of where we'll be going, regardless. And perhaps then, Bastila might have some closure with regards to the matter."

We head on out of the cantina again. Once outside, Bastila mutters, "I should just keep the bloody holocron. I'd like to have something to remember my father by."

"That's your choice," I reply. "But is that what you really want?"

"No," Bastila says. "I want my father back."

"I'm afraid that's beyond my powers," I say. "I'm sorry."

"She's such a horrible, greedy woman," Bastila says. "I always feared she'd be the death of him."

"And what if, hypothetically, she really is dying?" I ask.

Bastila sighs and quietly shakes her head. But any response she might have immediately had is cut short by an unarmored Mandalorian approaching our group in anger.

"Canderous!" says the man.

"Jagi?" Canderous says, turning to the man in surprise. "I thought you were dead! What are you doing here?"

"That's because you left me for dead, along with the rest of our clan!" Jagi snaps.
"What's this about?" I ask.

"You stay out of this," Jagi says. "This is Mandalorian business."

"That makes it my business," I say.

Jagi turns and looks at me appraisingly. "You're a Mandalorian?" he asks incredulously, eyes resting on the lightsabers on my belt.

"I'm Mandalore."

"Bantha shit," Jagi says.

"He is," Canderous says.

"So is this what you've been up to, Canderous?" Jagi says. "You dishonored yourself when you left us to die, and now you're running with a Jedi claiming to be Mandalore?"

"This man is the greatest warrior alive," Canderous says.

"Before we start accusing one another of being dishonorable," I say. "Would someone care to explain the incident in question?"

It seems like I can't land on a planet without walking into a soap opera.

"Canderous left us to die in the battle over Althir," Jagi says.

"Canderous," I say. "What's your take on it?"

"I saw an opening in the battle," Canderous says. "I turned to attack the exposed area."

"You saw an opportunity to seize the glory for yourself!" Jagi accuses.

I raise a hand. "Canderous, would you say that your actions ended the battle more expediently and with fewer losses than might have been incurred otherwise?"

"Definitely," Canderous says.

"You disobeyed orders!" Jagi says. "You ignored the battle plans!"

I snort softly. "The only battle plan that survives contact with the enemy is to improvise. You should know that. You should also know well enough that you should be flexible in battle and take whatever opportunities might arise. Strictly adhering to pre-arranged tactics and strategies? That's a sure way to doom yourself to failure. How long have you been holding onto this foolish grudge?"

Jagi stares at me for a moment, then looks to Canderous and says, "Who is this man, really?"

"I told you," Canderous says. "He's Mandalore."

"Would it help identify me if I put on a black cloak and a mask?" I say.

"You're..." Jagi says, eyes widening. "No, it can't be. They said you were dead. And even if you lived, you still broke our people and scattered them across the galaxy in pieces. Why are you now claiming to be Mandalore?"

"Because that's what I swore to Mandalore the Ultimate upon his death," I say. "And then I had that
memory stripped from me when I was turned into a force of darkness." I sigh. "Let's just say it's a long story and not one I care to go into on a public street in the Tatooine suns."

Jagi says, a little sheepishly, "I was going to challenge Canderous to a duel to the death over his honor..."

"Don't waste your own life, Jagi," I say. "I'm going to need every Mandalorian I can get who still has any shred of honor left to them."

"If you're really who you claim to be, then prove it," Jagi says. "I'll challenge you to a duel instead. If you can defeat me, then I will believe you are who you say you are. I will follow you, and I will bring whoever I can find to join you as well."

"I accept," I say.

Jagi gives me coordinates to a location in the Dune Sea. "Meet me there tomorrow at noon. And come alone."

"Very well. I shall do so."

We part ways. Once he's out of earshot, Bastila says to me, "Are you really going to do this?"

"Of course," I say.

"It could be a trap," Carth says.

I snort softly. "If it is, then I'll know that he no longer has any honor and should be killed immediately. And I said that I would come alone. I can hardly stop any of you from doing whatever you wish. That's entirely your choice."

I doubt it will be a problem unless Jagi brings a small armored infantry division. Or a squad of Dark Jedi. But I'm not going to get myself killed by overconfidence, and if my friends choose to watch my back discreetly, I won't argue.

"Are you sure that revealing your identity like this is wise?" Bastila says.

"They're Mandalorians," I reply. "Besides, if it's not, I'll just have to face the consequences of my choice."

After a bit of information gathering, I discover that Czerka Corporation isn't allowing anyone to leave the city without a hunting license.

"Ah, Czerka Corp again," I mutter. "Always the highlight of my day. Like a supernova in the face."

I head over to the Czerka Corp offices in Anchorhead to see what I'm going to need to do in order to obtain one. While quietly plotting in the back of my head just how I might be able to utterly destroy Czerka Corp once and for all. I've a lovely growing bubbling pit of hate in the depths of my heart for them.

"I'm looking to obtain a hunting license," I say to the woman at the desk.

"I'm sorry, we're currently not selling any new hunting licenses at this time," she says.

I fold my arms across my chest and look at her. Just who am I going to have to intimidate to make this go through? "Nonetheless, I require a hunting license."
"Well, there is a possibility for a special dispensation," the woman says. "I can authorize you for a hunting license, for no charge, on the condition of fulfilling a bounty."

"What is the bounty?" I ask.

"For gaffi sticks, from the Sand People. I can pay a set fee for each one brought in, as well as a bonus for bringing their chieftain's gaffi stick."

"There have been problems with the Sand People, I take it?" I ask.

She nods. "They've made several unprovoked attacks on people out in the field, and are one of the reasons why a hunting license is required to leave town. We've been hoping a competent warrior could deal with them for us." She looks at us pointedly, her eyes resting on our weapons.

"Right," I say dryly. "Well, I need to go out there, and if what you say is true, I'd probably get attacked by Sand People anyway. So I'll take it."

"Great," she says. "Here, fill this out for me."

I obligatorily fill out the form for the hunting license. The need for all these restrictions and regulations grates on me.

"Also, there's a search and rescue posted for a Twi'lek by the name of Griff Vao, who was kidnapped by the Sand People."

Vao? I wonder if he's related to Mission.

"I'll keep an eye out for him, too," I say.

I take my new license and head back for the docking area. It looks like Mission is currently trying to teach Neeja how to play Pazaak.

"Hey, Mission," I say.

"What's up, Lexen?"

"Do you happen to know a Griff Vao?" I ask.

Mission's eyes widen in surprise, and she frowns. "That's my brother's name. What, is he on Tatooine?"

I give a nod. "Actually, there's a notice for him in the Czerka offices. He's currently missing, thought kidnapped by the Sand People."

Mission gasps, putting her hands to her mouth. "We've got to go save him!"

"I was planning on it," I say. "Come on. Let's go."

Bastila's father is already dead. He can wait. I leave Canderous and Bastila at the ship and bring Mission and Zaalbar along with me instead.

On our way through town, a man stops us and says, "You! Didn't I just see you in the Czerka offices? You agreed to slaughter the Sand People, didn't you?"

"Do you have a better suggestion?" I say. "It's not like they're exactly welcoming people with fruit baskets and inviting them to tea."
"Can you really blame them for being upset at Czerka Corp?"

"No, not really," I reply with a shrug. "And I don't even know what Czerka Corp is doing, but I'd bet they're doing something that might upset somebody."

"You should try talking to the Sand People instead of just killing them all. It's hard to find a translator, though. I hear Yuka Laka has a protocol droid that knows their language."

"Uh-huh," I say. "I'll go see Yuka Laka, then. But you should brush up on your sales skills. If you're looking for a commission, there's better ways to sell things."

"What? I have no such ulterior motives! I simply do not wish to see intelligent beings slaughtered like animals!"

"Why don't you go say that in the middle of the Dune Sea, then?" I say, shrugging as I walk away.

Still, I head over to Yuka Laka's droid shop out of curiosity. Maybe a translator would come in handy, after all. I know a lot of languages, but I doubt I know the Sand People's tongue. I step inside and glance about, and spot a bronze-colored humanoid droid standing in the far corner.

"This droid of yours is a nuisance!" Malak exclaims. "I cannot abide having it around."

""Query: Master, do you wish me to terminate this meatbag?" says HK-47.

"I laugh aloud. "No, he's still useful to me. For the moment. I'll let you know if that should ever change. But do feel free to continue calling him a meatbag.""

I blink for a moment and stare at the droid. I haven't previously gotten flashes of memories while awake before. Maybe yesterday jostled something loose in my head. That might not be such a good thing, though.

Still, this is one droid I'm happy to see again. I grin broadly. "HK-47."

HK-47 looks over to me in surprise. The Ithorian shopkeeper looks up with alarm and a bit of nervousness, although he quickly attempts to mask it and put on a neutral look, which I imagine would work with most humans. I doubt that my droid was legitimately acquired.

"Yuka Laka, I presume?" I say to the Ithorian.

"Y-- Yes," he replies. "Are you interested in purchasing this fine protocol droid?"

"That droid belongs to me," I say. "Where did you obtain it from?"

"If you are the legitimate owner of this droid, then prove it!" Yuka Laka challenges.

"Hopeful statement: Master, please liberate me from this inept meatbag, so that I may visit immediate termination upon his person. Lamentation: I have suffered beneath his woefully inadequate mechanical skills for far too long."

"That proves nothing!" Yuka Laka says.

"You still haven't answered my question as to how you acquired this droid," I say.

"I purchased it from a friend!" Yuka replies. "If he stole it, I know nothing about it!"

"A name," I say, looking at him dangerously.
"Oop!"

"What?"

"His name was Kaka Oop!" Yuka says desperately.

That's the stupidest name I've heard yet. I think I should kill this Kaka Oop just to put him out of his misery, even if he weren't going around selling other people's property.

"Very well," I say. "I'll be asking Kaka Oop some pointed questions in the near future. As for you. Return my droid to me. Immediately."

"I put a lot of work into that stubborn, worn out old droid," Yuka grumbles.

HK-47 says, "Observation: An epileptic Jawa could have done a better job of it, you incompetent meatbag."

"Plus I'm afraid it'll kill me the minute I take off the restraining bolt," Yuka murmurs.

"HK-47, you are not to kill Yuka Laka provided he complies with my request within the next 30 seconds. If he does not--"

"I'll do it!" Yuka Laka says quickly. He hastily goes over to remove the restraining bolt and transfer ownership of the droid back to me.

HK-47 says, "Disappointed statement: 27.31 seconds. Oh, Master, may I kill this meatbag anyway?"

"Not just now," I say. "But we may just have to come back and teach him a lesson if it turns out he's lying about this Kaka Oop selling stolen property."

"Hopeful statement: I look forward to it, Master."

"Come on," I say. "Let's go."

We step outside again, and Carth says, "Did you really have to scare that poor shopkeeper so much?"

"I don't have much patience for shady merchants," I say. "He was dealing in stolen property, and was obviously a scavenger with no real technical skills himself."

"So... this is your droid?" Carth says, looking over HK-47.

"I built him myself," I say.

"Query: Master, is there someone you wish me to kill? Admission: I have not exercised my assassination and combat protocols for some time, and I am eager to put them into practice again."

Carth stares at the droid for a few moments before commenting, "I can tell."

I snicker softly. "HK-47, your translation protocols include the Sand People's language, correct?"

"Reply: Affirmative, Master," HK-47 says. "Hesitant query: Are you considering negotiating with these meatbags?"

"Oh, I'm just checking, as I was told that by someone far more concerned about the well-being of Sand People than I am," I say. "Certainly I want you to talk to them. You can taunt them
appropriately in their own language while slaughtering them."

"Pleased statement: Oh, Master, I have missed you so much!" HK-47 says. "Your suggestion makes my neural core figuratively glow with delight!"

I giggle and head off toward the city gates. Okay, so this might not do much for getting Carth to not think I'm a psychopath. I suppose he would get suspicious if he only ever saw me petting kath hound puppies. I wanted him to see me doing something good or helpful, and I'm going to do that, too. Saving Mission's brother will be a good thing, right?

"So, in this random patch of sand in the middle of nowhere, I manage to run across Bastila's mother, Mission's brother, Canderous's clansman, and a droid that I constructed myself?" I say with a sigh. "What are we going to run into next? Carth's long-lost son? Jolee Bindo's former roommate?"

As we approach the gate, we're stopped along the way by a Jawa. "You are going outside? I would speak with you first," the Jawa says to me in their own rapid, high-pitched language.

I say the first thing that comes to mind. "Ooh ee ooh ah ah, ting tang walla walla bing bang."

Where the hell did that come from? I'm pretty sure that's not Jawa.

The Jawa looks at me oddly. "You're a very strange human. But I appreciate your gesture of friendship. I am Iziz."

"Nice to meet you," I say. "I'm Lexen. Do you need something?"

"Several members of my tribe have been captured by the Sand People," Iziz says. "The humans in this town care nothing for the plight of Jawas. But you're different. Could you find my kinsmen, friend Lexen?"

"Certainly," I say. "We're on our way there to rescue my friend's brother. I'll see if I can find these lost Jawas while I'm there."

"Thank you, friend Lexen," Iziz says. "The Sand People are bad! They enslave us! Good luck in saving us!"

I head to the gate and show the guard my hunting license, and we step outside into the Dune Sea.
I have to wonder why anyone would choose to live in a place like this. I suppose it has its own appeal, if you like hot sunlight, desolate lands covered in barren sand, and overly aggressive humanoids. Hmm, the latter is a good point in its favor. People I can kill that nobody will mind me killing? I grin at the thought of imminent slaughter.

"I still think you're insane," Carth mutters.

"What?" I say, snapping out of my thoughts.

"You had that look on your face again," Carth says.

"What look?" I wonder.

"That crazy, feral, 'I'm about to kill something' look."

"Oh," I say dumbly.

"You enjoy killing people far, far too much," Carth says. "I don't know why I'm even still here. I'm half afraid that you're going to try to kill me every day."

"Hey," Mission interrupts. "Lexen wouldn't do that!"

"You're deluded into thinking that Lexen is a good guy just because he's helped you and Zaalbar a couple times," Carth says. "But make no mistake. This man is still a Dark Jedi, and a psychopath who seems to love nothing better than the chance to kill someone without consequence."

"The Sand People are randomly attacking people, as well as enslaving Jawas," I say. "I think most people would consider killing them to be a good thing."

"Yes, but, it's the way you go about it," Carth says.

"Would you prefer me to be all Jedi?" I say, and then go into an exaggerated impression. "Oh, I deeply regret this inevitable loss of life! All life is precious, all life is one with the Force! Peace, harmony, tranquility..." I drop the impression. "And then get shot in the face."

Mission snickers softly, and says to Carth, "Relax, old man. He's a little creepy sometimes, but he hasn't actually done anything bad since I met him."

"But he killed millions of people during the war!" Carth retorts.

"I was being mind controlled by the Sith Emperor," I say flatly.

"What?" Carth says.

"I never chose to betray the Republic," I say. "My head was fucked with by the most powerful Dark Side user I've ever had the misfortune to run across."

I shudder involuntarily at the memory. Now that I remember it, I can't forget it, and it keeps coming to the surface even in otherwise innocuous conversations like this.
His eyes, looking at me, looking through me, looking into me. His eyes, boring through my very being, gazing into my mind, looking into my very soul. Nothing can hide from those eyes...

"Lexen, are you alright?" Mission says, looking at me worriedly.

I nod to her distantly. "Yeah. Yeah. I'm fine. I just wish..." I sigh softly. "Sometimes I wish that I could really just start over, completely, without any fear of reversion..."

Carth goes quiet and looks away. I'm content to drop the subject if he is. But the others seem inclined to keep trudging across the Dune Sea in silence at the moment now, and I don't trust my own train of thoughts just now.

"So, Mission," I say, pointedly changing the subject. "What was your brother like?" I'm content to listen to Mission talk in order to get my mind off of those memories.

"He was no saint, but he was a great brother," Mission says. "Taught me all sorts of things, like how to slice a lock, pick out a mark from a crowd..."

"A great role model," Carth mutters sarcastically. "Things that every little girl should know, I'm sure."

"Hey, don't go dissing my brother," Mission says. "He really looked out for me, after our parents were gone! But then that floozy, Lena, dragged him off and they left me behind. He promised to come back for me, but he never did. I was always afraid something might have happened to him out in the galaxy, but I guess he just never really had the chance to."

Suddenly, we're beset upon by a small patrol of Sand People. I whip out my lightsabers and drop into combat mode in the blink of an eye. It's five on five. No problem. I keep my control, and block any blaster shots that might be directed toward Mission, even at the expense of being able to press an attack. But I still wind up cutting down three of them myself in a focused rage.

"We must be getting close to their territory," I say, staring off into the trackless sands. "Probably. Possibly. Maybe." I go to collect their gaffi sticks for the bounty.

"If you get us lost out here, I'm going to kill you," Carth says. Zaalbar roars at him, and Carth quickly adds, "Figuratively!"

After a bit more walking through the dunes, I hold up my hand to stop the group. "Hold on," I say, peering about suspiciously. "I think there's mines out here."

"Mines? Here?" Carth says. "How can you tell?"

"I just can, alright?" I say. "And I never said it was logical. Who the hell would bother strewing mines all across a huge stretch of desert? Oh well."

I proceed to step forward carefully and locate the concealed mines. Then disarm them and tuck them in my pack.

"You're collecting mines again," Carth observes. "What are you planning on blowing up?"

"I don't know yet, but I'm always glad when I have them," I answer lightly.

We certainly are getting close to Sand People territory. Another group attacks us out of nowhere. How do these things manage to keep sneaking up on us in the middle of the open desert? You'd think there isn't really anywhere to hide out here. I guess their clothing kind of blends in with the
Not that I'm one to complain. I grin gleefully at the prospect of more things to kill. Lightsabers in hand, I spin around and cut into my attackers with relish. With a flash of my blade, one life ends beneath my hand, and then another, and another.

We continue on, and I peer off into the distance. It's hard to make out anything in the blowing sands, but I think I see structures nearby.

"Looks like there's something over that way," I say, pointing. "Can anyone make it out better?"

HK-47 says, "Answer: It appears to be a small settlement of sandy meatbags. Warning: There are several high-caliber turrets situated around the entrance. A frontal assault with our current weaponry would be ill advised. Suggestion: Obtain better weaponry, preferably long-range rockets or missiles. Or orbital bombardment."

I smirk. "We're on a rescue mission, not here to turn this patch of sand into a smoldering glass crater. Let's get a bit closer and see if we can find an alternative approach."

We don't get far before being ambushed by another party of Sand People. It's a good thing I enjoy killing, or this would be starting to get obnoxious and tedious. After collecting this group's sticks as well, I examine their clothes thoughtfully.

"Hmm," I say aloud. "I wonder if we could sneak up to their settlement in disguise to get past those turrets. Although, draping a robe over a Wookiee probably wouldn't be very effective. If we disguise ourselves as Sand People, Zaalbar, could you pretend to be our prisoner?"

"I can do that," Zaalbar growls reluctantly.

"Once we're inside, we can commence the slaughter again," I say with a grin.

"Statement: I have formulated a number of suitable and scathing taunts for the occasion," HK-47 says.

"Excellent," I say, grin broadening. "When we get into earshot of the enemy, everyone stay quiet until we're inside and in a position to disable those turrets."

We pull the robes off of the corpses and pull them on. They smell terrible, and some of them have gaping lightsaber cuts, but they'll suffice at a casual glance. Falling into role, we approach the settlement. Zaalbar doesn't seem too happy about playing prisoner, but it's only necessary until we get inside.

Sure enough, the disguises manage to get us past the point where the turrets would be a danger, although not much further. The Sand People guards start questioning us in their own tongue, and pointing to Zaalbar wildly. I don't really care to talk. I just yank off the stinking mask and pull out my lightsabers.

We're beset upon by every side by a large number of Sand People, and I grin gleefully as I dive into the fray. Slashing to and fro, limbs flying off into the sand. Unarmored targets! How delightful! I do take care to put myself between Mission and harm's way as much as possible, too. Carth and Zaalbar can take care of themselves, but Mission I promised to protect.

Still, there's a lot of enemies. I lose myself in the fight, thinking about nothing but block, slice, parry, strike. Untold numbers of Sand People fall before my twin blades.

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Still, there's a lot of enemies. I lose myself in the fight, thinking about nothing but block, slice, parry, strike. Untold numbers of Sand People fall before my twin blades.
Finally, their numbers seem to stem. I lean back against a post, panting heavily, and sink to the ground, blood rage rushing out of me like a popped balloon.

"Lexen, are you alright?" Mission says, leaning close over me.

Carth looks me over and says, "I think he's dehydrated. Idiot, probably been so caught up in killing things all the way over here that he's been forgetting to drink something now and then."

"I'm just a little dizzy," I murmur. "I'm fine."

Ignoring my protests, Carth presses a flask to my lips. "Just drink it, damn it."

I suppose I can't really argue, especially when Carth of all people is trying to help me. I carefully drink a bit of the lukewarm water.

"I think you'd wind up killing yourself if someone weren't around to look after you," Carth says with a snort.

"Sorry," I mutter, standing up. "Sometimes I just... lose myself."

"You're scary when you fight, you know that?" Carth says. "Like nothing matters but the kill. And then when everything's dead, you look positively lost for a minute, as if you're only then remembering where you are."

"You've been watching me?" I say, slowly stumbling to my feet again.

"Somebody's got to," Carth replies. "Can you walk?"

"My brother's got to be somewhere around here," Mission says, peering about the compound.

"Yeah, I'm okay," I say. "I can't imagine there's too many more Sand People in the vicinity. Did you get those turrets shut off?"

Carth gives a nod. "Taken care of already. Let's go find Mission's brother."

We head on through the compound that is now conspicuously devoid of Sand People, and come upon some makeshift holding cells. I suppose I can see how this ramshackle construction could keep Jawas in, but I'd think that a full-grown Twi'lek male shouldn't be quite so easy to hold. Then again, the place was surrounded by turrets and mines, never mind the dunes were swarming with Sand People. Maybe staying put was the safer bet. Still, I could have escaped from here in an instant.

I open one room to find it full of Jawas. "Hi guys," I say. "Iziz sent me. You're free to go now. Most of the Sand People in the area should be dead."

"Thank you!" the Jawas say, swarming out of the place.

A short ways down the corridor, there's another cell that I open up, revealing a male blue Twi'lek inside. "Are you here to rescue me? I'm a very important person! I'm sure the reward for my rescue will be substantial! I'm-- wait, Mission? What are you doing here?"

"Griff!" Mission scolds.

I smirk. "You know, we were going to rescue you anyway. I wasn't exactly expecting a reward from it besides making Mission happy."

"Oh..." Griff says. "I didn't realize Mission had any Jedi for friends... But I'm glad to see you weren't
on Taris when it was destroyed. I was... worried about you."
"Insert some nonsense about the Force guiding us to you, whatever," I say with a bored wave of my hand. I sit down in the shade and rest a bit, sipping on a bit more water.

"Griff, what happened?" Mission says. "Why didn't you come back for me? And what happened with Lena?"

"Oh, things didn't work out," Griff says. "And uh, I always meant to, but you know, stuff happened, and well..."

Mission sighs. "You don't have to lie to me, Griff. Did your schemes get you in over your head? Tell me the truth this time."

"I got into some trouble with debt," Griff admits, shaking his head. "I had some great plans on how to make a lot of credits, but nothing has really worked out so far. But I came up with a new plan this time! This one's going to make me rich!"

"Convenient time to come up with a new plan," I comment dryly.

"Well, I've had a lot of time to think while sitting in this cell," Griff replies. "With Taris wiped out, there's going to be a huge demand for Tarisian ale, right? Well, I think I know how to make it, all I'd need is some tach glands, and um..."

"You're not butchering my pet tachs for their glands," I say flatly.

"You were thinking about schemes to make money off the destruction of Taris when you weren't even sure I was still alive?" Mission says, looking at him in shock.

"Well, um... I was worried about you, too!" Griff insists.

I sigh. "Word of advice, Griff? Shut up before you make your little sister cry. And apologize."

Griff looks at me thoughtfully. "You'd do that for me?"

Mission doesn't look at her brother. "I'm still mad at you, Griff. But if I were you, I'd listen to Lexen. He's a great guy, and he's very smart, even if he is kind of crazy."

"What would you have me do?" Griff asks.

"Whatever you're good at," I say. "And if all you're good at is coming up with half-baked schemes to make money, well, we can work with that too. I'm not really expecting a tight schedule or deadlines or anything."

"Alright," Griff says. "That sounds good. I think I'll take you up on that, then."

"Oh, and one word of warning. Don't try to skip out on debts to me. I can use my all-seeing Jedi powers to track you down again and make you swab my decks." I casually take another swig of water. "And hope that I haven't upgraded to a battleship by that point."
Mission says in a stage whisper, "See my comment about the crazy part."

Griff's eyes widen a bit. "I wouldn't dream of it."

"Yes, you would," I say with a smirk. "That's why I'm not really expecting much of you. You're getting off the hook with your debts, and getting effectively free room and board for the time being. And if you've got any ideas, bring them to us and we can hammer out the details. We might even be able to hammer out something that actually works for a change." I grin at him.

I put the water flask away and stand up slowly. I'm still a little woozy, but at least I don't feel like I'm about to fall over at any moment.

"You need any water or anything before we head out, Griff?"

"I'm alright," Griff says. "They didn't starve me or dehydrate me or anything."

I give a nod. "Alright. Let's head on back for Anchorhead, then."

I'm heading on out of the compound. Griff, following behind me, says, "Wait. You didn't tell me your name. I'd like to know who I'm working for, at least."

"I'm Darth Revan," I reply lightly, not looking back at him.

"Oh, come on, very funny," Griff says, then notices the others aren't laughing. "Wait, what?"

"You can call me Lexen Skywalker, or 'Stormseeker', if you like," I say. "I'll trust you to keep my identity quiet."

"How in the galaxy did my sister fall in with a famous war hero turned Dark Lord?" Griff says incredulously.

"I saw some Black Vulkars threatening her, in a cantina in the Lower City, and made them rethink that," I reply.

Griff says, "What were you doing there? I wouldn't expect to find someone like you in a cantina in the Lower City."

"I was mainly there to turn in a bounty for killing one Bendak Starkiller in an illegal death match," I say lightly. "Aside from that, well, you could say I was slumming?" I snicker softly. "Frankly, I liked the people there better than the assholes in the Upper City. And I'm going to fucking kill Malak for trashing that place and killing so many people like that."

Griff says meekly, "You look very scary when you say that."

"You get used to it," Carth says. "I still say he's psychotic and needs therapy."

"Probably," I agree with a shrug. "Feel free to therapize me if you like."

"That's not even a word," Carth replies.

"But seriously," I say. "I'll be the first to admit that I very likely need serious psychological help at this point. It's frequently a daily struggle just to keep my mind from falling apart."

Griff turns to Mission and says quietly, "And you hang around with this person?"

"Hey, he's a good guy!" Mission insists.
Carth rubs his head and sighs. "While I'll admit that he does try to do good, I just have to question his methods at times."

Griff says, "What have I gotten myself into here?"

I snicker softly and say, "Relax, kid. Look at it this way. Would you rather be my friend, or my enemy?"

"Point," Griff practically meeps.

"Anyway," I say. "I expect that the Jedi Order is rife with psychological problems. I mean, what do you think is going to happen with a group that takes children away from their families at a young age and cuts off all contact with them, and then puts them through harrowing training and forces them to suppress their emotions, telling them that any emotion whatsoever is bad and will lead to the Dark Side. I have to wonder just how many kids have turned Sith just for being told their normal teenage crushes were evil and wrong."

HK-47 says, "Suggestion: Could this problem be solved by terminating large numbers of Jedi meatbags?"

I smirk. "Only when necessary, HK."

We get back to Anchorhead. I'm certain that Carth is grateful that I did not get us hopefully lost, although this was more thanks to the Czerka Corp beacons than anything else. I suppose they're occasionally useful for something.

I stop by Iziz on the way in, and say, "I rescued your tribe mates. The majority of those responsible should be dead now."

"Thank you, friend Lexen!" Iziz replies cheerfully. "In return for helping my people, I give you this map of the Dune Sea. We Jawas know many secrets about the desert that most humans don't know! I hope this helps you."

I thank him for the map and head over to the Czerka offices next. I pull out the bag I was collecting the Sand People's sticks in and dump it out onto the desk. The gaffi sticks, covered in sand and blood, tumble out all over the desk and many of them fall onto the floor. One of them looks larger and fancier than the others. I must have killed the chief, too, without realizing it.

"Wow, you've been busy," says the Czerka representative. "And this looks like the chief's gaffi stick, as well. And is that Griff Vao, too? Let me count these out and give you the bounty you deserve for all your good work."

After seeing the sizeable amount of credits we receive from the woman, Griff's eyes go wide. "That's... a lot of money."

I snicker softly. "Yes, I'll let you in on my number one money making scheme. Killing people. I find it to be very effective. There's always someone willing to pay lots of money to make something dead."

Griff says, "I'm not so good at fighting that I could cheerfully kill an entire tribe of Sand People and call it an afternoon's work."

"I can give you some pointers if you like," I offer lightly.

We make some necessary arrangements. Griff resigns from his job with Czerka Corp. I make sure
sufficient funds are send to his creditors, without prying into just why he owes money to the individuals in question. Then with that all taken care of, we head back to the Ebon Hawk.

"Hey everyone," I say. "This here is Griff Vao. He'll be joining us from now on."

After I make some introductions, Griff says to me, "You've got quite the crew here, Lexen."

"They're good folks," I say. "And valuable friends."

It's growing late, but all in all, I'd consider it a productive enough day. I get dinner, do some sparring, record the day in my journal, meditate for a while, and then go to sleep.
The twin suns of Tatooine beat down overhead above the Lars family farm. Two droids I’d recently purchased from Jawas stand at my side, R2-D2 and C-3PO. I figured they would come in handy with what I’m doing, but C-3PO is no substitute for HK-47, and R2-D2 is no T3-M4. I miss HK-47. There’s no one I’d rather have at my back when needing something shot at. Except maybe Canderous.

I came here looking for my father, but I never imagined that I might find a brother instead. Luke Skywalker is two years younger than me, or at least he would be if I were really as old as I should be. He looks totally unlike me. I guess I must take heavily after my mother. He’s blond and pale, to the point where I wonder just how he’s managed in a desert. Even I’m darker than he is.

I can sense a strong affinity for the Force in him. He takes after our father in this way. He could be a great Jedi, if there were anyone around to train him. But as it is, here he is, already in his late teens, without ever having any inkling of his potential. Such a waste.

"Lexen, you shouldn’t be here," says Owen Lars, Luke’s uncle. Well, I suppose he should be my uncle just as much, which is to say not at all. Owen is technically our father's stepbrother, not a blood relation, but I suppose it doesn't really matter.

"I don't plan on staying and disrupting your family," I say. "My father obviously isn't here, anyway."

"You should give up on this mad quest of yours," Owen says. "Your father is long dead."

"Is he?" I say, sighing. "I was afraid of that, but I've been searching for so long, I'd hoped... well, no matter. Could you tell me how he died, at least?"

"It's not my place to say what happened," Owen says. "You should go find Ben Kenobi. Crazy old wizard that lives out in the Jundland Wastes. And you shouldn't come back here. It's a good thing you look nothing like your brother. I'm going to tell Luke that you were a merchant come over from Mos Eisley trying to sell us second-hand droids."

I shrug. "Suit yourself. It's none of my business."

As we head off into the Wastes, R2-D2 begins to play a message. A beautiful young woman, saying, "Help me, Obi-Wan Kenobi. You're my only hope."

"Obi-Wan Kenobi, huh?" I say, heading off through the desert.

I wake, and rub my eyes, and go to record this dream in my journal. As I'm doing so, I notice a few bizarre discrepancies, and find myself very confused. This is obviously a premonition, seeing as I apparently missed HK-47 and Canderous. And yet, my younger brother, who should be two years younger than me, is still a teenager?

Am I really that much younger than I look? That can't be so. I was obviously already an adult when I went to fight the Mandalorian Wars, years ago. But, wait. There was a strange comment about "if I were really as old as I should be". What in the galaxy could that mean? Am I not as old as I am? That makes no sense.

And on top of that, another strange comment about the state of the Jedi. I've seen more than one
confusing dream that seems to suggest dismal fates for the Jedi. And while I can't complain about the idea of the fall of the Jedi Order, it sounded like there was no one around who could or would train Luke. That can't be a good sign. But this Kenobi sounded like a Jedi, or a "wizard" as Owen said. Why didn't he train Luke? Or maybe he wasn't allowed to.

And my father was dead. Is dead. Will be dead? I don't know what to make of this all. I sigh and set aside my journal for the moment, and go to get some breakfast.

I glance over the map the Jawa, Iziz gave me. Hmm. No mention of a Mos Eisley on this map, but maybe it's farther away from here. "Does anyone know where the city of Mos Eisley is, by chance?" I ask.

"Mos Eisley?" Griff says. "I haven't heard of any town by that name. I'll look it up and see what I can find."

"Thanks, Griff."

At least the map marks the spot where there are some ancient, mysterious ruins. No doubt where we might find the next Star Map, at least. There's also a note of warning about a krayt dragon having taken up residence in that very cave. Could it be that Bastila's father was off treasure hunting in the very same cave the Star Map is in?

"There is no Mos Eisley," Griff says. "I can't find any reference to such a place, nor any similar name."

I frown faintly. "Hmm. Thanks anyway," I say. Strange. The world I saw in my dream was definitely Tatooine. Perhaps Mos Eisley doesn't exist yet?

"Having strange dreams again, Lexen?" Bastila asks.

I give a nod. "Yeah, this one was particularly confusing. I had a brother named Luke, who was supposed to be two years younger than me, but he was still a teenager. And someone mentioned a city named Mos Eisley... And an old Jedi named Obi-Wan Kenobi."

Bastila frowns. "I've never heard of any Obi-Wan Kenobi, either."

"These dreams are getting more and more confusing," I say with a sigh. "No matter. Bastila, take a look at this map. I think we'll find your father's remains in the Star Map ruins. The Jawas warned about a krayt dragon that had taken up its lair in that very cave."

"How will we deal with a krayt dragon?" Bastila asks.

"Same way we dealt with the Black Vulkar's rancor," I reply without missing a beat.

"So that's why you were collecting all those mines," Carth says.

"No, I was just being a packrat," I say with a snicker.

"A packrat with a penchant for explosives," Carth adds.

"Anyway, I have an appointment with Jagi to meet first," I say. "Let's meet up afterward and we can go hit up that cave."

"You're really going to go by yourself?" Bastila says.

"We discussed this yesterday," I reply. "Do what you like. I'll be back soon."
I check my equipment, making sure my weapons and armor are in order, and head out into Anchorhead. I barely pause more than to make sure I'm not about to be ambushed by any more Dark Jedi, before heading for the gates.

The guard glances at me and says, "Oh, you again. I already know you're allowed to be out there. I don't need to look at your hunting license again."

I head out onto the Dune Sea. The place Jagi asked me to meet is in the shade of a derelict sandcrawler, some ways to the south of Anchorhead. When I arrive, I find Jagi with a handful of Rodian mercenaries at his back.

"So," Jagi says. "You actually did come alone."

"Are you that surprised?" I reply. "I said that I would. I honor my word."

Jagi snorts softly. "It's been a long time since I've seen anything resembling honor in this galaxy."

"What, were you hoping that Canderous and I would both come, so that you'd have an excuse to call us dishonorable, and an opportunity to kill us both?" Jagi opens his mouth, and I hold up my hand and shake my head. "Don't answer that. I'm going to ignore any dishonorable intentions you may or may not have had, and take this duel at face value."

Jagi gives me a long look, and says, "Fine. Let's see the proof of your right of strength."

I pull out my lightsabers, and face off with Jagi's vibroblade. Our weapons clash. Sparks fly. He's better than I expected. I'm still not fully used to using dual lightsabers, and while they've been more than sufficient for most of the purposes I've been putting them to, this Mandalorian is an experienced duelist.

"You're not half bad," Jagi admits.

"You're not so shabby yourself," I reply. "I think I'm going to need to go with a style I'm more experienced with for this one." I shut off my red lightsaber and hook it back onto my belt smoothly.

Jagi looks at me in some surprise. "You don't know two-weapon fighting very well?"

"Oh, I've only been using it for a few days," I say lightly.

Jagi looks surprised. I start dueling him with only my green lightsaber in my right hand, using a mostly defensive form. I smoothly block his attacks, allowing him no opening. But mostly, I'm having fun. I haven't had this much of a challenge since Bendak, and I didn't really have an opportunity to screw around with him. I'm more relaxed here. There's no rage in me. Less of a storm and more of falling rain.

"Better, but you're still not making any progress," Jagi says. "All you can do is block my attacks."

"I suppose you're right," I say with a sigh. "I'll just have to go all out, then." I grin.

"What, you mean you weren't?"

"By the way," I say, tossing my green lightsaber into my left hand. "I'm not right-handed."

Jagi's eyes widen as I suddenly shift forms, taking on a more aggressive stance. I don't go in for formal lightsaber forms, but I imagine an experienced saber duelist would call my preferred style to be a variation of Juyo form.
My moves change in an instant, and the storm rages up in my mind. Our blades clash. I strike aggressively, but with no intent to injure. It takes a fine line of control to be able to fight for merely disarming and disabling an opponent without harming them, especially when in a blood rage. I find the challenge of the idea thrills me, not merely to defeat this skilled foe, but to defeat him without so much as letting my blade singe him.


But the moment my lightsaber is back on my belt, the Rodian mercenaries Jagi brought with him open fire on me. They hardly manage to get off two shots, however, before several accurate and deadly shots come in from behind me, striking them down quickly.

"You... didn't come alone after all," Jagi says.

"I didn't ask anyone to come," I say.

Carth approaches me and deposits a container in my hands. "You forgot your water again."

Canderous, HK-47, and Bastila Shan also emerge from their hiding place near the base of the sandcrawler. Canderous says, "Why did they shoot, after all that? Was it because you lost?"

I say, "You know what. I don't really care at this point. I'm just going to assume you hired idiotic loose cannons of mercenaries, and not that you were dumb enough to order them to shoot at me if you lost." I smirk. "It's not like I was planning on killing you, after all."

"You... weren't?" Jagi says. "I mean, of course you weren't..."

"Take good fortune where you can get it, Jagi," I say. "And I'm in a good mood after a fight like that. We should spar again sometime. It would be a shame to kill a skilled warrior as yourself."

Jagi sighs. "As skilled as I might be, you put me to shame. I believe you are who you claim to be."

"Then follow me," I say. "Reclaim your former honor and glory. The opportunity is there. It's up to you to take it."

"You're right," Jagi says, then salutes me. "I will follow you, Mandalore. What would you have of me?"

"I want you to take who you can and regroup with the other Mandalorians on Dxun," I say.

"Yes, Mandalore, I shall do so," Jagi says. "I will contact the other surviving clans and we will gather there per your command."

Jagi heads off back to Anchorhead, and I turn to Carth and ask, "How'd you get past the gate guard, anyway?"

"He recognized me as being with you," Carth replies. "And I told him you forgot your water."

Canderous adds, "I doubt Czerka Corp is actually all that concerned about people's safety, regardless."

I say, "Admittedly, I think we probably look more competent and better armed than your average hunters, too."
"Lexen, drink some water," Carth says insistently. "You've been fighting out here in the hot desert working up a sweat. You don't want to go passing out from dehydration."

"Yes, mom," I say lightly, grinning wryly and going to take a drink.

Since when did Carth of all people become so concerned for my well-being? I thought yesterday only would have established me as completely psychotic in his mind. And yet here he is being nice to me. Well, I'm not going to complain, even if it does confuse me. I'd much rather be able to trust him than constantly have to wonder if he's really on my side and if I can count on him in a pinch.

"Also, I brought your mines," Carth says, handing over a bulging bag to me.

"Ah, thanks," I say. "I was going to head back to collect them when I was done with Jagi, but you've saved me the trip. Shall we go find those ruins now?"

"Let's do that," Bastila says. "I am eager to see my father's holocron."

I pull out the Jawa's map and examine it to determine the proper direction to go, and set off for the east. I wonder how anyone manages to find anything in the middle of these blank, trackless sands. If it weren't for the Czerka Corp beacons, I probably would wind up getting hopelessly lost, or trying to rely on the Force to find my way.

"There," I say, pointing out a dark spot tucked into a nearby ridge. "I think that must be it."

The cave in question is almost concealed by a bend in the rocky ridge, making it impossible to detect from a distance. We approach cautiously, alert for any sign of the krayt dragon. But the dragon is deeper inside the cave, with its back to the entrance. I can only see its tail from here.

"Alright," I say quietly. "This is close enough. Let me set up those mines..."

As I did with the rancor, I put down rows of mines, sparing none of my stash. The Sand People put a lot of mines out in the desert for some reason, and I wind up putting down about thirty mines in total in a five by six field. It's wide enough that if the dragon decides to deviate from going straight at us that it'll still hit mines. When I'm done, I stand back at the far end of the minefield, out of the blast radius of the nearest mine, and turn to the others.

"Okay guys, can you get its attention from here?" I say. "Bastila, we're going to be standing at this end of the minefield with lightsabers in case it survives that far. The rest of you, keep shooting at it as it makes its way over. Ready?"

They nod in agreement, and I give them the signal to start firing. At first they only strike the krayt dragon's tail, but that's enough to piss it off. The creature roars and turns around, poking its head out of the cave to see what's annoying it. Then it comes lumbering toward us in a rage, faster than I would have expected from a beast of this size.

It hits the minefield, and explosions rip into its underside. The krayt dragon pauses at that, roaring again and thrashing its tail in pain. Carth, Canderous, and HK-47 continue hammering it from a distance, however, and it can't keep ignoring them. It charges on into the next couple rows of mines.

This thing is tough. With its thrashing about, it managed to detonate almost all of the mines, and yet it just survived four rows of mines, now five. I grip my lightsabers tightly and drop into a combat stance, ready to fight once it crosses the last line. Explosions pop underneath it as the dragon passes over the final row of mines. Still alive. Badly wounded, but still moving and dangerous.

Bastila and I attack the krayt dragon all out with our lightsabers even as the others keep shooting.
The wounded dragon flails at us, and tries to snap at me with its teeth, but I dart out of the way and lure it into the handful of mines that haven't been detonated yet. It's Bastila that gets the killing blow, however. Fighting in an uncharacteristic rage, she slices repeatedly into the dragon's hide with her double-bladed lightsaber. And keeps hitting it long after it's stopped moving.

"Bastila?" I say gently, looking over to her with a touch of concern.

"Killed my father," Bastila snarls, hacking at the corpse. "Took my father from me. Die!"

"Bastila!" I say. "It's already dead."

Bastila slowly calms down, staring at the dragon corpse wide-eyed and backing away. She shuts off her saber and drops to her knees when she realizes what she's done.

"I must be calm," Bastila says quietly. "There is no emotion--"

"Bantha shit," I say. "You have every right to be angry about your father's death. To deny that is to deny being human."

"... there is... there is... there is only..." Bastila murmurs half-heartedly.

"Here, drink some water," I suggest. "Let's take a rest inside out of the sun."

Bastila numbly lets me guide her into the shade just inside the cave, and distantly sips a bit of the offered water. While she's getting a hold of herself again, I open up the krayt dragon's gizzard and retrieve the valuable pearl contained within. That should fetch a fair number of credits. It's a pity Bastila's father didn't live to see it.

"Here," I say, dropping the pearl into Bastila's lap. "This is yours."

Bastila stares at the shiny, round object before her blankly. "What?"

"This is what your father died for," I say. "It's only right."

"I would rather have my father back," Bastila says with a sigh, tossing it aside.

"I can't do that, Bastila," I say gently. "But you still may be able to repair the relationship with your mother and save her life. Don't throw away that opportunity because of misplaced hate."

Bastila looks at me for a long moment and says, "How do you do it? How do you go from fighting in a rage, to being so calm and... and... reasonable? One moment I might think you've actually gone over the edge and fallen to the Dark Side this time, and then you turn around and act like you really care about people..."

"I can teach you, if you like," I offer quietly.

Bastila looks away, and goes to pick up the krayt dragon pearl again and run her fingertips over it. "I always trusted in the wisdom of the Jedi. But you make me doubt it, and wonder if there isn't a better path. And try as I might, I can't condemn you as evil."

"Everything would be easier if the universe really were just black and white, wouldn't it?" I say, squatting down and putting a hand on her shoulder.

Bastila gives a small nod of agreement. "You make me think it might all be merely shades of gray."

"Not at all," I say with a small grin. "I don't see any gray. I see a rainbow, a full spectrum of colors,
bright and vibrant and alive."

"That sounds lovely..." Bastila says softly. "I wish I could see the universe through your eyes. How could you have gone through such hell and still have such an optimistic view of the universe?"

I have seen the face of evil...

I look away, and drop down to sit next to her, clench my eyes shut for a moment, and answer in barely more than a whisper, "It's the only thing that keeps me sane..."

"I'm sorry," Bastila murmurs. "I shouldn't have brought it up."

I shake my head. "Don't worry about it."

Bastila goes quiet for a few more moments before saying, "I think I would like to learn from you."

"Alright," I say.

Bastila turns her head and looks to me. "What, just like that? No ranting about the power of the Dark Side? No demands to swear my unconditional loyalty? No oaths, or tests, or recitations of a code?"

"Heh," I say, quirking my lips in a grin. "Nope. You're my friend and I trust you. I wouldn't demand anything more than that."

Bastila stares for a moment and says, "Alright. Alright."

I chuckle softly and slowly climb to my feet. "Let's find that Star Map and your father's holocron, shall we?"

The body of Bastila's father, mangled by the krayt dragon, lies to one side of the cave. Bastila goes over and kneels beside the corpse. "I'm sorry, father," she says quietly. "I wish I could have seen you again, alive. I wish I could have spoken with you, one more time."

I stand behind her quietly. "Do you want to take his remains back and lay them to rest?"

Bastila gingerly retrieves the holocron from her father's pack. "I think... I think it would be alright to leave him here like this. I can't think of any better place for him."

I go over and retrieve the Star Map, checking as well to see if I'd left anything here like I did on Kashyyyk. But no such luck. This one doesn't appear to have been tampered with.

"Statement:" HK-47 says, "Several meatbags have positioned themselves outside of this cave. Query: Do you wish me to terminate them, Master?"

I groan softly. "Let's see what we've got. Combat positions, everyone!"

I can't imagine that anyone who tracked us out all this way would be friendly. Sure enough, outside the cave, near the krayt dragon corpse, several swoop bikes have been parked, and between them stand a handful of Dark Jedi.

"And who might you be?" I ask, pulling out my lightsabers to face their apparent leader.

"I am Darth Bandon," the Dark Jedi replies. "Darth Malak's apprentice. And you are dead."

I snort softly. "If you can actually succeed at that, you deserve the accolades. But I doubt you're that competent. I have my doubts in Malak's standards for his apprentices. But let's find out, shall we?"
My companions take care of the others, while I attack the Darth Bandon himself. His skill with his double-bladed lightsaber is nothing spectacular, but he attacks me with Force powers. Blue lightning crackles from his fingertips, flying toward me. Instinctively, I put my green lightsaber between the attack and my body, protecting myself from the electrical assault.

Darth Bandon laughs at me. "You won't get very far just defending like that. I bet you wouldn't even be able to use Force Lightning if you tried. Pathetic Jedi! The Dark Side would make you strong. Let loose your rage and hate!"

I stare at him for a moment. "You're an idiot, you know that, right?"

"What, going to spew nonsense to me about redemption and the Light, and what a terrible thing the Dark Side is?" Darth Bandon says.

I snort softly in amusement. "Don't make me laugh. I know more about the Dark Side than you'll ever live to learn." I pause for a moment and examine him again. He seems familiar. "You were on the Endar Spire, weren't you. You killed Kara Vir?" I had to re-read that damned entry enough times. I'm almost surprised that I can even remember it now.

"Oh, you remember me?" Bandon says. "Was she your friend? Lover, perhaps?" He tries to take advantage of my distraction to slash at me, but I'm not really that distracted, and block his attack easily.

"I barely knew her," I say. "And she might have tried to kill me if she saw me now."

"But go on," Bandon says. "Show me your Force powers. Can you even use any? Can you do things like this?" The very air wrenches around me, lifting me off the ground and holding me in place. I growl and struggle against it for a moment, but Bandon isn't finished. "Or like this?" Dark tendrils surround me and penetrate my body, making me feel weak and light-headed, threatening to drain my very life away.

Sedder laughs as the young boy before him dies screaming in torment...

Lightning crackles around me like a storm. It comes so easily, so naturally. It's an incredible rush to let it loose again. A blast of electricity knocks Bandon off his feet, distracting him from maintaining his hold upon me. I hit the ground again and stumble unsteadily.

Darth Bandon is laughing. "Yes, the Dark Side is wonderful, isn't it? Your rage makes you strong!"

"Shut up, dumbass," I say, sending another blast at him.

Bandon is laying out on the sand, badly hurt, his double-bladed lightsaber fallen a few feet away. I leap forward and put my red lightsaber to his throat. He's still laughing, however. "So, did I make you turn to the Dark Side, Jedi?"

"You don't get it, do you?" I tell him. "I was already using the Dark Side freely."

"What?" Darth Bandon says, looking to me in confusion. "Then why are you helping the Jedi? They won't tolerate that from their sycophants! You should join the Sith!"

"You have no idea who I am, do you?" I say. "Malak didn't even tell you who he was sending you up against? I'm Darth fucking Revan!"
"You... no way, that's impossible," Darth Bandon says. "Darth Revan is dead. My Master killed him and took his place."

"He tried to kill me, but due to being too much of a coward to fight me face to face, he screwed up and I survived," I reply. "And if you weren't so much of a bleeding idiot, I might even offer to let you join me instead. But no. I have no use for morons. You die now."

Without another word, I slice off his head in a rage. I straighten and look around the battlefield. Most of the others are dead by now, with blaster or lightsaber wounds to show for it. One is still in melee with Bastila, however. Most likely he realizes he's not in a good position, he lunges forward and grabs the middle of Bastila's saber-staff with one hand, and slices into her gut with his lightsaber beneath it.

"Bastila!" I cry out. I rush up behind the enemy and, with one furious swipe of my red lightsaber, bisect his body from his head to his crotch.

"Ungh," Bastila groans, clutching her stomach and tumbling to the ground.

"Bastila!" I hiss. "Damn it, damn it..."

"I think... I think that does it for me," Bastila says quietly. "Find the Star Maps. Stop Malak..."

"No!" I say. There's too much rage in me. I can't heal her like this. I don't want to subject Bastila to the terrible Dark Side power that passes for healing.

"I know how badly wounded I am," Bastila says. "I'm not going to make it. We're too far from town..."

"No," I say fiercely. "No. Hang in there, Bastila. I'm going to heal you."

"Lexen?" Bastila says weakly. "I think... it's too bad for that. I don't think even you could heal this..."

"Don't give up," I say, taking a deep breath and letting go of my rage. "Have hope. Trust me. Please."

"Alright... I'll trust you," Bastila says quietly.

I need the Light Side for this, and I need it quickly. It's difficult, though. I'm frantic, panicked, angry at the decreased Dark Jedi for wounding her so badly. But I don't want Bastila to die. She's my friend. I care about her. I must help her.

... I love her. I would give my life for her.


I direct the light into Bastila's body. I must heal her. I must save her. Love. Compassion. Desperation. Hope...

The light overtakes me.
Love
Chapter by Keolah

The sun streams down from the blue sky, over the swaying green fields. So calm and tranquil, like nothing could disturb this place. Huge, strange creatures float through the sky overhead, and different strange creatures graze on the grasses nearby.

There are buildings nearby. I approach, curiously, wondering what sort of people live in this peaceful place. I meet a small man with big ears, wearing robes.

"Hello," I say to him.

"Well, hello there, youngling. What brings you here?"

"I dunno," I say, shrugging. "I'm Lexen Skywalker. What's your name?"

"I am the Jedi Master, Vandar," he replies. He looks me over thoughtfully, and says, "Hmm. The Force is strong with you, young Skywalker."

"What's the Force?" I ask.

Master Vander chuckles softly, and says, "You should come learn with us, and become a Jedi. You're a little older than we normally take students, but that should not be a problem for one as strong as you."

"Oh," I say. "I came here to learn, I think. I want to learn everything you can teach me."

I wake, and quickly realize that I'm laying on hard stone. I groan and sit up, blinking and looking around. I'm in a cave? Oh, it looks like I'm in the krayt dragon's lair, where the Star Map was. Judging by the lack of light outside, it's nighttime. Canderous and HK-47 are standing guard at the cave entrance, and Carth looks to be asleep.

Bastila, however, is sitting next to me, watching me closely. "You're awake!" she says. "I was afraid you weren't going to wake up."

It's dark in this cave. I can't see her very well. I fumble around and find a portable light, and flick it on. Bastila doesn't look wounded at all. There's a gash in her clothes above her abdomen, but the skin beneath it looks smooth and untouched. I sigh in relief at the sight.

"You're alright..." I say quietly.

Bastila's hand goes to her stomach. "I'm fine. You healed me up perfectly without so much as a mark. I didn't think it was possible..."

"It's no wonder you didn't," I say. "The Jedi will never accomplish great acts of the Light Side with their current philosophy. Ironic, really. Remember when I told you that the Light Side is also fueled by emotion? That one was fueled by... well... love."

"You... love me?" Bastila repeats, staring at me and raising an eyebrow.

"Well, I had to, in order to save you," I reply quietly. "But you can't really force emotions or control them like a straightjacket. You can guide them, and ride them out, and make sure that they do not completely control you..."
"So you... really do love me?" Bastila says, looking a little stunned.

"Finally, this proves it!" Carth's voice says, and he sits up.

"Wait, you're awake?" I say.

"It's a hard rock floor and I heard you talking," Carth says with a shrug. "Sorry to interrupt your heartfelt conversation, though. I'm just surprised, Lexen. You're interested in women after all!"

"I-- wait, what?" I say in confusion. "Damn it, Carth, that's not-- it's not-- I mean-- fuck."

"Wow, mark this on the calendar," Carth says. "I've managed to make you of all people, tongue-tied."

"To be honest..." I say. "I care deeply about all of you. I could have done the same thing for you, Carth."

"Wait, what?" Carth says, looking at me warily. "Are you coming on to me?"

"No!" I snap. "Fuck's sake. Love doesn't necessarily mean romance or sex."

"Okay, good," Carth says.

"So... you don't actually love me?" Bastila says.

I put my face in my hands. "That's not what I meant, either."

Canderous comes in from the cave entrance and says, "What's going on? Did I miss something?"

Carth explains, "Lexen is confessing his love to us all."

"That's not-- I mean-- damn it, Carth."

Canderous smirks. "What, are we putting together a bisexual harem now?"

"I'm very confused," Bastila says. "Lexen, do you love me or not?"

"Of course I love you!" I reply.

"Do you love me?" Canderous says.

"I love you too!"

"What about me?" Carth says.

"Yes, you too!"

"How about HK-47?" Carth asks.

"Him too!"

"Kinky," Canderous says.

"So, what," Carth says. "Do you love everyone on the crew?"

"Well... yeah," I say. "Love, friendship, trust, loyalty, it all goes hand in hand in my eyes. They're all tied together into powerful bonds of companionship."
"This isn't sounding nearly as romantic as it did at first," Bastila says, sounding disappointed.

"Come now, you're disappointing the lady," Carth says. "That won't do."

"I thought I was special for a moment there," Bastila says.

"Does the fact that you're not the only one I care about mean that I love you any less?" I say.

"I... well, I suppose not..." Bastila admits.

I sigh. I'm being foolish. Bastila is obviously romantically interested in me. Here I went and tried to tell her it isn't like that, in hopes that she wouldn't be uncomfortable if she isn't actually interested in me. But... she is, I really think she is.

"Oh, hell with it," I mutter.

I suddenly lean close and press up against Bastila, and kiss her passionately on the lips. She's a little surprised at first, but relaxes quickly and puts her arms around me, embracing me tightly. Beside us, Carth and Canderous start applauding quietly. After several long moments, I break away and look at Bastila.

"I thought you meant you weren't... interested in me that way," Bastila says.

"I just didn't want you to feel uncomfortable or pressured into anything," I say. "But I'm perfectly capable of not being a blind idiot when the mood strikes me." I chuckle softly and grin at her.

"Just so long as you don't try to kiss me, too," Carth says.

"Trust me, Carth, you're not my type."

"So... you... really do love me after all," Bastila says. Now she's blushing.

I sigh softly and give her a faint grin, and put my arm around her reassuringly. "Yes, Bastila. I do love you. I would die for you, and I will live for you."

This time, it's Bastila who initiates the kiss. She presses her warm lips up against mine fervently, hungrily. She's quite clearly set aside her repressed Jedi thinking. When she pulls away finally, she looks at me curiously.

"But do you feel the same way about our other crewmates?" Bastila asks.

"Well, I don't want to kiss them all, if that's what you mean," I say with a smirk. "I can't afford jealousy or possessiveness, though. Love and caring are positive emotions that can protect and heal. Anger and hate are negative emotions, but they can be used to destroy one's enemies. Jealousy and possessiveness, however, can only be used to destroy those you care about." I shake my head. "But denying that they exist is a folly worthy of the Jedi."

Carth puts in, "That's not very romantic, Lexen. You're losing points."

I ignore him. Bastila looks away from me and goes quiet. "So you are interested in someone else after all," she says. "Who is it? Juhani?"

"Juhani's only interested in women," I reply.

"Oh," Bastila says. "Wait, what? How do you even know that? You were hitting on her?"
"Not that I recall," I say. "I don't think she ever actually told me. I just kind of, know." I shrug.

"So, who then?" Bastila presses. "Neeja?"

"Bastila, relax," I say, putting my arms around her and squeezing her tightly. "I said that I love and care about them. As friends, companions, teammates. Like family. But it's you that I owe my life to. My life and heart are yours, and no one else's."

That seems to satisfy her, finally. So be it, then. If she'll be content with nothing less than everything, then I will gladly give her everything. I doubt I would have come onto her of my own volition, but I refuse to turn her away or break her heart.

Canderous clears his throat after a few moments. "Not to cut this romantic interlude short or anything, but we're running low on water and it might be a good idea to get back to Anchorhead before the suns come up."

"Good idea," I say, standing up and stretching a bit. We gather up our things and head out of the cave, and into the darkened night of Tatooine. The night is chilly compared to the day, and the quiet of the dark is broken by the occasional strange animal sound echoing across the dunes. I keep alert in case something decides to attack us, but it turns out to be a surprisingly uneventful walk back to Anchorhead.

When we get back to the Ebon Hawk, Juhani is up waiting for us. "Oh, you're alright! I was worried that something bad had happened, when Carth called and said you'd be delayed."

"We're all fine," I assure her. "And we got what we came for."

Bastila pulls out her father's holocron and turns it over in her hands thoughtfully. "I suppose I'll give this to my mother after all."

I nod. "Let's get cleaned up. It's not even morning yet."

She heads off to the refresher, and I go to see my journal. I was a little anxious waking up and not having it on hand. After recording everything that happened yesterday, I scan through it and realize that I didn't forget anything since the last time I looked. My life was in very real danger multiple times, and yet I received no premonitions about it, and also forgot nothing.

What was the difference between yesterday, and every other time I've seen and felt myself dying? Was it because, this time, I didn't make any fatal mistakes? But I still wasn't warned about any mistakes that I might make.

All things considered, I'm really starting to wonder if these dreams are really premonitions at all. Especially considering that they feel just as real as when I'm awake. Plus, I can't even tell the difference between them, and dreams that are clearly memories, and the dreams that I can't really identify one way or another.

But if they aren't premonitions, then what are they?

With unanswered questions still on my mind, I put my journal away and go to take a shower.

Come morning, Bastila, Carth, and I head out Anchorhead again. We stop in first at the hunting lodge, since Bastila wants to sell the krayt dragon pearl that we got.

With the credits from that in hand, we go to the cantina again to see about meeting up with Bastila's
mother. Sure enough, she's right where we ran into her before, as if she hadn't moved an inch in the past two days.

"Mother," Bastila says, approaching her. "We were able to retrieve father's holocron and kill that krayt dragon." She pulls it out and offers it to Helena.

Helena puts up her hand. "Keep it. I just wanted it so I could give it to you, for something to remember your father by."

Bastila sheepishly looks at the holocron in her hand, and after a few moments, puts it away. "Mother, here's the money I got from selling the krayt dragon pearl. Use it to get whatever treatment you need."

Helena's eyes widen as she looks at the sum. "With this I could get professional help on Coruscant. Your father would be proud, Bastila."

"I hope so," Bastila says quietly.

Helena goes to leave the cantina, but before she goes, she turns to me and says, "Take care of Bastila, will you?"

"I will," I promise her.

With that, we return to the Ebon Hawk.

I say, "We still have the Star Maps on Korriban and Manaan left to find, but I'd like to take a detour back to Dantooine to see if I can't find any information there that might shed some light on my dreams. This is a purely selfish wish, though. I'd feel bad about taking time out of an important mission for it."

"Relax," Bastila says. "You're trying to find your father. Family is important, you've shown me that. It won't take long to go back to Dantooine for a bit. Besides, we could use a bit of a rest before we go after the next Star Map."

Carth adds, "I'm setting a course for Dantooine, and I'm not taking no for an answer."

I chuckle softly. "Alright, alright."

"If these names you've mentioned, Anakin Skywalker, Obi-Wan Kenobi, were ever Jedi, we should be able to find some information about them," Bastila says.

"Provided they ever existed," I say. "Or even exist yet."

"What do you remember of your mother?" Bastila says.

"Anara Chelseer was her name..." I reply thoughtfully.

Thelsa and Anara are twin sisters, and would be identical in appearance if it weren't for the fact that Anara's eyes are golden rather than the typical Chelseer green. Hard eyes, cruel eyes. Thelsa is soft, quiet, and gentle, but Anara is loud, violent, and bloody. She delights in calling forth lightning from her fingertips to strike down her enemies...

"Lexen?" Bastila prods gently.

I blink for a moment. "Sorry... was just remembering something there. My mother... was apparently a Dark Jedi. I don't know what she was like while she knew my father, or whether he even realized it.
But that's definitely the image I remember."

"A Dark Jedi?" Bastila says, frowning faintly. "Are you sure?"

"Yellow eyes, throwing lightning, cruel, violent... Yeah, I'd say that's pretty clear," I say with a shrug. "I suppose there's no reason it should really bother me, though, considering who I am."

"You said your father was a Jedi, though," Bastila says. "Jedi aren't supposed to have romantic relations, though."

"For all I know, she messed with his mind," I say with a sigh.

"Your father was the most powerful person from his world," Mother says. "And your grandfather from his. There's a lot of power running through your veins."

"I think they were breeding for power," I say quietly. "Looking for powerful people to have children with, like breeding stock for animals."

Bastila looks horrified at the idea. "Who would do such a thing?"

"The Chelseers are descended from royalty," Mother tells me. "And from several of the most powerful magical families on Lezaria. The universe is in our hands. Anything we wish for will be ours."

"Lezaria... I repeat quietly. "Lezaria! That's the name of my homeworld!"

"Ah!" Bastila says. "Excellent. Let's see if we can find that on the star charts."

After a thorough search for the name and any variation thereof, the closest match we can come up with is the Lazerian system. And judging by the information on that, I don't think that's it.

I sigh. "Maybe Lezaria is a local name. I have no idea what it would be called on the official star charts if that's true."

"Well, is there anything else you can remember about the planet itself?" Bastila says. "Maybe we can search for its characteristics rather than the name."

"Hmm," I say. "Let's see..."

*The bright golden sunlight of Yallia pours down from the sky...* The sunlight on many other worlds seems pale in comparison to the memory.

"The sun is called Yallia, but that's likely another local name. Yellow-orange type star," I say. "Apparent magnitude about 50% higher than average."

"Hmm. No matches for Yallia," Bastila says.

*Two moons shine down from the night sky...*

"A pair of moons," I go on. "A larger one, silver, called Thondorron, and a smaller one, green, called Halladan."

*The solid ground of Lezaria feels good beneath my feet...* I feel a little light on other worlds, after growing up on Lezaria. It's no wonder I move so easily, even though I barely remember it.

"Gravity is heavier than average," I say. "Maybe 1.5 G's."
"Hmm. This narrows things down, but there's still too many places it could be, if it's even any of these places."

*I feel a little out of place amongst my family. My ears are barely pointed any longer, after two generations of breeding with humans. But my grandmother, Keliole Chelseer, still has the long, elegant ears indicating her pure blood. Other branches of the family look down on us for diluting our bloodline with human stock."

"The primary inhabitants of Lezaria appear to be a near-human species with long, pointed ears," I say.

Bastila ponders a bit and continues her search. "Could they have been Sephi, perhaps? Or a species closely related to Sephi?"

She shows me an image, and I give a nod. "Yes, they looked a lot like that."

*This is my first visit to Tinemocun, the capital city of Lezaria. In this sprawling city-fortress, I can see many strange beings that I've never seen before in my home village. In addition to the usual humans and elves, there are bulky, green-skinned trolls, mischievous goblins, a handful of bearded dwarves drunk on ale, a couple of gnomes arguing amongst one another... I even see one zephyl flying through the air, a three-foot tall monkey-like person with silver-feathered wings.*

"Tinemocun is the capital. And the 'elves' as they were called weren't the only inhabitants of Lezaria," I say. "There were a lot of humans, too, and a lot of other things." I describe the various things I can remember.

"I don't recognize most of those, but that might not mean much," Bastila says. "What was the technology level like?"

Wooden doors creak. The water wheel turns. Horses snort and chew on their hay. Smoke curls up from the chimneys of the thatched cottages.

"Not very high," I say. "The place I grew up looks positively medieval."

*I've never seen a contraption like this before. The gnomes call it a steam serpent. It seems like a giant snake made of metal that runs along a track. They say it can be used to take people from one end of the continent to the other quickly.*

"Looks like early steam technology is available in the more developed areas," I say.

"Strange," Bastila says. "Normally you'd expect that kind of cosmopolitan population from a spacefaring society. To see it in a late-medieval to early-industrial setting is peculiar at best."

"But they did have some means of getting from planet to planet," I comment thoughtfully. "My mother mentioned distinctly that my father and grandfather were the most powerful from their respective worlds..."

*My mother guides me into the heart of a deep, dark forest. Here, in the furthest depths, covered by dark clouds, is a cave entrance that looks like the skull of a huge dragon. The place is scary, but I'm more curious than anything else. I'm finally going to get to see Torn Elkandu!*

*The portal doesn't give any indication of its presence when we pass through it, but when we emerge on the other side, we're in a strange, new world. The sky is twisting, swirling purple and black. The buildings are silvery-gray with glowing cyan runes. And then we come to the center, to the heart of Torn Elkandu, to the center of the universe: The Nexus. Eight rune-covered pillars surrounding a*
"This is it, Lexen," Mother says. "The Nexus. It's from here that we Elkandu can explore other worlds. This can take you anywhere in the blink of an eye."

"The Nexus..." I murmur. "They had a teleportation device called the Nexus. Mother told me it could take a person anywhere instantly..."


"I'm hesitant to call anything impossible, generally," I say, chuckling softly. "That's just a challenge to prove it wrong."

"I suppose you're right," Bastila admits.

"The Nexus was in a place called Torn Elkandu. Weird place, with a swirling purple sky that looked more like some variation of hyperspace than any normal sky. And she mentioned a group called the Elkandu... Perhaps the local term for Force-users..."

Bastila frowns. "I'm starting to think we aren't going to find any evidence of your homeworld at all, most likely. I imagine it's not on the normal navigation routes, if that's what they use... And these Elkandu must be extremely secretive if they've avoided notice by groups like the Jedi."

"When we travel to other worlds, we must be careful about who we reveal what to," Mother says. "There are those who would venerate us as gods, and those who would attempt to execute us for being demons. So we must watch from the shadows, and learn as we do, and only with great care do we reveal our true nature."


"Would they cause trouble for you if they found out?" Bastila says.

"I doubt they even still realize I'm out here," I say with a sigh. "I've certainly been here long enough, and I doubt my mother's even gone looking for me." I snort softly. "I arrived on Dantooine when I was a child. Maybe ten or eleven. I must have used the Nexus to get there... the Jedi Masters were so confused as to where I came from. And I already had amnesia."

"Your memories seem to be coming back to you more easily now," Bastila observes.

I nod. "Maybe thinking about it has helped. Or I've just formed enough connections to be able to hook onto things better. Or... I don't know. I didn't use to get flashes of memories while awake before, until I read that journal from Kashyyyk."

The face of evil...

"... and now I can't get even unwanted memories out of my mind," I say with a sigh.

"I'm sorry," Bastila says.

I shake my head. "I just need to deal with it. I need to be stronger."

A man's strength cannot withstand a black hole. I will inevitably be crushed.

"Let's just do some training, shall we?" I suggest. "I would be remiss if I did not actually teach you anything after you asked to learn from me."
Darkness. Crushing my will. Consuming my mind. I cannot withstand this.

Darkness is the natural state of the universe. It's the light that's an aberration. My soul is submerged in darkness. I cannot remember the light.

Which way is the fall? Which way is the rise? Can one rightly distinguish an ascent from a descent?

I've seen the dark secrets in the heart of Malachor V. Here I choose the dark. There is no temptation. There is no fall. This is where I sacrifice the light.

The dark is comfort. The dark is power. Let it fill me and give me strength. I came here seeking knowledge. I would sacrifice the entire galaxy for the sake of that knowledge, if need be. Let it all burn. Only this has lasting meaning.

I wake with a groan and almost fall out of my bunk. I shudder involuntarily as I reach for my journal, although I'm not sure that I want to remember this dream. I fear I will not be able to forget it.

My memories have been returning more quickly now, and this is the danger in it. I fear that they will turn me into someone else. Or at least a me who was a little different from what I am now. Since when did I become afraid of myself?

It's disturbing to think that I could ever freely choose to sacrifice the entire galaxy for my own advancement. And yet I don't doubt for a moment that I ever had that heartfelt thought, even if it only lasted for a minute, an hour, a day.

Am I really that dangerous?

Haunted by these thoughts, I go out to get some breakfast. The Ebon Hawk arrived at Dantooine while I was asleep, and it's still the middle of the night, locally. One of my tachs is scurrying about, so I toss him a bit of food and scratch his head. I feel a little bad about keeping them cooped up on the ship all the time.

"You're up early," Bastila says, approaching me from behind.

"So are you," I reply with a smirk. "Space lag always messes me up. It might be noon in Anchorhead on Tatooine, but at the Jedi Enclave on Dantooine, it's still pitch black outside."

"Well, shall we go look through the archives?" Bastila says. "The Jedi Masters shouldn't be awake for a while, if you wanted to see them while we're here."

"I did," I say. "I wanted to get some pointers on dual lightsaber fighting, so long as we're here."

"Master Vandar is an expert in Jar'Kai," Bastila says. "You could ask him."

"Ah," I say. "Good, for a moment there I was afraid you might say Master Vrook."

Bastila snickers softly. We head out of the Ebon Hawk and into the Jedi Enclave, and I follow along after Bastila as she leads me to where the archives are kept. All things considered, I'm again starting to wonder if we're going to find anything. Are my dreams mere hallucination, or visions of a time yet to come, or a time that never was and never will be?
"Anakin Skywalker," Bastila murmurs thoughtfully. "Obi-Wan Kenobi... How do you spell those?"

I show her how they're written, and help with the searching. But as I suspected, nothing comes up from either name. No variant of their names come up, nor any potential relatives with the same last name. It's as though they simply don't exist, and never existed.

"I was afraid of that," I mutter. "I didn't think we'd come up with anything. It's like we're chasing shadows."

"Well, this small archive pales in comparison to the main one on Coruscant," Bastila says. "But it should still have what we're looking for, regardless, if it's to be found at all."

"A strange hour to be poking around the archives," says a voice from the doorway. I look over to see Master Vandar.

"Ah, good morning, Master Vandar," I say brightly. "I was hoping to speak with you."

"Then why did you not come speak with me, rather than sneaking around like a thief in the night?" Vandar wonders.

"I didn't think anyone would be awake yet," I say. "I did not wish to disturb your rest, Master Vandar."

"What were you looking for here?" Vandar asks.

"We were attempting to find a couple Jedi whose names have appeared in my dreams," I say. "Without luck, I might add."

"Dark Jedi?" Vandar asks.

I shake my head. "No, I don't think so. One was a hermit on Tatooine, and the other, my father."

"We were never able to find any evidence of family for you," Vandar says. "It was as though you appeared out of thin air, without any trace of who you were or where you were from..."

I give a nod. "Yeah... I remember speaking with you, when I first arrived on Dantooine..."

"So your memories have begun to return?" Vandar asks.

I nod again. "For better or worse," I say with a sigh. "It seems half the things I remember either never happened or haven't happened yet. It's very confusing."

"Hmm," Vandar says. "Most peculiar."

"I remember people who don't exist, places that don't exist, events that haven't happened," I say. "I remember a city called Mos Eisley on Tatooine, but there is no such town. I seem to remember bad things happening to the Jedi Order..."

"Perhaps they are not memories, but premonitions of the future?" Vandar suggests.

"Perhaps," I say. "I don't know why I'm even telling him all of this. I don't expect any more wisdom from him than what I and Bastila were already able to piece together. That is, not much of anything, really."

"So what is it you wished to see me about?" Vandar says. "I will be happy to provide whatever guidance you may need."
"Bastila says you're a master of Jar'Kai style?" I say.

"Ah!" Vandar says. "That sort of guidance. I was thinking that you might need wisdom in dealing with unpleasant memories and resisting the temptation of falling back to the Dark Side."

"Heh, no, not exactly," I say. "But in a way, it is. I've taken to using two lightsabers, in part because it's new to me. And in part, to help me find a balance."

Jedi like to talk about the balance of the Force. They don't know what it means. They think that "balance" means rejecting the Dark Side and embracing only the Light. That's not balance. That's delusion. Balance is learning to deal with both sides without being consumed by either one. And it's a far more difficult thing than perhaps they realize. Certainly more difficult than choosing a single side and devoting oneself fully to it.

"Well enough," Vandar says. "It will take years for you to fully master this style, but I will give what instruction I can in the time that we have, for the moment."

We go off to the training room to spar for a bit and discuss techniques. Then Master Zhar comes in, and Vandar has him spar me while watching and giving instruction from the side. Neither of them make a comment as to my choice in lightsaber colors.

And then Master Vrook comes in. "What is going on here?" he demands.

"We are sparring, Master Vrook," Zhar says.

"He is wielding a red lightsaber!" Vrook says.

"And a green one," Vandar says with a shrug. "I see no problem with it. He is obviously not a Sith Lord."

"Have you forgotten who he is?" Vrook says. "Have you taken leave of your senses?"

"Calm yourself, Master Vrook," Vandar says. "He came to us for instruction, not in hostility."

"He's just using you to gain power to use against you later," Vrook says. "Fine, if you will not believe me, then I will prove it. I will show you that he has not truly repented of his dark ways. Let me spar him."

"Very well, Master Vrook," Zhar says, stepping away and putting away his lightsaber.

Vrook steps forward to face me, pulling out his own green lightsaber. "You think you have twice the power because you are wielding two blades? Yet each has only half your strength because you have divided it into two."

I didn't come here to argue with Vrook. I beat back his strikes, ignoring his words. He's far more skilled with lightsaber combat than Master Zhar, and he seems more like he's dueling me than merely sparring. I'm pushed into actually fighting myself rather than merely playing around.

"Yes, there," Vrook says. "Now we will see your true heart, how you behave when you have to fight."

"What do you expect of me, Vrook?" I say. I'm getting a little annoyed at him, but I maintain my focus. I am the eye of the storm. I've gotten better with two-blade combat, but it's still taking a lot of concentration to be able to match a skilled duelist.
"Do you think yourself a paragon of light?" Vrook says. "You have been hopelessly tainted by the dark and will forever return to it. I argued that we should have cut you off from the Force, but no. They insisted that you still had a chance at redemption. Well? I haven't seen it. Do you think you can redeem yourself in this way?"

Anger boils up in me unbidden. How dare they think that they could take away my power like that. No. I won't let anger control me. I won't let rage guide my actions. That would only prove him right. I let my fury go into the storm of emotions swirling in my mind, and stay firmly in the eye. I will remain in control. Still, I'm barely managing to block Vrook's attacks for a moment.

"You should back off, Master Vrook," Vandar says. "You aren't trying to actually kill him."

"No, it's fine," I say, letting out a breath. "I am... honored by the opportunity to fight such a skilled duelist."

"So you say," Vrook says. "What do you really think? Are you angry with me? Do you hate me? Do you wish me dead?"

Oh, yes, I am, and yes, I do. At the moment, I'd like nothing better than to take this growing storm of anger and annihilate him with it. But I didn't come here to kill anyone. I just came here to learn. I will not lose control. I continue to block his attacks, clenching my teeth and breathing heavily.

"And I see Bastila is still traveling with you," Vrook says, noticing her sitting off to the side of the room and watching us. "Have you corrupted her to the Dark Side as well yet? Perhaps we should forbid her from traveling with you. Keep her from ever seeing you again. For her own protection."

"You will do nothing of the sort," I half-snarl at him.

"Oh?" Vrook says. "Have I struck a nerve?"

"Bastila follows me by choice," I say. "You will not impose yourself upon the free will of others."

"Ah, I see," Vrook says. "You have obviously led her astray with your honeyed lies and dark seduction."

"I do not lie," I snap.

I'm losing it. My control is slipping. Damn it. I must not let this bastard get to me like this. The trouble is, I'm not sure if he's just bluffing or not. I don't know if he's serious and whether he really can or will take Bastila away from me. Damn it all.

"Really?" Vrook goes on. "It was bad enough that you led so many young Jedi astray to fight the Mandalorians. But what about those oaths you took to serve the Republic? What happened to those when you decided to become the Dark Lord of the Sith and turn against us all?"

"I never decided to do that," I retort. "That was not my choice!" I barely block another attack. Focus. I must focus.

"What?" Vrook says. "Were you forced into it?"

*I have seen the face of evil..."

"Yes..." I hiss.

*His eyes bored into me..."
"I don't believe you," Vrook says, slashing at me.

*His will crushes my mind...*


*Darkness overtaking me...*

And his lightsaber cuts straight through me.

I wake, clutching my head. Damn. Damn that Vrook. He killed me! He totally killed me! Right in front of Bastila and the other Jedi Masters! How could he do such a thing?

It looked like an accident. How clever of him. Waiting until the right moment to strike so that it would look like an accident. I'm going to kill him for this.

I should calm down. It won't do to go charging in there in a blind rage. I pull out my journal to update it, and scan through to see if I've lost anything. Sure enough, the journey from Dantooine to Kashyyyk has vanished from my mind. There doesn't even appear to be any rhyme or reason to what I might forget, besides possibly that it's information I haven't used recently.

I sigh in frustration, and roll over in my bunk. I think I'll just go back to sleep. I feel as though I haven't even slept at all, and it's still the middle of the night at the Jedi Enclave anyway. I drift off into slumber again for a few hours.

*Jedi Master Yoda is strong with the Force, defying his small stature. I can practically feel the waves of energy pouring off of him.*

"Strong you are, young Lexen," Yoda says. "But much anger there is within you. Lifetimes of hatred. Already claimed you the dark has, hmm?"

"I know," I say quietly. "I won't deny that I've walked with the Dark Side so long that I no longer remember the Light. But believe me when I say that I mean no harm here right now."

"Hmm," Yoda says, looking at me. "Believe you I do. Why have you come?"

"Looking for answers to questions I've forgotten," I reply. "Looking for closure to a never-ending cycle. Looking for peace for a soul that knows only war."

"Perhaps, then, help you I can."

I wake slowly. It's morning at the Jedi Enclave, and I'm calmer now. I go and write this next bit down in my journal before getting up and stretching. I have no need to search through the archives now, but I think I'll go see Master Vandar, regardless.

Bastila catches me on the way out. "Good morning, Lexen. Are you going to check the archives now?"

I shake my head. "No, we don't have to do that anymore. We won't find anything."

"Oh," Bastila replies. "Did you have a premonition about it?"

"Something like that," I say. "I'm going to go talk to Master Vandar. You can come along if you like."
"Alright," Bastila says, following along after me.

I locate Master Vandar, and bow to him in greeting. "Good morning to you, Master Vandar. May I speak with you for a bit?"

"Certainly, certainly," Vandar says. "What do you wish to speak of?"

"First, I have a question," I say. "Do you know of another Jedi Master of your species, by the name of Yoda?"

"Yoda?" Master Vandar repeats, quirking his lips. "No, there is no such Jedi Master."

"I see," I say. "I suspected as much."

"Oh?" Vandar says. "Why do you say that?"

"I saw him in a premonition," I say. "But I don't think he, well, I don't think he's been born yet."

"Ah," Vandar says. "I see."

"That aside, I wanted to ask you if you would give me instruction in Jar'Kai. I've been told you're a master of the style, and I wish to learn."

So Master Vandar and I go to the training room to spar a bit again. I severely hope that Vrook doesn't decide to interrupt us. I don't know if I'll be able to hold back if I see him again. But it's a few hours later than before. What are the chances of him wandering by again?

Pretty high, apparently. Vrook strolls through the door and looks at me and Vandar sparring. "What is the meaning of this?"

"Ah, good morning, Master Vrook," Vandar says. "I am instructing young Skywalker here in Jar'Kai style. Perhaps you could spar with him so that I might be able to observe and give instruction from the side?"

Great. Looks like I'm not going to be able to avoid it that easily. No matter. I'm not willing to back down from a fight with Vrook at this point.

Vrook draws his green lightsaber and faces off with me. "Very well. I'll show you the true intentions of this Sith Lord you've invited into our midst."

"Master Vrook?" Vandar says.

"Just let me fight him," I say, narrowing my eyes and dropping into a combat stance.

Vrook attacks me fiercely. I'd like to go after him aggressively, but it's all I can do to defend against him. And he was distracting me so much before that I didn't even have much chance to pick apart his style and find any weaknesses.

"Tell me, Revan, what were you thinking when you betrayed the Republic? When you turned your back on your people?" Vrook says. Looks like he's not going to let up this time either.

"Damn it, Vrook," I mutter. "I never wanted to betray anyone!"

"No?" Vrook says. "First you led many young Jedi off to war. And then the only ones that didn't wind up dead or worse ended up turning to the Dark Side and becoming your new generation of Sith!"
They followed me blindly, and I destroyed them all.

I block his attacks frantically, trying less successfully to block out the memories welling up in my mind. Not this again...

"Why did you do it, Revan?" Vrook goes on, still slashing at me with his lightsaber. "Why did you turn to the Dark Side?"

Malachor V...

"Malachor V..." I murmur.

The secrets of darkness. Ancient teachings. Knowledge that could destroy a mind just by knowing it.

"You embraced the Dark Side, why, out of greed? Lust for power? Hunger for knowledge?" Vrook goes on.

There is no temptation. There is only choice.

"Yes," I reply quietly. "I did that out of choice."

"You admit it, even?" Vrook says. "And the dark path led you right around to destroying everything you once claimed to care about."

Telos is burning. Telos is ashes. It was beautiful, once. But now there's nothing left but a dead ball of rock.

"I never meant to destroy anything," I say softly.

I can hardly parry his attacks at the moment, never mind his arguments. It's really disheartening.

So destroy him.

"And yet you did," Vrook goes on. "The Dark Side can only ever destroy. And it will destroy everything it touches. Even you. You think yourself wise? You think yourself strong?"

Destroy him. Let anger make you strong. Crush this insect that besmirches you.

"Shut up," I murmur.

"What did you say to me?" Vrook says.

"I said," I say, more loudly. "Shut. Up."

Because if he doesn't, I don't know what I'll do.

"Why, am I saying something that you don't like?" Vrook says.

He's taunting me. I shouldn't let him get to me. He's just trying to make me angry. He's trying to make me lash out at him.

He's a fool. I could destroy him, if I use the Dark Side. There's no way that he's as powerful as I am, if I let loose.

"You're weak," Vrook says. "Your mind is weak. Your will is weak. Your heart is weak."

I clumsily block another attack. This is getting me nowhere. All I'm doing is blindly trying to block
while letting his words distract me. This would be deadly in a real battle. But wait, he's trying to kill me. Isn't this a real battle?

*So I need to kill him before he kills me.*

I will not kill him unless I choose to. My mind is not that weak. There is no temptation, there is only choice.

*So choose to kill him.*

The Dark Side wants me to kill him, and it's hard for me to say no when I agree with it so wholeheartedly. I *want* to kill him. It's not like it's pushing me to do something I don't want to do.

"We should just cut you off from the Force right now," Vrook says.

*Don't let this fool dare to try to sever my connection to the Force.*

I choose to kill him.

My stance shifts instantly. I go from defensive to aggressive in the blink of an eye. Vrook grins and gets a triumphant look in his eye upon seeing my change in posture. But I'm no longer really listening to him.

I attack. I let my rage flow through me. I let the Dark Side give me strength. I swing, I slash, I strike. Now Vrook is the one on the defensive.

"You see, Vandar?" Vrook says. "How easily he gives in to the Dark Side? He's actually trying to kill me now?"

"I'd think you'd be more concerned about that prospect," I snarl, slashing at him furiously.

"Lexen," Vandar says. "Stop."

"No," I growl.

"Lexen!" calls Bastila.

I don't even care what they're saying anymore. I am a storm of raging fury. What do their warnings mean to me? They can't stop me. I will destroy my enemies. I will kill this man in front of me. And I will take great joy in doing so.

"Still lost in the dark," Vrook says. "You will never be anything more than a slave to darkness."

I swing at him in a blind rage. But I've left myself wide open. Vrook's green lightsaber strikes me down in an instant.

I wake. My eyes snap open. I growl in rage. That bastard *killed me!* And it definitely was no accident that time. He didn't even try to make it look like an accident. He just *killed me!* I can't believe it!

I don't even stop to bother with my journal. I get dressed and grab my lightsabers and storm into the Jedi Enclave looking for Vrook. I am going to kill that bastard! And damn the consequences. He *killed me!* I don't even bother thinking over the logic of avenging my own death too much, even though I'm obviously not actually dead now.
Vrook is walking down a corridor. I rush up to him. He turns to me in alarm. "You--" he says. "What are you--"

I grab him by the throat. Fuck dueling. I'm not giving him a fair fight. I'm just going to kill him. "You bastard!"

I start punching him in the face repeatedly with my other hand. But after a few blows, Vrook gives a sharp push with the Force, sending me flying several feet.

"What do you think you're doing, you Dark Side addled wretch?" Vrook says. "Assaulting a Jedi Master in the corridors? You've really gone over the edge this time."

I pull out my lightsabers, and Vrook matches me with his own green blade. "What am I doing?" I say. "I'm going to kill you!"

So it's going to be a lightsaber duel after all. I drop into a combat stance, and throw myself at him in a rage. The Dark Side will give me strength. But it's not enough to match his skill. So I'm going to need to expand my repertoire if I want to beat him like this.

I let my rage and hate take over, and call forth Force Lightning. A crackling blue storm surrounds me, and I send a blast straight at Vrook. But he blocks it with his lightsaber, and my attack is ineffectual.

"You are weak," Vrook taunts. "Do you really think you can defeat me like that? You're nothing but blind rage, not even thinking clearly any longer!"

"I know," I say. "I don't care. I'm still going to kill you."

"You fool," Vrook says. "And to think they rested the salvation of the galaxy on the likes of you."

And in the midst of my furious attacks, Vrook cuts me down again.

I wake up with a headache and roll over, falling out of my bunk in the process. Fuck's sake. How I hate that man. How I want to see him dead. But I can't do it like this. This isn't working.

I look down at my journal and set it aside with a sigh. I've probably forgotten something by this point, but I don't care right now. I'll look over it later. Right now, I want to deal with Vrook, one way or another.

I get dressed, putting on my armor again, and grab my lightsabers, before heading down into the Jedi Enclave. Even if I want to actually kill him, I can't do it like this. I have to concentrate, focus, think. I need to find a weakness that I can actually exploit, and I need to keep my defenses up so that he can't get through to me.

But for the moment, I need to stay calm. I go to see Master Vandar instead of just accosting Vrook in the hallway, and we go off to spar in the practice room.

"You are doing surprisingly well with the Jar'Kai style for someone who hasn't been using it for very long," Vandar says.

Perhaps because, for all the time I've been using it, the amount of experience gained with it has been multiplied due to having to see the same day over and over again sometimes. But I don't care to try to explain that to Master Vandar.
Shortly, Master Vrook comes in, as expected, and requests to spar with me instead, to which Vandar happily takes him up on the offer. I carefully put a calm mask on my face to avoid glaring pure hatred at Vrook.

"So, where did you get the red lightsaber?" Vrook says.

"From a Dark Jedi that I killed," I reply.

"So you've been killing Dark Jedi now," Vrook says. "But how many Jedi have you killed in the past? How many common soldiers? How much blood is on your hands?"

"Too much," I answer, parrying an attack.

"You even admit to being a mass murderer?" Vrook says.

"What do you want from me, Vrook?" I ask. "A confessional? I know I've done plenty of bad things in my lifetime. I never denied that."

Vrook swings at me again, and I block his blow. "Why did you do it, Revan? Why did you lead so many people to their deaths?"

Here we go again. Here I am, on the defensive, and listening to him taunting me, trying to get a rise out of me, trying to provoke me into a blind rage again. No. I'm not going to fall into that again this time, damn it. I concentrate. I watch his movements with focused deliberation.

"I was trying to save the galaxy," I reply quietly.

"Were you trying to save the galaxy when you became the Dark Lord of the Sith?" Vrook retorts.

"Vrook, don't talk to me about that," I say flatly, with forced neutrality.

"Why not?" Vrook says, slashing at me viciously, and I parry again. "Do you wish to deny that it happened that badly? Or is forgetting about it the only way that you can claim to be a good person any longer?"

"Because," I say through clenched teeth. "It brings back... Evil... terrible... darkness... "... memories."

*The light is an aberration. Embrace the darkness. Give yourself over to the dark.*

I stumble back, and clumsily manage to block another strike. Damn it, I have to focus. I can't let these memories control me any more than I should let my rage control me. I am in control here! I will do nothing but by my own free choice!

"Does it bother you so much to know the atrocities you committed?" Vrook says.

"What bothers me the most," I reply, struggling to maintain my focus. "Is the fact that it was not my choice."

"Oh?" Vrook says.

*I have seen the face of evil..."

"The Sith Emperor tried to crush my will under terrible Dark Side powers, the magnitude of which I've never seen before and never hope to see again," I say.
But I chose to use the Dark Side.

Yes, I did. I don't deny that. But I don't wish to reject the Dark Side now. I merely don't wish to reject the Light Side, either. I'm always free to make another choice. And I can freely choose which, if any, to use in any given situation.

"So you say," Vrook says. "But I don't believe you. You're just as corrupt as you ever were. I can see the rage and darkness within you, bubbling over, seething with hatred. You want to kill me, don't you?"

I don't bother giving him a response to that. I concentrate. I push away my memories. They can't control me. I focus my rage around the eye of the storm. It can't control me.

And I watch his moves. He's using Juyo style, very aggressive and forceful. And he's leaving himself wide open. Probably because I've been so heavily on the defensive here and haven't really been able to strike back.

But I've had enough of purely defending. I can't win like this. Neither can I go purely aggressive and forget my defense, however. I shift my stance. Red for attack, green for defense. This is what Vandar has been trying to teach me, and I haven't really had a chance to learn. The strengths of using two blades.

"Going to try to kill me now?" Vrook says.

I ignore him. I fight back. I let myself fall into the thrill of battle. If I'm not getting so pissed off at him needlessly, I realize that this is a great fight. He's possibly the best duelist I have ever fought. Even Jagi pales in comparison to an experienced Jedi Master. I'm no longer listening to what he says, letting him distract me. Now, instead, I'm having fun.

Slash, parry, swish, clash. Sparks fly, and suddenly I'm doing a lot better against him. The perfect offense combined with the perfect defense. But it takes an incredible amount of concentration to maintain. I must know where his blade is at all times and be ready to stop it the moment I realize where it's going. And suddenly I know where it's going.

With one quick move, I knock the green lightsaber out of Vrook's hand. I leap forward, putting my red lightsaber to his throat.

I choose not to kill him.

I turn off my lightsabers and back away, and give him a bow. "Good fight."

Vrook blinks and stares at me in shock. I put away my lightsabers and summon his toward me with the Force, and hand it back to him. He numbly takes it back, as if not believing what he's seeing.

"Excellent job, Lexen," Vandar says. "You have a great natural talent for lightsaber combat. But the important part is that you were able to maintain your concentration despite Vrook's attempts at distraction."

"For a moment there, I thought you were going to kill me," Vrook says.

I chuckle softly, and shrug helplessly. "It would be a shame to kill one so skilled as you."

"Wait," Vandar says, looking at me in puzzlement. "You considered killing him?"

"Heh," I say. "Of course I did. I can't stand him. I hate him almost as much as Malak. He pissed me
off good. But... I'm not a slave to the Dark Side. I am in control."

"I'm glad to hear that, Lexen," Vandar says.

"It's not often that I am beaten like that," Vrook says, seeming more confused than anything else now. "I'm just surprised that, after you fought with the ferocity of a Sith warrior, you were still able to choose not to follow through in the end."

I laugh softly. "That's going to bother you for the rest of your days, isn't it? The fact that I could have killed you, and chose not to."

"I still think that it's a terrible idea resting the fate of the galaxy in your hands," Vrook says with a snort.

"Not to worry," I say brightly. "I still think it's a terrible idea to rest the training of young Jedi in your hands. Did they make you a Jedi Master just so you could teach people to control their anger by trying to piss them off at every turn? If so, that was a brilliant move, I'd say."

"You would have killed him, right here, with me watching you?" Vandar says.

"I'm perfectly willing to face the consequences of whatever choice I may make," I reply.

"What of your actions during the war?" Vrook says. "What of Malachor V?"

I sigh softly. "How much ill can a man commit and claim that it seemed like a good idea at the time? I don't know my reasoning for what happened at Malachor. But I hope that I had a good reason for it. I hope that all those lives, on both sides, were worth something."

"We should not ask him to answer for things that he does not even remember," Vandar says gently.

"Fine," Vrook says. "Then answer me this. Why didn't you kill me, if you wanted to do so?"

"I told you," I reply. "You're very skilled, and it would be a shame to destroy that. I've destroyed enough things of beauty in my lifetime."

"You aren't afraid that I may end up being your enemy at some point in the future?" Vrook says.

"Not at all," I say. "I'm not planning on doing so at the moment, but if I were to choose to take that path, I would not deserve to win if I could not beat you. It would be an honor to be killed by one such as you. Mind you, I still think you're a bastard, but I can respect your skill."

Vandar says, "Well. Now that no one is trying to kill one another, perhaps we could return to the training as originally planned?"

I smile at him. "An excellent suggestion, Master Vandar. Master Vrook, I would be honored if you would be willing to spar with me for a bit longer."

Vrook sighs and says, "Oh, very well."

So we return to sparring. He doesn't bother taunting me any longer, now. It's like a barrier has been pushed past, and everything is on a new level. I'm able to fight now with precision and clarity.

I can't duplicate whatever feat allowed me to win last time, but I'm not concerned about it just now. The true victory was not in defeating him. The true enemy was myself.

"Lexen," Vandar says. "How was it that you defeated him before?"
"I'm not really sure," I say. "Just, for an instant, I thought I saw what he was going to do and realized how I should strike to take advantage of that."

"Battle precognition?" Vandar says. "You've shown similar abilities in your premonitions before."

I don't mention that I don't think my premonitions are quite the same thing as he seems to think they are. "Perhaps," I say.

"A valuable skill, if you can cultivate it," Vandar says.

We practice for a little while longer, and then part ways. I grow tired early, as though I haven't slept in days and my weariness is just catching up to me. I return to the ship to record the day into my journal. And, sure enough, as I had suspected, my memory is missing several days, seemingly at random. Even my dreams aren't immune to being forgotten.

"Lexen, you're back," Bastila says, poking her head into the crew quarters. "Did you find what you were looking for in the archives?"

"Ah, no," I reply. "There was nothing there. It was as though the people I dreamed of don't exist and never did. But it wasn't a complete waste. I had an excellent sparring session with Vandar and Vrook. It was a pleasure to fight Vrook."

"You were fighting Vrook?" Bastila says. "I'm surprised you didn't kill him."

I laugh aloud. "To be honest with you? So am I."
The dream in this chapter is from the Geneforge universe.

I stand over the swirling pool of essence. The Geneforge, it's called. It promises great power, drawing me in, pulling at my mind.

I've used many of the crystal canisters, so many that I've long since lost count of them. Each one of them rewriting my being a little bit, and giving me a little bit more power. They make me stronger. They set me far above these mere insects.

And with the power of the Geneforge, I could be a god on earth. Anything could be in my grasp.

I pull on the Shaping gloves and approach the pool. I kneel beside it, and carefully touch the surface of the pool. Instantly, incredible agony. Not gentle, not small changes like the canisters. Terrible pain as the Geneforge rewrites me... Screaming. Must concentrate. Must retain consciousness. Must not fall into the pool. That would kill me.

And then, finally, it is over. I look myself over, pleased at the result. I am strong. I could do anything. The world is in my grasp. Such power! Nothing, no one, will stand in my way now!

I wake, and rub my forehead. What a strange dream. I was being such a power-hungry maniac with a bizarre device like that. Should I even bother trying to look it up? I have a feeling that I wouldn't find anything, anyway.

I write down the dream, regardless, and go to get some breakfast. "Oh, good, you're awake, Lexen," Bastila says. "We're about to land on Korriban. Why didn't we go to Manaan first? This place will be crawling with Sith."

"I know," I say. "But we need to come here, regardless. Let's just hope that they aren't on alert for us. It might be better if I went alone, and the rest of you stayed aboard the ship."

"Are you sure about that, Lexen?" Bastila says, frowning at me in concern.

I'm concerned that I might be being overconfident again, but in this case, I don't think going into this place in a crowd would help. We're not here to try to cleanse the entire planet of Sith.

"This will be an undercover operation," I say. "It'll probably work better if I don't have to explain the presence of our motley crew. What would we say? A bunch of Dark Jedi, their slaves and droids, and a couple hired mercs? Actually, that doesn't sound so terrible. But let's do this for the moment."

I head out into Dreshdae, putting on a mask of a Dark Jedi. It's not a difficult feat. I'm not far off from it myself, I don't think. I just don't need to let on that I can still actually use Light Side powers effectively.

As I'm heading into the port of Dreshdae, I run across a Sith talking to several hopefuls.
"Yes, we would do whatever you want!" one of them is saying.

"No, no, no!" exclaims the Sith. "You're supposed to kill me and take my place!"

This is why I hate the Sith. The sheer level of stupidity involved makes me barely restrain putting my face in my palms.

"You're all worthless. I should just kill you all. You there," the Sith says, turning to me. "I'm Shaardan. What do you think I should do with them?"

"You're asking me?" I say, raising an eyebrow. "I don't know that you'll like my thoughts on the matter."

"I asked, didn't I?" Shaardan says.

"Fine. You want to kill them for being too loyal?" I say. "What kind of sense does that make?"

"They can at least entertain me if they're not going to be useful," says Shaardan.

"Not everyone is cut out to be a Dark Lord, but every Dark Lord needs loyal minions," I point out. "If you want to kill people at random for entertainment, it generally is more sensible to kill your enemies, rather than your allies."

"I suppose," Shaardan says, sighing. "Oh, fine. Go on, you lot."

I move on. I hardly get very far before being stopped by a trio of Sith. "Well now, another Dark Jedi come to Korriban?" says the human woman in the middle. "I am Lashowe."

"I'm Lexen," I reply. "Nice to meet you."

Lashowe chuckles darkly at me. "So polite, are you? Why don't you amuse us some, Lexen? You're on Korriban now, and here, we Sith do as we please. We could kill you on a whim if we wished to."

I sigh inwardly. Why do the Sith have to be such fucking idiots? "Yes, acting like common thugs and accosting random strangers in port?" I snap. "Is that the best you can do? This is pathetic!"

Lashowe narrows her eyes and glares at me. "And what would you do in my place, hmm?"

"I don't know," I say with a shrug. "I'm not in your place."

"Fine," Lashowe says. "You're not being very entertaining. Why don't you just tell me what you intend to do on Korriban, instead?"

"Well, let's see," I say thoughtfully. "I intend to look around and gather information. See if I can unearth any dark secrets of power and ancient knowledge. Kill anyone who gets in my way. And then I might go shopping later."

Lashowe chuckles softly and says, "Alright, you've sufficiently entertained me. I'll spare your life, today."

"Oh, that's mighty generous of you," I comment lightly as she and her companions walk off again.

The Rodian at a nearby kiosk says, "Did you say something about shopping? I'm B'ree. You should check out my inventory! As you've seen, it always pays to be heavily armed when traveling on Korriban."
"Heh, alright, I'll take a look," I say.

"Just between us," B'ree says, lowering his voice, "but I don't get why some of these Sith seem to think that 'Dark Side' means they need to act like hooligans."

I roll my eyes and sigh dramatically. "I know! Really now, if you're going to be all dark and evil and bent on galactic conquest, you could at least be civilized about it."

"Yes, and that would be much better for any random merchants who happen to get caught in the middle," B'ree adds.

"You've got some nice-looking weapons, but I'm not much one for blasters, myself," I say. "I wouldn't know a good blaster from a bad one. But I've got some friends who might be interested. I'll send them along to take a look later."

I continue on into Dreshdae port. A Rodian stops me along the way, and says, "Is that the Ebon Hawk you just came in on?"

"That's right," I say.

"Finally! I'm Lurze Kesh. I've been waiting for this shipment for weeks! When I heard Taris was destroyed, I thought Davik hadn't actually made it out and the shipment was lost."

"Um," I say. "Actually, Davik didn't make it out. I killed him and stole his ship."

"Oh," Lurze replies. "Well, these things happen in this line of business. Ships change hands, people die, planets get wiped out. So if you stole the ship, you might not even know about the secret compartment, right?"

"No, but I suppose I shouldn't be surprised that there is one," I say dryly.

"Well, if you can bring me the shipment, I'll pay you what I was going to pay Davik for it."

"That's fair," I say. "If you can tell me where this secret compartment is, I'll go fetch it for you."

He tells me where to find it, and the code to open it. I nod, and head back to where the Ebon Hawk is docked.

"Did you forget something?" Bastila says as I come on board.

"No," I say. "Davik apparently had a secret smuggling compartment. I'm retrieving some cargo, apparently."

Canderous chuckles softly. "He never told me about that."

"By the way, Canderous," I say. "There's a weapons merchant selling blasters just inside the port. Feel free to go take a look at his stock and see if there's anything that might be useful. I think Mission could definitely use a better blaster, for one. I pass him a chunk of credits."

"Alright, will do," Canderous replies, heading off to visit B'ree.

I open up the secret compartment and pull out a small fortune worth of spice. Snickering a bit, I say to Griff on the way out, "There's another great money-making scheme. Smuggling. Especially accidental smuggling by accidentally stealing someone else's smuggled goods. But that's a bit hard to arrange."
"Uh, I would imagine so," Griff says. "How do you accidentally smuggle something, anyway?"

"Very easily, apparently," I say lightly. I give a casual wave to him and head back out into Dreshdae to take Lurze his spice.

Along the way, I pass Canderous at the weapons kiosk. "Check this out!" Canderous says. "This guy has Cassus Fett's own blaster!"

"It's genuine?" I ask.

"Think so," Canderous says. "Though even if it's not, it's still a damned good blaster. I could take the head off a boma with this baby!"

I give Canderous a thumbs-up and continue on to find Lurze. The Rodian is still standing around right where I ran into him before.

"Ah, there it is!" Lurze says happily. Spice and a large sum of credits change hands. "Pleasure doing business with you."

"Not a problem," I say with a grin.

Further on, I come upon a sign that says 'The Drunk Side'. I've found the Dreshdae cantina, apparently. I head inside, hoping to find some information. I may be here to look for the Star Map, but I'm hardly going to single-mindedly hunt for it just yet. Right now, I'm mainly interested in getting a feel for the place before blindly going rushing into things.

"Ah, welcome to the Drunk Side!" says the Rodian bartender. "I am Mika Dorin. I'm glad you've come to me. I've heard many interesting things about you."

"Have you, now?" I say, approaching and leaning up against the bar. "Like what?"

"You're the current owner of the Ebon Hawk, for one," Mika says. "Which makes you always welcome in my cantina. And that you're Darth Revan, the former Dark Lord of the Sith, on a quest for revenge against your traitorous apprentice, Malak. Which means I'm going to offer to sell you premium items to help you!"

I stare at him for a moment. Well, he's a merchant, not an assassin, and I can always trust a merchant's greed. "Where did you hear that?" I ask.

"I have many contacts who have whispered things into my ear that few might realize," Mika says.

I haven't exactly been keeping it as much of a secret as I could have been, so it really doesn't surprise me too much that someone with the right contacts could have gotten the information. If I'd really wanted to, I could have kept it a lot quieter. But it's the Jedi who stand to lose the most from that information getting out. Especially if the truth of their involvement got out.

"Alright, let's take a look at your premium items, then," I say with a crooked grin.

"Excellent!" Mika says happily. "Step right back here and you can take a look."

"Hmm, say, that's a lovely suit of armor you've got there," I say, looking over a piece of merchandise. A nice combination of flexibility and protection. "Mind if I try it on for size?"

Admittedly, it's black, except for the parts of it that are exposed metal, which are bronze-colored, but that's not such a downside considering where I am at the moment.
"Certainly," Mika says.

I slip into the armor. A perfect fit. Too perfect. Like it was tailor made for me.

Wait. This is my armor.

This is my armor.

A rush of memories floods into my mind unbidden.


I collapse to the floor, doubled over and clutching my head. Shaking.

My vision is swimming. I open my eyes, staring, but I don't recognize the face. Someone is calling my name, but I'm not even sure which name they're calling.

Then, after several long moments, a Rodian face focuses in my eyesight.

"Are you alright?" Mika Dorin says to me in concern. "I swear, I did nothing to the armor. Nothing was done to it but some minor repairs. I did not mean to harm you, my lord."

"Where did you get this armor?" I demand raspily.

"I obtained it from a Rodian by the name of Kaka Oop," Mika replies. "I did not steal it from you, I swear."

"This Kaka Oop seems to have acquired a lot of things of mine somehow," I snarl. "You repaired my armor, you say?"

"Yes," Mika says. "It came to me damaged, but I patched it up again, good as new."

I examine the armor carefully. I can appreciate the work that was done on it. I can find no flaw or weakness in its construction.

"How much?" I ask.

Mika looks at me in surprise, as if he weren't expecting to actually sell anything after what happened. "For you, a mere five thousand credits."

It's a good armor, and I'm happy to have it again. I wore it during my entire time as Revan, as Light and Dark, aiding the Republic and conquering it. And Mika did do me a favor in fixing it up again. He would no doubt have asked for many more credits from anyone else. I hand over the requested credits without complaint.

"By the way," I say. "You wouldn't happen to know where I might be able to find this Kaka Oop, would you? This isn't the first thing of mine that I've come across that he pawned off for credits."

"Is that so?" Mika says. "Well, I'm not normally one to give out information about my suppliers to those who might mean them bodily harm, but I'll make an exception in this case, because you're you, and because he owes me money. You can find him on Nar Shaddaa, usually. Ask Vogga the Hutt about him, and he should be able to point you in the right direction."

"Thank you," I say. "I think that's worth a bonus, don't you?" I grin crookedly, and pass over another five hundred credits.
"Many thanks, my lord," Mika says, bowing to me gratefully.

It feels a little strange, wearing this armor again, but extremely comfortable. I might at some point want to make some modifications or accessorization, but for now, I think this is more than sufficient. Certainly beats wearing a generic light body armor pulled off of a shelf. And that one was just to replace the one that got mauled by a Wookiee, not that the one I was wearing before then was anything special either.

I notice a purple Twi'lek female in the corner of the cantina watching me curiously, so I go over and approach her.

"Nice armor," she says with a smirk. "I'm Yuthura Ban. Don't tell me you're another hopeful looking to get into the Sith Academy?"

"And what if I were?" I say, taking a seat across from her.

"I know the type," Yuthura says with a sigh. "Dark Jedi parading in and out of here, all eager to become the next Dark Lord. And, since I'm the second of the academy, all of them hoping that I'll give them a pass inside."

"And what sort of criteria are you looking for in prospective students, then?" I ask.

"Primarily, I'm looking for those with the proper mindset," Yuthura says. "Although having indications of potential talent and intelligence is definitely a plus."

"It seems the standards are pretty low on those last," I comment dryly. "I met Shaardan and Lashowe on the way in. And I think they're idiots."

Yuthura chuckles softly. "Well, if that's so, then they won't last long, especially if they have competent competition."

"So, say I want into the academy," I say. "What would I have to do?"

"Just answer some questions for me, for starters," Yuthura says.


"You're a former Jedi, aren't you?" Yuthura says, to which I nod. "Why did you leave the Jedi Order?"

"Primarily because they're naive fools that think they can keep a straightjacket on their emotions, and are unwilling to use their wonderful Light Side powers to do anything more than meditate on how tranquil they are. There's wars and injustice all over the galaxy, and what do they do about it? Sit back and berate anyone that tries to do anything. Hypocrites."

"I see," Yuthura says, frowning thoughtfully. "And why do you wish to join the Sith?"

"I don't," I reply.

"You... don't?" Yuthura says, raising an eyebrow. "Then what are you doing here? Why do you want to get into the academy?"

"Seeking knowledge," I say. "I've no interest in the Sith one way or another at this point, but if they're a means to an end, then I will take it."

"Ah, I see," Yuthura says, nodding. "That is acceptable."
It disturbs me a little that I can answer Yuthura's questions completely honestly, and still gain her approval from it. I've only committed a few lies of omission, but I have to wonder even if I told her exactly who I am and what I intend to do, if she'd disapprove even then. Of course, she's not likely to even believe that I'm Darth Revan, anyway.

"Still, there is something about you," Yuthura says. "You bristle with the Force, and yet..."

"Is there a problem?" I say.

"What do you intend to do with the knowledge you gain from the academy?" Yuthura asks.

"Kill Malak," I reply, grinning at her wickedly.

Yuthura looks as though she just saw something very disturbing. "You had... quite the murderous and hateful look in your eye just then. I think you'd fit in quite well here." She hands me a medallion. "This will mark your acceptance into the academy."

Yeah, how dark am I really if I don't even have to hide my intentions? Whatever. I take the medallion and thank her, and leave the cantina.

Outside of the academy gates, I come upon another Sith standing before three rather weary-looking people. "What're you up to?" I ask him casually.

"I'm Mekel," the Sith introduces himself. He lowers his voice and tells me, "I'm just having a little fun at the expense of these gullible losers here. They actually think I'm going to let them into the academy if they stand here long enough."

"Really?" I say, raising an eyebrow. "How long have they been standing there?"

"Nearly three days," Mekel says.

I smirk at him. "That's impressive. I do hope you haven't been so bored as to have been watching them the entire time, though."

"Oh, of course not," Mekel says. "I think I'll go get something to eat now, myself. Hah! And it will be all the tastier with the thought of these fools standing out here starving!"

Mekel turns and heads off into the academy.

I look over the three hopefuls. "Didn't you hear him? You know he's not actually going to let you into the academy."

"He... he's not?" says one of them. "Ah, man, forget it, I'm out of here." He runs off.

"Loyalty is admirable, but so is the ability to think for yourself," I say.

The second one doesn't even say anything, and just runs off after the first. I sigh softly and approach the third one, a male Aqualish. I wonder if that fool Mekel realized how strong this person is with the Force, or if he even cared. Perhaps a contributing factor in how long he's been able to hold out here.

"You're just trying to trick me," he says. "I won't be fooled."

I chuckle softly. "Good. You have no reason to trust me. Don't take my words at face value. Use the Force to feel their veracity. Let it tell you what is truth, and what is deception."

"I... what?" He blinks at me, and then I see a newfound clarity enter into his previously dull eyes.
I grin. "You're sharper than they'd give you credit for. But you mustn't let anyone deceive you. These Sith will use you for your own amusement and then throw you away if you let them. What's your name? And why are you so desperate to get into this academy?"

"My name is Varik," he replies. "I wanted to learn to use the Force."

"Why?" I ask.

"I want to be strong," Varik says. "I want to be powerful."

"You're off to a good start by allowing others to push you around," I point out.

Varik looks at the ground. "A mistake. I was eager to prove myself."

"Attempting to prove oneself rarely leads to actually doing so," I say. "In truth, you should never need to do so. Your heart is your proof. You are always yourself, and no one else. Your every action and every word reflects upon yourself, and so, if you are true to yourself, everything you do will be proof of yourself. There is no need for anything else."

"I have heard more wisdom from you in five minutes than I have in my entire time on Korriban," Varik replies.

I lean closer and lower my voice. "These Sith are not worthy of you. Follow me, and I will teach you to use the Force myself."

"Who are you?" Varik wonders.

I grin faintly. "I'm Darth Revan."

"You..." His eyes widen. "You're telling the truth? But they thought you were dead!"

"They still think I'm dead," I reply. "I'm going by the name of Lexen Skywalker at the moment. I'm here undercover, and most of them have no idea who I really am."

"I will follow you, my lord," Varik says. "Make me your apprentice! Teach me strength, so that I might never be weak again!"

"Go to the docking area in Dreshdae," I say. "Find the ship called the Ebon Hawk. Tell them I sent you. Get nourishment and rest, first off. My other students can help you out and get you started."

"Yes, my lord," Varik says, bowing to me slightly. "I shall do so. Thank you!" He turns and runs off for the port.

As I look to watch him go, I see Yuthura Ban approaching from Dreshdae. "What was that all about?" she asks.

"Oh, just ruining Mekel's fun," I say lightly, snickering.

"I see," Yuthura says. "I can show you to your room in the academy now. The testing doesn't begin until tomorrow."

"Do I have to sleep in the academy?" I ask.

"I suppose not," Yuthura says. "Why?"

"Well, because the place is full of Sith, obviously," I say with a smirk. "I prefer not to sleep around
people that might try to murder me in my sleep, if I can help it."

"You have a point, I suppose," Yuthura says. "Very well. Sleep wherever you wish. Just be here for the opening ceremony in the morning or you won't get another chance to join until next year."

"I'll be there," I say.
"The Death Star is a terrible superweapon that can destroy an entire planet. If we give it the chance to do so, it will destroy the very rock we're standing on and kill everyone on it."

"There has to be some weak spot. What can we do?"

"Our analysis of the Death Star schematics brought in by Princess Leia reveals a small weakness that could be used to destroy it. The battle station is well defended against attacks by larger vessels, but a small, single-man fighter craft could exploit this weakness."

The Death Star schematic on the screen zooms in.

"An exhaust port, two meters wide, situated inside of a trench protected by turbo-lasers."

"That's impossible. No one could make a shot like that!"

"If Luke were here, he could do it. He was the best pilot I ever knew! You should have seen him bullseye womp rats in Beggar's Canyon back home!"

"Yeah, it's a pity he was killed when the Imperial Stormtroopers came looking for those stolen schematics. Let's win this one for him, Wedge."

I wake, and find myself frowning. Why am I so upset to hear about the death of a brother I never even knew? And why do I get such an ominous feeling about that dream?

I pick up my journal reflexively and write down the dream. Not that there's much point in doing it right now. If I have any "premonitions", that won't have happened anyway. No matter. I'll try to be careful. But with the Sith Academy as it is, I have a feeling that all the care in the galaxy might still lead to me stumbling into disaster.

I get dressed and grab some breakfast real quick and head out to the academy. Thankfully, it's still early. I don't want to be late for the introductory ceremonies.

I groan inwardly as I see Shaardan, Lashowe, and Mekel all present, as well as some I don't recognize. "As you may know," says a bald, tattooed man. "I am Uthar Wynn, the master of this academy. We have a late entry to our little contest here. Hopefully he will prove as promising as the rest of you have. Now, tell me, prospectives, are you ready to learn the power of the Dark Side?"

After the other students express their eagerness, Uthar turns to me, and I reply, "I am."

"You don't sound nearly as eager as these others, Lexen," Uthar says.

I smirk at him. "What, afraid I might be some Lightsider in disguise trying to sneak into the academy for whatever reason?"

"The thought had crossed my mind," Uthar says.

I snicker softly. "Tone does not dictate intent. A face can be a mask. And the most dangerous threat is the one you never realize was there."

"Yes, I think you are a Jedi spy," Uthar says. Before I can even react, he raises his hand and
I wake, shuddering involuntarily. Well, that was a quick and painful trip. Grumbling for a moment, I glance at my journal, notice that I don't recognize the name 'Endar Spire', and then toss it aside without even bothering to read the entry. No point in worrying about it at the moment.

I get dressed and grab my lightsabers. I take a look at the red one in my left hand. I frown at it, trying to remember where I got it, but nothing comes to mind.

Breakfast. Then I head back to the Academy and listen to Uthar's introductory speeches again. I'm pretty pissed about the bastard killing me like that.

"Lexen, are you ready to learn the secrets of the Dark Side?" Uthar says to me.

"Damned right I am," I reply, half snarling. "And just as a word of warning, I'm going to fucking kill you later."

"Such anger and hatred in you," Uthar says. "But you shouldn't tell someone in advance that you're going to kill them."

He raises his hand to shoot Force Lightning at me, but I manage to block it with my green lightsaber this time.

"Why not?" I reply with a smirk. "I like to make my enemies worry, constantly looking behind their backs, wondering if every moment will be their last."

"I can appreciate that attitude," Uthar says. "But I would be a fool if I were to allow such a threat into my midst. Kill him."

Uthar attacks me again with Force Lightning, and I'm suddenly beset upon by all sides by lightsabers, blasters, and Force powers. Alone and surrounded by an army of Sith, I don't stand a chance.

I wake again, and find myself growling in anger. I was concerned that I might be killed by something in the academy itself, not that I wouldn't even manage to get in. Fuck's sake.

I don't even bother glancing at my journal. I get dressed and pick up my lightsabers. I look at the green one. I don't remember where I got this one either. Well, I'm not going to worry about it right now.

I get breakfast and head over to the academy. Looking at Uthar Wynn and listening to his speech, I definitely don't need to fake my anger and hate. Or at the very least, excessive amounts of annoyance and frustration. Which pretty much amounts to the same thing.

"Lexen, are you prepared to learn the power of the Dark Side?" Uthar Wynn asks me.

"I'm ready," I growl.

"Ah, you have such anger within you," Uthar says. "The Dark Side is strong with you."

If they're going to piss me off this badly, it's not going to be hard at all to fake being a Dark Jedi for this. If I were truly a Jedi, I would be concerned about giving in to the temptation of the Dark Side here or some such. But me? That's not what worries me. I'll use the Dark Side all I damned well
"This is how it's going to work," Uthar explains. "Only one of you will actually get admitted into the academy. The one who gains enough prestige first will be selected. You can gain prestige by locating Sith artifacts or performing impressive acts of notoriety. You are encouraged to kill and manipulate the other students as necessary to gain prestige."

"Master Uthar," I say. "Can I just kill them now and save us all the trouble?"

"If you think you can kill them all right now, then by all means do so," Uthar replies, almost boredly. I'm sure this isn't the first time someone has asked that question.

The other students draw their weapons and turn to face me. Some of them have lightsabers already, while others are wielding vibroblades or blasters.

Grinning ferally, I shoot Force Lightning at the Sith students. Two of them collapse, unable to withstand the attack. And then, in an instant, they're all upon me. Attacking. Assaulting me with Force powers themselves. My body spasms in unearthly torment as their Dark Side powers hit me full on. I'm quickly overwhelmed.


I start to get dressed. I'm going to need to be more careful next time. Just because these Sith might be less experienced than me doesn't mean they're any less dangerous in a group. I need to get into that academy...

What am I doing? Why am I even on Korriban in the first place? It's not like I need to learn to use the Dark Side or anything. I'm the bloody Dark Lord of the Sith. I was infiltrating the place. For what?

Journal. I pick up the datapad and take a few minutes to look through it and refresh my memory. I've lost several days worth of memories again, it looks like. I'm here to find a Star Map. That's why I'm here.

This isn't good. What would I do if I wound up somewhere without my journal? I might wind up forgetting what I'm doing entirely, why I'm there, who I am. The thought terrifies me.

I sigh, and go to grab a quick breakfast before heading over to the academy. Listening to Uthar give his overblown introductory speeches is enough to annoy me enough to sound convincingly Dark Side.

"I will be in the main hall," Uthar says. "You may come to me to declare your deeds or bring me artifacts from the Valley of the Dark Lords. As a hint for earning prestige, the first person who comes to me who can recite the Sith Code will receive a head start."

Uthar Wynn heads off down the corridor, and the students head their separate ways, no doubt starting on their own various schemes to gain prestige. I head along in the direction Uthar went after a moment.

"Yes, Lexen?" Uthar says. "Do you have something for me already?"

"I know the Sith Code," I say.

"Very well," Uthar says. "Recite it for me."
Well, I should know it at any rate. This is embarrassing. I know the gist of it, I think, but the words don't manage to come out.

Uthar sighs in annoyance. "Fine, let me make this easy on you, then. Peace is a lie..."

"... there is only passion," I reply, caught in a memory. "Through passion, I gain strength. Through strength, I gain power. Through power, I gain victory. Through victory, my chains are broken. The Force shall free me."

"Ah, good," Uthar says. "You do know it after all. Now, can you explain to me what it means?"

It's more familiar to me than I've realized in recent days. Should I find it disturbing that I still seem to be taking this code to heart? Am I still really a Sith, deep down?

"Emotion is what drives the Force," I say. "To deny emotion is to deny the Force. With strong emotions, one can attain more powerful effects with the Force than could be attained by stubbornly clinging to supposed peace and tranquility. And with that, one can ensure that they can always act of their own free will, unhindered by authority or unwanted ideals."

"Hmm," Uthar says thoughtfully. "That is acceptable. Congratulations, you've gotten a head start on gaining prestige. Don't let this make you complacent, however. You still have a long way to go, and at this point, anyone could still win."

I snort softly. "I've met the competition, and I think they are fools. I'll be doing you a favor to eliminate them."

"We'll see," Uthar says.

I head off to explore the academy and see what information I can gather. I should probably head out into the Valley of the Dark Lords and look for artifacts there. I'm betting that's where I'm going to find the Star Map. I may not even have to bother with this whole prestige thing and actually getting accepted into the academy, although my pride demands that I win, damn it. Although, all things considered, they're probably keeping it somewhere that not just anyone can stumble in and find, anyway. So it's likely in my best interests to win here.

I start off with seeing what the competition is up to, starting with the ones I'm unfamiliar with. This one is a nervous-looking young human male.

"Ah, hello. I'm Kel Algwinn."

"Lexen Skywalker," I say. "Nice to meet you."

"You're... more polite than most of the people I've encountered on Korriban," Kel says.

"Yeah," I agree. "It seems like a lot of these children think that they need to be jerks in order to show how superior and enlightened they are. It's kind of tiresome."

Kel nods. "You understand? It just seems to me... the longer I spend here, the more I feel like I don't belong here."

"Why did you come here in the first place?" I ask.

"Well, I wanted to learn to use the Force and all, and I thought it would be a good way to do so," Kel answers.
"And your first thought was 'Sith' and not 'Jedi'?' I say, raising an eyebrow.

"I... well, I guess it never really occurred to me that I could join the Jedi Order." Kel says.

"Forget joining the Jedi Order," I say. "They're idiots. But they're perfectly willing to train most anyone they come across, and are less likely to kill you in the process. And they won't complain too much if you decide to go 'missing'. I was a Jedi, once, but I don't really agree with everything they do. Or don't do, more importantly."

"I... see," Kel says, looking at me in confusion. "You think I will get killed if I try to join the Sith? I know, I'm weak for having such doubts, but..."

"It's very likely," I say flatly. "And it doesn't make you weak. It makes you intelligent enough to look at things objectively and make your own decisions."

"Thank you," Kel says. "Maybe I **should** try getting training from the Jedi instead. You're right that they're less likely to kill me if I decide I don't like the way they do things and leave."

"Or I should give you another option," I say, lowering my voice. "I can train you myself. I've started... something of a third order of Force users, who have chosen to take another path than the one offered then by either the Jedi or the Sith."

"Really?" Kel says. "Why are you here, then?"

I chuckle softly. "Infiltration," I say quietly. "I'm here looking for something. I didn't come here specifically to recruit, but if I see someone as promising as you, I'll take the opportunity as it is presented."

"Perhaps I should appreciate the opportunity," Kel says. "Thank you for the offer. What would you ask of me, if I wish to join you?"

"Just go to the docking area in Dreshdae," I say. "Look for the ship called the Ebon Hawk. Tell them I sent you."

"Alright," Kel says. "I will do that. Thank you. You may just have saved my life..." He goes to head off out of the academy.

Well, at least all of the prospectives here aren't hopeless idiots. I head off again, and encounter Yuthura Ban next.

"Ah, Lexen," Yuthura says. "I was hoping to speak with you."

"Of course, Yuthura," I say, grinning at her. "What about?"

"You're different from the other students," Yuthura says. "I have no doubt that you will succeed in gaining acceptance into the academy above these others."

"Yeah, I ran into one who wasn't a complete and utter idiot," I say. "And I already convinced him that it would be in his best interests to give up and leave."

"Well, you do the Sith a favor by thinning out those whose convictions aren't as strong as they could be," Yuthura says. "Although most would have simply taken advantage of the situation to kill him. Still, I have a proposal to make for you."

"I'm listening," I say.
"I have a scheme in mind," Yuthura says. "And there are great rewards that could be yours if you assist with it. I could even make you my second, when I become head of the academy."

"What, planning on killing Uthar Wynn?" I ask.

"Indeed so," Yuthura says. "And I'd like you to help me with it. I'll grant you whatever assistance I might in carrying it out, as well as additional information that may help you in gaining prestige."

"Oh, I'd be positively delighted to kill Uthar Wynn," I say, grinning ferally.

"There's that murderous look in your eyes again," Yuthura says, smirking. "I don't know if he did something to anger you personally, or if you just enjoy killing people."

"Both," I say.

"Very well," Yuthura says. "After you've been accepted into the academy, you will face a final test in the tomb of Naga Sadow. You'll be asked to retrieve a lightsaber from the heart of the tomb. Once you have done so, Uthar Wynn and I will come in. This would normally be where he would have you kill one of the other students to prove yourself. But here is where we will strike. It will be Uthar Wynn who dies here instead."

I give a nod. "A good place for an ambush, out of the way and without anyone else that might assist him. He'll likely be a difficult enough fight all by himself."

"There are ways to alleviate some of that difficulty," Yuthura suggests. "A bit of poison placed in his bed to weaken him for the conclusion of the test..."

"No," I say. "I'm not going to use poison. If I am to kill him, I'll do it in a stand-up fight."

"You have something against poison?" Yuthura says.

I give a nod. "I don't like poison. I don't like slavery. I don't like lying."

"At the look on her face, I add, "So I'm a Sith with principles. Go figure."

"You don't like slavery?" Yuthura says.

"Indeed," I say. "In fact, I have some freed slaves working on my ship at the moment. It's the whole thing about trying to stamp out someone's free will and take away their power to choose. I have to admire any slave who, even under such oppressive conditions, manages to free themselves."

"I... thank you," Yuthura says quietly with a touch of surprise.

I raise an eyebrow at her. "I was unaware of your background. You were a slave once, I take it?"

Yuthura nods. "Back on Sleheyron. I belonged to a Hutt named Omeesh, a fat drunken worm who was nothing but a torment to his slaves. But I didn't want to amount to nothing, and I wanted vengeance, so I killed him in his bedchamber and stowed away on a cargo ship."

"Well, good on you, then," I say, clapping her on the shoulder. "He sounds like he certainly had it coming."

I cock my head at her and look at her strangely. "Why'd you join up with the Sith, though? They tend to practice slavery freely."

"I was a Jedi once," Yuthura says. "But I saw their inaction as intolerable. They told me I had too much anger..."

I give a nod. "I understand. And I agree completely."
"Why are *you* interested in joining up with the Sith, though?" Yuthura asks.

"I told you," I reply. "I'm not. I'm just using them for my own ends."

Yuthura nods. "Right, you did say that. You really are serious about not liking lying, either, it seems. Most people would have just lied in order to get in..."

"If I need to, I'll deceive by omission or stating misleading truths," I say with a shrug. "But I won't outright lie, nor intentionally break an oath or promise."

"Do these principles of yours cause you trouble frequently?" Yuthura asks.

I grunt. "Sometimes. Mainly with Malak. He knows me too well and will exploit them if I give him a chance to. But I suppose that's my own fault."

"Should I ask what happened between you and Lord Malak?" Yuthura asks.

"I don't think I'm willing to explain it just yet," I say. "But be assured that I have no desire for anything bad to happen to you right now."

"Very well," Yuthura says. "Do you think you could take on Uthar Wynn in a one-on-one fight?"

"Probably," I say. "He is powerful and skilled, but so am I. I believe I have a good chance of being able to defeat him. But it would offend my pride if I weren't to duel him fairly, even if I might die."

"Your sense of honor is liable to get you killed," Yuthura says. "But fine, then, even if you lose, I should be able to take advantage of his distraction with you to finish him off."

I chuckle softly. "What's the point in victory if I don't demonstrate my own superiority in the process?"

Yuthura stares at me for a few moments. "Just when I think you've stumbled into the wrong place and you'd make a terrible Sith, you go and say something like that."

Right... that's pretty much out of the Sith Code, isn't it? I'm repeating the principles of the Sith, such as they are, without even realizing it. Should this make me more ashamed than it actually does?

"Heh," I say in amusement. "Maybe I'm just what a Sith *should* be?" I grin crookedly. "I don't know. Either way, I won't betray you to Uthar Wynn. And when the aforementioned opportunity arises, I will fight him."

Yuthura gives a nod. "Very well. You'd best get back to gathering prestige. Let me know if there's anything I can help with."

"One question," I say. "Is the Star Map in the tomb of Naga Sadow, by chance?"

"Yes," Yuthura says. "How did you-- wait, you aren't going to actually tell me anyway, I imagine."

I chuckle. "Not yet. Perhaps when this is over, I'll tell you everything."

I bid her farewell and head off again. I go off to talk to some more of the students here. I find another young human male, and wave to him cordially.

"Greetings," I say. "I'm Lexen Skywalker."

"Oh, hello. I'm Dustil Onasi."
"Onasi, huh?" I say. "You wouldn't happen to be related to a Carth Onasi by chance, would you?"

Dustil looks at me in surprise. "You know my father?"

"I've had some dealings with him, yes," I reply. "As far as I know, he believes you are dead."

"Just as well," Dustil says with a snort. "He abandoned me after the attack on Telos, not that he was ever there for me before then."

"How in the galaxy did you wind up with the Sith, though?" I ask.

"The Sith found me, after the attack," Dustil says. "They sensed the latent power in me, and offered to train me, gave me a place among their ranks."

"But it was the Sith who attacked Telos in the first place," I say. "Didn't they kill your mother?"

"You sound like you're trying to tell me the Sith are all bad," Dustil says. "Aren't you a Sith yourself?"

"Point," I say with a shrug. "I was just wondering why you would run off with the same people who killed your mother. I'd think you'd hate them. That's all."

"I was pretty angry at first, yeah," Dustil says. "But they taught me how to channel that anger into strength."

In other words, they brainwashed him. I'm going to need to handle this one delicately. "So you hate your father for having gone off to war and left you alone? I can understand that, I suppose."

"Yeah," Dustil says. "He was always away, fighting. He cared more about the Republic than his own family."

"Why?" I say.

"What?" Dustil says.

"Why do you think he went off to war, fighting for the Republic?" I ask.

"Oh..." Dustil says. "I don't know. I suppose he was just after glory or something."

"Is that what he seemed like to you?" I ask. "You must have interacted with him at some point. What does the personality that he demonstrated at those points tell you of his motivations?"

Dustil looks thoughtful for several moments. "He was always happy to see me, and always sad to have to leave... He spent every moment he could with me and my mother, when he had a chance... We played together, and he was always encouraging..."

I give a small grin. "So, does it seem like he actually cared about you, when he was there?"

Dustil gives a small nod, eyes widening. "I... do you think I've made a terrible mistake?"

"It's not for me to say that," I say. "Think for yourself, and draw your own conclusions."

"The Sith took me in and welcomed me..." Dustil says.

"Of course they did," I say. "Do you think they would have let a Force sensitive out of their grasp, if they thought they could convert you to their cause? The Jedi would have done the same thing. The
Sith just happened to get there first."

"But which side is right?" Dustil wonders.

"Both? Neither?" I reply with a shrug. "It's not my place to say. That's your own choice to make. But make it freely and with your eyes wide open. Don't let anyone else take your free will from you. Not the Sith, not the Jedi, not your father, and certainly not me."

Dustil looks at me strangely. "Are you a Jedi or a Sith?"

"Both? Neither?" I reply, snickering softly. "If I have to put a label on myself, I'll call myself a Gray Jedi. I follow my own principles, which don't entirely mesh with either the Jedi or the Sith. I have several students, myself."

"Really," Dustil says, frowning a little. "Would you be willing to add another one, by chance? I think... I think I'd like to get away from this place. I'm not... entirely comfortable here any longer."

I give a nod. "Alright. I'd be willing to teach you as well."

"Did you just come here to recruit or something?" Dustil asks.

I chuckle. "No, but I've taken the opportunity to pick up a few new students regardless. I actually just came here for information."

"Also... You do know my father, right?" Dustil says. "Is there any chance you might be able to arrange an opportunity to see him again? I don't know if this hate will be mended with mere words, but I think I should at least give him a chance. I fear I might have been wrong about a lot of things all these years..." He sighs.

I smile at him and pat him on the shoulder. "I think I might be able to arrange something. Come on, I'll show you to my ship. My crew are good people, and I sure as hell trust them more than I do the Sith."

I lead the way out of the academy, although keeping watch around me alertly at all times out of paranoia. Is it really paranoia if it's justified? It might be bad if the Sith realize what I'm up to. I'm already thinking up excuses in my mind as we go, in case someone stops us and questions us. But we make it to the docking area without incident.

"What, did you come here to go on a recruiting spree or something?" Canderous says as he sees us come in. "That's the third one you've brought in so far!"

"Ah, Kel made it in?" I ask.

"Yeah, he's in the crew quarters with the other Jedi," Canderous replies. "Though at this rate we're going to have to start laying out bedrolls in the cargo hold."

"Alright, Dustil, right this way," I say, turning to head for the cockpit.

I don't even need to ask if Carth is there. I can sense him quite clearly. I think, in his case, he might as well just lay out a bedroll in the cockpit, since he never seems to leave the place of his own volition. Current, he's playing Pazaak with Griff, and losing from the sounds of things.

"Hey, Carth," I say. "I've got someone here who wants to see you."

"Huh?" Carth says dumbly, looking up.
"Father?" Dustil says.

"Dustil?" Carth says. "You-- You're alive?"

"Dad!" Dustil says, finally breaking down and running tearfully into his father's arms.

"Well," Griff mutters. "That certainly beats my reunion with my sister..."

Griff and I file out of the cockpit to give Carth and his son some space. "I think I'm starting to make a habit of this sort of thing," I say dryly.

"I think we're going to need a bigger ship," Griff says.

"Or a base," I say, chuckling. "Or several bases and a fleet."

"Well, since Carth is otherwise occupied now, I think I'll go relieve the cantina patrons of their credits at Pazaak some more," Griff says. "It certainly beats playing against Mission. I swear, she must cheat..."

I snicker softly. "Have fun."

I decide to go to take a nap. I'm exhausted. And I think it might be a good idea if I take a quick nap whenever I've done something difficult or frustrating, if I have the chance to do so. I don't know what's causing my... issues, but I always seem to "snap back" to the last time I slept. Taking regular naps might allow me to effectively "save my progress", perhaps.

I'm under no illusions that I'm actually experiencing premonitions any longer. I don't really understand it very well yet, but I seem to actually be experiencing these events. And if I die, my mind jumps back to a previous point, apparently damaging my memories in the process. Since the alternative would have been being dead a long time ago, I suppose I can't really complain.

The three Jedi and two new students are in the starboard crew quarters at the moment, sitting cross-legged in the middle of the floor and talking.

"Ah, hello, Lexen," Bastila says.

"You did good on getting these kids away from the Sith," Jolee says to me. "Though I don't know how I got roped into playing teacher again. You sure about teaching these kids, Lexen?"

"Am I ever sure about anything?" I reply dryly. "Still, I chose to make training available to them outside of the framework of the Jedi and Sith, and I'll stand by that choice and face whatever consequences might come of it."

"Alright then," Jolee says.

"Though I'm afraid I don't have time to do any teaching myself at the moment," I say. "My apologies."

"No need to apologize," Varik says. "Jolee, Bastila, and Juhani have been very helpful so far."

I go over and pick up my journal. "And I'm completely exhausted, so I'm going to go take a nap in the port crew quarters. Carry on."

I head over to the other side of the ship. Write down the events of the morning into my journal, including my stupid actions in attempting to get into the academy. And then, nap. I'm more tired than I realized, and I'm asleep in moments.
I walk through the Valley of the Dark Lords. A chill wind whips through the barren, lifeless land. The sun glaring down overhead does little to warm this forsaken place.

The Dark Side is strong here, in a way that feels almost palpable. I glance to the sides, at the various ancient tombs, but my goal is before me. The tomb of Naga Sadow, although he's not actually interred here.

I gain entrance to the tomb and carefully make my way through. It's a twisting, treacherous labyrinth, where dark whispers constantly echo. The very stone over my head seems to press in against my mind oppressively. I avoid a pair of terentateks and make my way into the back. The Star Map...

I wake to the sound of beeping. Right, I'd set an alarm to make sure I didn't sleep too long. I turn off the alarm and take a glance at my journal. Nothing forgotten at the moment. That dream I was having was just a memory, it seems.

I head back out for the academy again. It's afternoon, but despite that, the place has a constant sense of gloom about it. How can anyone live in such a dead place?

I cross through the academy and enter into the Valley of the Dark Lords. Out in the valley, there are several archaeologists digging and carefully brushing through the dirt, searching for ancient secrets. I suppose, in order to gain prestige, I'm expected to raid these tombs for artifacts and bring them back to Uthar Wynn. I'm not sure what I would actually want Uthar to get his hands on, but I console myself with the thought that I can always take them back later after I kill him.

Well, time to get started, I suppose. I'm still tired, though. Maybe I should have slept longer. But I can't afford to waste too much time, when the other prospectives might be getting ahead. Or, knowing those idiots, getting themselves killed. Still, even if they might be turtles, I'm not going to be the complacent napping rabbit.

I approach one of the tombs, and speak to the archaeologists poking around outside. "What can you tell me about this tomb?"

"This is the tomb of Ajunta Pall. The stories say that he had a legendary sword that he was buried with. Be careful if you go inside. The ancient Sith protected their tombs with traps and guardians."

"Thanks for the warning," I say, and head inside. The place has been infested by a number of vicious beasts. Tuk'ata, I believe they're called. I pull out my lightsabers and fight my way through them to gain passage into the tomb.

I make my way into the back, and after some deliberation, I locate the legendary sword in question among three distinct blades. As I turn to leave the tomb, I come face to face with the translucent impression of a man. A Force ghost?

"Who is this?" says the ghost. "Someone come here after so long? Take what you wish. I have no more need for the wealth of this world or the implements that were once mine."

"I am Lexen Skywalker," I say, giving a small bow. "You are Ajunta Pall, I take it?"
"Yes... that was my name, wasn't it?" says Ajunta. "I was the Dark Lord of the Sith, once. But now I am merely a memory, an echo, barely even that."

"Why are you still here?" I ask.

"I don't know," Ajunta says. "I held so much anger once, so much hate. We great, proud Sith were each others' downfall. Our might was brought down not by our enemies, but by ourselves. I find I have little left but remorse."

I sigh. "That's the trouble with the Sith... the self-destructive tendencies. It never had to be that way."

"So, who are you, that has come to my resting place?" Ajunta says. "Are you of a new generation of Sith, seeking ancient relics? Or a Jedi, come to try to cleanse this dark place of its taint?"

"Neither," I reply. "I was once a Jedi, a champion of the light. I was once the Dark Lord of the Sith. But no longer. Now I've embraced both the light and the dark, and walk another path."

"I see," Ajunta says. "A difficult path you must tread, then..."

This poor man. I wonder if there isn't something I could do for him. "If you could do it all again, what would you do?" I ask.

"I don't know," Ajunta says. "It's been so long, and I've forgotten so much. But what's the point in wondering? There's no way that could ever be."

"Perhaps there is," I say. "You see, this may sound strange, but I have died many times, but I have yet to experience death."

"I do not understand," Ajunta says.

"Whenever I would die, I return to a previous point and have the chance to make different choices," I explain. "I'm not too sure on how it works, but I believe it is the work of the Force."

"Do you think... you might be able to give me another chance, then?" Ajunta says.

"Maybe," I say. "I don't know. I've never tried using this power deliberately before, never mind on someone else. But if you're willing, I'll try it."

"If there's even the smallest chance that it might work, then I will take it," Ajunta says.

"There we go... Hope," I say. "Coupled with regret, remorse... yes... The Force is fueled by emotion, and your emotions are quite strong. Well, you're pretty much nothing but emotion at this point. Let us hope that the Force is with us today, then."

I reach out my senses into the powerful impression of energy and emotion that makes up the Force ghost of Ajunta Pall. I've never done anything like this before, but I feel that I must try. No one should have to suffer like this, and telling him to just let go and become one with the Force or some other such nonsense just doesn't feel right. Not when I, of all people, seem to fail to actually reach death again and again.

I call on the Force, fueling it with the emotion of remorse. So much remorse. I feel like a blazing conduit of power. It feels very strange. Tingling. Burning. Hot and cold at the same time. It's almost enough to make me pass out from the exertion, especially as tired as I am, despite the nap.

Send him back.
Fire in my veins, ice in my blood. Blinded in light.

Send him back to the point where he can choose a different path.

Inferno in my heart, blizzard in my soul. Consumed in darkness.

And then, in a flash, it's gone. A rushing sensation, something is snatched away. The ghost of Ajunta Pall has vanished.

I collapse to my knees, panting and shuddering. I don't know if I succeeded or not. I'm not even sure what I just did. But I obviously did something.

Then, as I'm catching my breath and calming my pounding heart again, the image of Ajunta Pall's Force ghost shimmers back into view before me. But now he looks different.

"Ajunta Pall?" I say, blinking up at him.

"Yes," he replies. "It's been difficult to find you again, Lexen Skywalker."

"Did... did it work?" I ask.

"Oh, yes," Ajunta says. "Better than I had ever dreamed possible. You sent me to a very pivotal moment when I could change the course of my life forever. I did not return to the Jedi Order, however. I followed your example and took the middle path, instead. It was difficult at times, but I believe it was far more fulfilling, in the end. I am grateful. I owe everything to you."

"I'm glad that I could help," I say with a weak smile. "But all I did was give you the chance. You are the one who made the choice yourself. Your path was your own, and you've done well."

"You are generous," Ajunta says. "You downplay your own role. But I suppose that is your nature."

I chuckle softly. "How do you mean, it was hard to find me?"

"When I changed the path of my life, events did not play out as they otherwise would have," Ajunta explains. "I searched for you, and waited, but it seems that you were never born. But I grew more powerful in the time that I had on my hands, and I discovered how to traverse the boundaries of possibility, and trace my line back to where I began. You have a tangled line yourself, Lexen Skywalker. Weaving your way across time and possibility, like a spider bouncing from branch to branch as it spins its silk."

"I'm... I'm just glad that I could help," I say quietly. "I never thought to do something like that before, never realized I could even do that."

Ajunta smiles at me. "You are far more powerful than you realize at this point in time and space, Lexen Skywalker. You have a long journey ahead of you yet, and there are many things that you must discover for yourself. But we will meet again, in the future."


I hope when I get to that point, that I'm not so cryptic and useless. There were many questions that I wanted to ask him. And yet, I doubt he would have been willing to tell me all of the answers, anyway. Still, I did gain some valuable information here. Most importantly, that I can do this, and that it actually worked.

I climb to my feet again, staggering for a moment and putting a hand out against a wall to steady
myself. Damn, I feel like I've just run a marathon in under a minute. I really should just go get some real sleep. I might get myself killed if I try to tackle the other tombs like this. I don't know if I could even fight in this condition.

I head for the entrance to the tomb. Thankfully, I killed all the tuk'ata on the way in, and I don't seem to have missed any. Unfortunately, I'm stopped when I get to the entrance. Shaardan is standing in my way.

I straighten and put on a confident mask, trying to hide how weak I am at the moment. Damn it, I don't want to die now. I'm already apparently messing with time travel and multiple timelines, but even despite that, what I just did was difficult and draining, and I don't think I could handle doing it again anytime soon.

"Well, now," Shaardan says. "You've successfully retrieved the sword of Ajunta Pall, I take it?"

"What are you talking about?" I say.

"Don't play dumb with me," Shaardan says. "I know you have the sword. Hand it over now, and I will let you go free."

I groan softly and murmur, "Damn it."

"Yes, I can see your condition," Shaardan says. "Don't think you can fool me with your posturing. You can barely walk right now, never mind fight. I don't know what happened in there or what you had to fight, but now I've caught you in a moment of weakness. So do yourself a favor and hand it over, or I will take it from you by force."

I sigh. "Fine." I pull out one of the other swords that was in the tomb. "Look, just take it and leave me be. This isn't worth it."

"Aha! The legendary sword of Ajunta Pall!" Shaardan says, hefting the fake sword triumphantly. "Let it not be said that I'm not a man of my word. I will spare you, for now."

"You are most gracious," I murmur.

Shaardan makes his way back to the academy. I head on outside and lean my back against a stone pillar, and slide to the ground. I'm so tired, I could just take a nap right here. But I shouldn't. It's not safe here. I'll just rest for a minute to regain enough strength to walk back, and return to the Ebon Hawk. Even so, I'm struggling to stay awake here.

"Are you alright?" says one of the archaeologists, approaching me.

"Yeah, just a bit tired," I say. "I'm Lexen Skywalker. Who might you be?"

"Dak Vesser," he introduces himself. A human male. "Yeah, I suppose it's getting a bit late. Were you fighting things in the tomb there?"

I nod. "There were a bunch of tuk'ata inside. And a ghost. Oh, and an incompetent fool who wanted to take credit for someone else's effort in order to prove his own worth. But he's not going to get anywhere with that."

"I see," Dak says, chuckling. "Sounds like quite the adventure."

"So, Dak," I say. "You seem like a nice guy. How'd you wind up here?"
Dak shrugs. "I left the Jedi, and I had my eyes opened."

"Didn't agree with the Jedi, huh?" I say. "Can't say I blame you there."

"They said I was too emotional, and I was frustrated with them," Dak says. "I just wish that the woman I loved would have gone with me when I left."

"Who was she, if you don't mind me asking?"

"Her name was Juhani," Dak replies. "Beautiful, fiery, passionate... But she rejected me, telling me she didn't return my feelings, and I left, alone."

"Juhani?" I say, raising an eyebrow. "Cathar, blue lightsaber? That Juhani?"

"Yes, do you know her?" Dak asks.

"Yeah, I'm acquainted with her," I reply. "But, Dak... She's not even interested in men. She's a lesbian."

"Wait, what?" Dak says, blinking at me. "Are you serious?"

"It's true," I say.

"Damn," Dak says, then laughs after a moment. "Now I feel like a fool. No wonder! I wish I could apologize to her, now. I must have seemed like quite the impertinent ass to her."

"Well, if you really want to apologize, I could arrange that," I say with a smirk.

"You'd do that for me?" Dak says, raising an eyebrow.

"Eh, why not?" I say. "Dak, she's on my ship, docked in Dreshdae."

"Wow, that's quite the coincidence," Dak says.

"No kidding," I say. "I'm getting used to running into copious amounts of gratuitous contrived coincidences, though. Just call it the will of the Force and don't think too much on it. Otherwise it would drive me mad to think about how many coincidences I ran into on Tatooine alone."

"But, what's Juhani doing here with you?" Dak says. "I thought she was going to stay with the Jedi. Or did she turn to the Dark Side after all?"

"She did, but now she follows me, and has chosen to walk the path I walk instead," I say. "Neither Jedi nor Sith. Neither entirely light nor completely dark."

Dak frowns. "I don't understand. What are you doing here if you're not Sith?"

I shrug. "I'm as much Sith as I am Jedi. It's complicated, but I'm here for reasons of my own."

"I see," Dak says. "I should probably turn you in... but I would like to see Juhani again and mend things with her if I can."

"It's your choice," I say. "I'm well aware of the risk I take with every person I reveal anything to. If you choose that path, then I will deal with it as I can. But it need not come to that. There are always choices."

"I'm surprised that you aren't begging me not to turn you in, or threatening to kill me if I even think
"I believe in free will," I say. "Although it mainly boils down to the fact that I'm in no condition to follow through on any threats at the moment, and begging is beneath me. I have some dignity." I grin weakly at him.

"I could help you back to the academy," Dak offers.

"That'd be showing weakness in front of Sith," I say. "Although perhaps it might still work in my favor, regardless. They might underestimate me, perhaps."

"Here, can you walk?" Dak says, trying to help me to my feet.

"Yeah, I can-- umph." I try to stand, and flop down like a rag doll again. "Fuck's sake."

"What in the galaxy happened to you in that tomb?" Dak wonders. "Did that ghost you mentioned do something to you?"

"More like I did something to that ghost," I say. "It's complicated."

"I'm beginning to think that everything is complicated around you," Dak says.

I laugh softly. "Oh, believe me, you don't know the half of it."

Leaning heavily on Dak, I manage to walk a little. This is embarrassing. I'm not going to make it there like this.

"Alright, I've a better idea," I say. "Would you be willing to watch over me while I sleep?"

"You would trust me to do that?" Dak says.

"Would it be any worse than my current state?" I point out. "You could already kill me as easily as blinking and I wouldn't be able to do a damned thing about it."

"Alright," Dak says. "I will watch over you and make sure no harm comes to you while you sleep."

"Thanks, Dak," I say.

We head just inside the tomb. I tuck myself away in a corner and curl up. It's uncomfortable, but I'm so tired right now that I don't care. I could fall asleep with my eyes open while standing up at the moment, provided I could even stand on my own. Dak positions himself in front of me, lightsaber held close to hand, in a spot where he can easily keep watch on anyone approaching. Feeling sufficiently secure, I close my eyes and fall asleep.

"Come on, Lexen, we've got to get out of here!" Han Solo's voice calls to me.

I race across the docking bay toward the Millennium Falcon. But then I hear the sounds of fighting to the right, and I turn to look. Obi-Wan has his blue lightsaber out, and is facing off with a man wielding a red lightsaber. A man clad in all black, with a black helmet concealing his entire face. Darth Vader!

Even from this far away, I can hear their words clearly. "If you strike me down," Obi-Wan says, "I will become more powerful than you could possibly imagine."

And Vader strikes him down. But even as Obi-Wan dies, his body vanishes as though he were never there, robes falling empty to the floor.
"No!" I cry out, rushing toward him impulsively. But the Stormtroopers turn their attention toward me and shoot at me repeatedly. I collapse underneath a painful barrage of blaster fire.

I wake, and blink for a moment. This place is hard and uncomfortable. Where am I? Oh... right, I'm in the tomb of Ajunta Pall, where I was sleeping due to being too exhausted to walk. And there, in front of me, Dak Vesser is still standing watch.

"Dak..." I murmur softly.

"Lexen?" Dak says, glancing toward me. "You awake? You feeling any better now?"

"I think so," I say. I stand up slowly. Yeah, still a bit tired, but capable of functioning now. "At least I think I can walk without looking like I'm about to fall over, or actually doing so. How long was I out?"

"A few hours," Dak replies. "It's past nightfall now."

"Thanks for keeping watch," I say.

Dak chuckles softly. "I don't even know why I'm doing all this for you. There's just something about you... You're intriguing, to say the least. I've been thinking a lot on what you've said."

"Oh?" I say.

"This new path of yours sounds... appealing," Dak says. "I don't suppose you're looking for students?"

I grin faintly. "I'm not exactly trying to look, but I'll happily take them in anyway. I haven't really been trying, but it seems like the Force guides me to them anyway, one might say. Or vice versa."

"I'm glad for that," Dak says. "The Jedi weren't for me, but I don't really think the Sith are, either. Do you want to try to get back to the academy now, or stay here for the night?"

"It's probably safer if we stayed here for now," I say. "But I'd really rather get back to my ship."

"We'll have to be careful," Dak says. "Are you up to fighting?"

"Maybe," I say.

I consider my options. I look out into the pitch black night of Korriban. Dangerous things lurk in the darkness on this world. I'm better, but still weak. I won't be fighting at my peak if it comes to that. I don't fear for my own life at this point, but I'd hate to get Dak killed for my own recklessness.

"Let's just stay here for now," I say. "You can sleep and I'll keep watch for a bit, if you want."

"Alright," Dak says, relaxing a little. He was clearly uneasy about going out there at night.

"I'll wake you if anything happens," I say, pulling out my lightsabers and taking up a watchful position.

Dak goes to sleep. I gaze off into the impenetrable black of night. It's quiet, for the most part, but the occasional eerie sound echoing across the barren landscape sends chills up my spine. It's been a while since I've been here. I wonder if I ever really liked coming to Korriban.

The strength of the Dark Side here isn't really a comforting feeling. The Dark Side isn't a cradling mother. It's a constantly challenging father, always pushing you to be strong and giving no quarter.
The hours pass, and I meditate in silence, conserving my strength while maintaining my alertness. I turn my thoughts to the puzzle of my memory. I need to find a way to either not lose my memories constantly, or to retrieve them more easily, without having to resort to a journal to refresh them.

Why do they disappear? Perhaps for that, I should look at when they disappear. And that would be, any time I jump back to a previous point in time after dying. So could it be that whatever power in me allows me to evade death exacts a price for this boon? That might make sense, I suppose, but I don't think it's quite as simple as that.

The thought of Ajunta Pall comes to mind. As a trapped Force ghost, he exhibited forgetfulness. He couldn't remember much of his life anymore. And later, he appeared capable of travelling freely through time without penalty, so far as I know. It would seem to me that it isn't the power itself that causes it, but dying.

So perhaps if I could figure out how to utilize it more deliberately, I could avoid my mind being damaged from death. The later Ajunta Pall didn't seem to have any trouble with it at all anymore, despite being, apparently, dead. I don't really understand. Perhaps it's merely a matter of learning to maintain one's hold on oneself even when passing through the veil of death.

But what I did with Ajunta Pall gives me encouragement. It's an indication that I may be able to learn to trigger my ability intentionally, and go back to a point of my choosing. I'm not really to that point yet, though, and I'm not sure I dare experiment just now, but it's something to keep in mind. I may yet come upon a situation desperate enough that I'm willing to try it blindly.

Come to think, I only ever go back to a point that I was actually at before. Why was Ajunta Pall able to come back here? Well, that's obvious. Because he's dead. He doesn't have the restrictions of a body to contend with.

So why don't I die when I, well, die? I may have been confused about it before, but after today's events, now I can see clearly that this is because of my own power. And it triggers whenever anything would kill me, whether I will it or not. Am I merely subconsciously rejecting death? That's understandable, I suppose. I'm sure as hell not ready to die just yet.

I wouldn't think I'd want to die at all, given the choice, regardless of the circumstances. If it came down to it... I might just let the entire galaxy burn to ensure my own continued existence. I'm not that altruistic.

Maybe the Valley of the Dark Lords isn't really the best place to meditate. These are awfully Dark Side thoughts. Well, no matter. I wouldn't have thought it if I didn't mean it.

My meditations are interrupted by the sense of something approaching through the dark of night. I can't identify it, but it definitely seems malevolent. I nudge Dak with my foot to wake him up.

"Nngh," Dak says. "What's going on?"


"What is it?" Dak says, peering out of the tomb entrance. He pulls out his lightsaber and is alert in an instant. An admirable reaction.

"I don't know," I say.

Then, as it comes close, I make out a form in the darkness. Humanoid, with red skin, terrifying features... a face of evil...
"No... it can't be," I whisper. "No way..."

"What...?" Dak says. "Who is that?"

"The Sith Emperor? Here?" I murmur.

I feel naked and exposed, even hiding in this dark tomb. I can't hide from him. I can never hide from him, anywhere.

*He will find me wherever I go. His mind will reach out and touch me from across the galaxy. I will never be free of him.*

I clench my teeth and try to block out the thoughts, although without much success. Still, I activate my twin lightsabers and step out to stand before him. If this is how it's going to be, I'll go down fighting. I will not be forced to be a slave again.

Dak is at my side, with his own red lightsaber in hand. Our enemy does not speak, merely attacking. Blindly. Like an animal. We slash at the monster, and he swipes at us with clawed hands. He doesn't manage to get through my armored torso, but he slashes across my exposed face. Pain. Deep gouges in my cheek. Blood. Running down my face. Dripping onto the barren ground.

*You will serve me. You will carry my name across the galaxy.*

"I will not be a slave again," I hiss. "Never again!"

He almost seems to be ignoring Dak, who takes advantage of that fact to flank the enemy. Slashing with his lightsaber. He scores a few good hits, but it hardly seems to affect this monster.

*Darkness. Crushing my will. Consuming me. I'm falling into the black hole all over again.*

"No!" I scream, flailing about wildly with my lightsabers. I can't focus. I can't fight like this. I'm falling apart. I collapse onto my knees. Dropping my lightsabers. Clutching my head. My bleeding face.

Dak cuts down the creature from behind with his red lightsaber. The bleeding abruptly stops. My wound vanished in an instant when the enemy was vanquished. But I'm still shaking uncontrollably.

"Lexen, are you alright?" Dak says, stepping close to me and examining me.

*The darkness will never leave my mind. It clings to me like an oily coating that won't wash off.*

"I don't think I'll ever be alright again," I whisper.

"Lexen, relax," Dak says. "It wasn't real. It was a dreambeast. They take the form of whatever you most fear. It wasn't... whoever you thought you saw."

*You will serve me, whether you wish to or not.*

"Won't be... a slave..." I murmur. "Can't get him out of my mind... Bent me to his will... with the Dark Side... can't escape..."

"There's no one here," Dak says. "No one's going to hurt you. You're safe now."

"Nowhere is safe from him," I say.

*Darkness is the natural state of the universe.*
"Why don't you try and get some rest and calm down?" Dak says. "I'll keep watch. I won't let anything harm you."

Dak gathers up my forgotten lightsabers and guides me back into the spot just inside the tomb. I go along with him blindly, my mind still in a haze. Still lost in darkness.

The light is an aberration.

"Don't leave me alone in the dark..." I whisper.

"Don't worry," Dak says. "I won't. I promise."

Darkness consumes me...
I'm trapped. Floating in darkness. A prisoner of my own mind.

There's nothing more terrifying to me than the feeling of helplessness.

I thought I was prepared to go up against the Sith Emperor finally. To get my revenge against him for trying to use me. To put a stop to his plans for the galaxy.

I was wrong. I was so very, very wrong.

One I had thought was my ally betrayed me, and Surik paid the price with her life.

I wasn't so fortunate. Death I could deal with. But this? I don't know whether the Sith Emperor knew about my power, or merely wished to keep me alive for whatever reason. Sadistic amusement? Attempting to break my will again?

And so, here I am. Unaware of anything outside of my own body. I don't even know where I am at the moment. Trapped. Unable to escape.

I'll drive myself mad like this. I must have hope. One day, maybe years from now, I'll either die, escape, or be rescued. Until then... I must try to put my mind to sleep and wait. Sleep. Wait. Hope.

Hope.

Hope...

I wake, blinking into the darkness. But it's not complete darkness. There's faint light spilling in through the doorway. I'm not trapped. I'm not a prisoner.

"Lexen, you awake?" says a voice.

I stare at this human male before me, blinking again. Yes, I know him. I know his name. "Dak?"

"It's morning," Dak says. "How are you feeling?"

Right, I also remember the terrible previous night. "I'm alive," I murmur. "You saved my life, didn't you..."

"I... I suppose I did," Dak says. "But if it killed you, it would have come after me next."

"Still," I say. "You watched over me and kept me safe. Thank you."

I find my lightsabers set off to the side, and hook them back on my belt. I stand, stretching. I'm a little stiff from having slept in a cold, hard tomb, but otherwise I appear to be physically alright. Mentally... well, I'd rather not think of that right now. The thought of losing my mind is a very real danger, and I'm terrified of it...

"We should probably head back to your ship now that we have the chance to," Dak says.

I nod. "Yeah. Let's get out of here."
We head out of the tomb and back into the Valley of the Dark Lords, and from there up toward the academy again. I probably look like a mess at the moment, but I don't really care. At least it beats barely being able to stand.

Along the way through the academy, I stop by the main chamber to see Uthar Wynn. I bring out Ajunta Pall's real sword and hand it over to him.

"Ah, you did find the real one?" Uthar Wynn says. "Shaardan brought back another one which he claimed was Ajunta Pall's sword, but was not. I Force choked him for failing to recognize your deception. You've earned yourself some prestige for this."

I chuckle softly. I have no remorse for what happened to Shaardan whatsoever. "He was a fool," I say, and continue on my way.

Dak and I make our way back through Dreshdae and to the Ebon Hawk. Bastila is pacing around the main operations room when we arrive. Upon seeing me, she cries, "Lexen!" and leaps toward me, wrapping her arms tightly around me.

"I'm alright, Bastila," I say. "Sorry for worrying you."

"When you didn't come back last night, I feared something had happened to you," Bastila says. "I could sense you were alive, but weak and in danger... We almost sent out half the crew to go and find you. But then the danger passed."

"It's alright," I say. "Dak here kept me safe."

"You found another recruit?" Bastila says, looking to Dak.

Dak chuckles. "Another? How many people have you recruited while you've been on Korriban?"

"Well, counting you, four so far," I say with a smirk. "I need to be careful with who I let in. I don't want to wind up bringing in someone I can't trust."

We head back into the starboard crew quarters. Juhani and Jolee are there, giving another lesson to the three students. They glance up at us as we come in, and Juhani's eyes widen in surprise as she recognizes the man with me.

"Dak?" Juhani says. "What-- what are you doing here?"

"Juhani," Dak says. "I wanted to... apologize to you. You probably thought I was a complete ass. Can you ever forgive me?"

"If you're hoping for another shot at getting with me, don't waste your breath," Juhani snaps at him.

"No," Dak says. "No, nothing like that. You aren't interested in me that way. I understand."

"So why are you here?" Juhani says. "You ran off to join the Sith!"

"Yes, I did," Dak says. "But then I ran into Lexen... and he showed me a better way."

Juhani stares at him for a moment before smirking. "He does have a tendency to do that, doesn't he?" Juhani sighs. "Look, I'm still not fond of you or anything, but if you want to join up with our little group, I'm not going to protest or throw a tantrum or anything like that. We're fellow apprentices. Nothing more. Let's keep it at that, shall we?"

"That's alright by me," Dak says, sighing himself.
I nod faintly. That's about the best I can expect for the moment, I think. "Everyone take a seat," I say. "There's some things I'd like to tell you, and now's probably a good time for it. If you don't like what I have to say, you are free to walk away at any time."

My students situate themselves in a semi-circle facing me, sitting cross-legged on the floor, and I take a seat in front of them myself.

"Let's start off with the introductions, shall we?" I say. "Some of you may not be fully aware of who I am. I am currently going by the name of Lexen Skywalker, my original birth name. But you may be more familiar with me under the name of Darth Revan."

"Wait, you... you're Darth Revan?" Dak says, staring at me incredulously. "But everyone said Revan was dead!"

I nod to him. "Both the Jedi and the Sith would like people to believe that I'm dead, for different reasons."

I explain what happened during that last fateful battle. About Malak's betrayal, Bastila's capture of me that was really more of a rescue, the Jedi's failed attempt at implanting a false personality, and a bit about my amnesia. I omit the part about my apparent time traveling ability. That one's hard to explain even to myself at the moment. I'm not comfortable trying to explain it to anyone else just now.

My students listen with interest. "So now you're against the Jedi for what they tried to do to you, and against the Sith because of Malak's betrayal?" Varik asks.

"That's a part of it, yeah," I say. "That, and the fact that I don't entirely agree with either of them, philosophically."

"How many more apprentices do you intend to take?" Juhani asks, eyeing Dak.

"As many as are willing to learn," I say. "If someone wishes to follow my path, I will not turn them away. I'll set up a real base somewhere that we can learn from one another and share our knowledge in relative safety. Some of us are more experienced than others, but I imagine that there are things that you could teach me as well. I'm not going to be an arrogant Jedi or Sith to think that I know everything and that I'm infallible. I'll be the first to admit that I'm not."

From the puzzled looks on their faces, they're clearly not used to that sort of attitude. However, they do seem to relax a bit. It's probably a refreshing change, I imagine.

My words do nothing to dissuade them from following me, however. Well enough, I think. I head over to the port crew quarters to sit down with my journal and go over recent events. I've a lot to record and think about. And some things that I don't want to think about.

So, I have the ability to traverse time. To return to a previous point to make a different choice. I can even send someone else back, too. However, this power is extremely exhausting to use, although perhaps the distance I sent him back as well as the fact that I was using the power on someone else contributed to that. That, and my inexperience with using the power intentionally. I likely was using the ability inefficiently and wasting a lot of energy. Still, it's not something I can do lightly.

For now, however, I head to the refresher to get cleaned up and take a quick nap. I just did a massive recap in the direction of the newcomers, and I don't care to repeat it again just yet, and they deserve better than for me to be getting short and impatient with them.

"Reach out with your senses, Lexen," Obi-Wan tells me. "Your eyes can deceive you. Trust in the
Force. Feel where the enemy is.

I can't see a thing through this blast visor. But the training remote is still shooting at me, its stings striking my body. How am I supposed to fight like this? But I make no complaint. I try to do what Obi-Wan tells me. Stretching my mind out through the Force.

Then, I suddenly seem to know where the next attack is coming from. I move my father's lightsaber to and fro in rapid succession to block the attacks.

"Beginner's luck, I say," Han Solo says.

I wake to the sound of the alarm. It's still early, and I have a lot of work to do. I head on out of the ship and back to the academy.

I'm a little leery of going back out into the Valley of the Dark Lords again just yet, so I poke around the academy some instead. There's a room where several Republic prisoners are being kept that the students can duel to the death against, which I decide to pass on. There's another room that seems to be an interrogation chamber.

"Ah, are you one of the prospective students?" the warden says to me. "This Mandalorian is hiding the location of a weapons cache. We haven't yet been able to break him, and he's resistant to Dark Side mind control. If you can get him to reveal it, you can gain some prestige."

"I think I can manage that," I say with a small grin.

"Good," he says. He shows me how to use the machine that they're using to inject drugs into the Mandalorian in hopes of breaking him, although I have no intention of using it myself. "I'll leave you alone to your fun. Come see me in my office if you can get him to talk."

After double-checking to make sure that I'm actually alone, I approach the man in the force cage and speak to him in Mandalorian. "What is your name, comrade?" I address him in the way a fellow Mandalorian would.

He looks up at me in surprise. "My name is Reto. Who are you?"

"I am Mandalore," I tell him. "And I'm going to get you out of here."

Reto looks at me in a mixture of hope and disbelief, as if not sure if he should believe my claim, but wishing with all his heart that it's true. "How did you manage to infiltrate this place?"

"Well, I am Force-sensitive," I say. "But aside from that, they have no idea who I actually am."

"You couldn't have come here just for me," Reto says.

"No," I admit. "I'm here on another mission. It was chance that brought me to you."

Reto nods. "Look, they're watching me carefully to make sure I don't escape. But if you give me just enough truth serum to put me in a catatonic state without killing me, they may mistake me for dead and dump me outside, giving me a chance to escape."

I think about the suggestion for a few moments, then shake my head. "Too much left to chance."

"Have you another idea?" Reto asks, looking at me hopefully.

"Hmm," I say. "I can tell the warden that I've convinced you to show me your weapons cache, but that you need to lead me there yourself. Act like you're under mind control."
"The warden knows I'm resistant to Force powers like that, though," Reto says.

I nod. "I am, however, exceptionally strong with the Force, and he can tell that as well. And if he insists on coming with us, I will kill him once we're far enough away from the academy."

"Very well," Reto says. "I will go along with your plan, Mandalore."

I go out to see the warden. "You're done? Did you get him to talk?"

I nod. "I got him to talk," I say. "I'll need him to show me where the weapons cache is, however."

"Bah, he'll just try to escape the minute he gets outside."

"He won't try to escape," I say. "I've made sure of that. He might be conditioned against mind control, but I'm strong enough in the Force to get through that anyway."

"Ah. Very well, as you say. I'll let him out and go along with you to the cache location, then."

The warden goes in and deactivates the forcefield. Reto is doing his best impression of a mind slave, staring blankly and expressionlessly, and following after us quietly. The warden looks at him suspiciously, but seems to buy into the story convincingly enough. The three of us head out of the academy.

We go out of the academy and into the open land, and head off down a narrow side trail away from view of anyone else. The place is rough and jagged, and although the ground is barren, it's uneven enough that no one is likely to notice what we're doing out here.

"This is where I hid my weapons cache," Reto says in monotone.

"Excellent," says the warden. "Now to just kill you both and take the credit for myself!" He draws a red lightsaber.

I snicker softly, lightsabers already in hand and blocking his attack. "You know, I was going to kill you anyway."

Our blades clash. He's more skilled than I had anticipated. Perhaps because weak Sith or those who lack talent are much more likely to die early on than Jedi. No matter. I will defeat him regardless. I grin broadly and slip into combat mode. I thrill at the prospect of a battle that's actually somewhat of a challenge, rather than simply murdering the man.

When he realizes he's outmatched in bladework, he tries hitting me with Force Lightning, but I block the attack with my green lightsaber. Simultaneously, I make a stabbing strike with my red lightsaber. He didn't anticipate an attack at that moment and had left himself open, and for that he dies beneath my blade.

Chuckling, I put my lightsabers away and turn to Reto. "Do you need a lift off the planet, or do you have a ship somewhere?"

"I had a ship," Reto says. "But the Sith have probably taken it or scrapped it by now. That weapons cache they were asking about was actually hidden on board."

"Let's see about getting you to my ship, then," I say. I turn and head back toward Dreshdae port.

"So, not that I'll complain about you helping me and all," Reto says. "But are you really Mandalore?"
"Yup," I reply.

"How is it that a Force user is Mandalore?" Reto says in puzzlement.

"Because I killed the last one and swore to him to rebuild the Mandalorians," I reply. "But circumstances prevented me from following through on that oath until now."

"Wait... You're not Revan, are you?"

"Yup," I say.

"Heh," Reto says in amusement. "The warden had no idea what he was going up against. I suppose I should have recognized your armor, but it's strange seeing you without a mask on."

We get back to the Ebon Hawk and climb aboard. Canderous is currently in the main operations center, monitoring things. "What, you found another apprentice?" he says, looking over at me incredulously. "This ship's getting pretty crowded."

"I'm not a Jedi, I'm a Mandalorian," Reto replies coolly in his own language.

Canderous replies in the same language, "Ah! Welcome, comrade. I am Canderous Ordo. It's good to have another of my people around when surrounded by all these Jedi. I'll put out another bedroll in the cargo hold for you."

Reto relaxes and warms up a little at Canderous's words. "I'm Reto Bralor. I'm glad to be here. I'd been imprisoned by the Sith, but Mandalore rescued me."

"I'll leave you to fill him in, Canderous," I say. "I'd best get back to work. Still need to find that damned Star Map."

"Good luck, Mandalore," Canderous says.

I return to the academy and go to see Uthar Wynn. "Greetings, Lexen," Uthar says. "Have you done something to gain more prestige, or just looking to ask a question?"

"I got that Mandalorian prisoner to talk," I say.

"Ah, really?" Uthar says. "How did you accomplish that?"

I chuckle softly. "I convinced him that I'm Mandalore."

"And he believed you?" Uthar says, then laughs aloud. "Oh, now that's a good one. So where was his weapon cache?"

"It was hidden inside his ship," I tell him.

"Ah," Uthar says. "A pity. I thought the incompetent fools had already thoroughly searched his ship, and had it sent off to be scrapped. Nonetheless, you've earned some more prestige for this."

"Oh, and you'll need a new warden, too," I say lightly. "He tried to kill me and take credit for himself, so I killed him."

"Ah, thanks for letting me know," Uthar says, snickering.

"So, aside from going into the tombs in the Valley of the Dark Lords, is there anything else I could do at this point to gain more prestige?" I ask.
"There's a couple things you could do," Uthar says. "There are some runaway students, as well as an old hermit, that you could kill. They're probably hiding out in the caverns and hills somewhere near the Valley of the Dark Lords."

"Hmm," I say. "I'll see if I can find them, then."

I head out of the academy and start poking my head into every cave I run across in the hills nearby. This results in me walking headlong into a nest of large winged bat-like creatures. What are they called again? Shyracks, that's it.

I whip out my lightsabers and flail about at the flying pests. They're quick to evade my blows, however. One of them catches my ear in its claws, almost ripping it off. I growl, and give in to my anger, lashing out at them in a rage as blood runs down my neck. I manage to down a couple of them with my lightsabers before resorting to blasting them with Force Lightning instead.

Once the shyracks are dead, I stand back panting, and put my lightsabers away before clutching my left ear. Still bleeding profusely. How embarrassing. I can kill rancors and krayt dragons without taking a scratch, but here I get mauled by shyracks.

I force myself to calm down to try to heal this wound. Channel the Force into stopping the blood flow. But I'm shaking and distressed, and the power won't come. Blood continues to pour out. Damn it.

First aid supplies? Do I even have any on me? What a fool for always relying on my own power for things. Idiot. I've got plenty of explosives, but not a simple bandage. Am I going to bleed to death from a shyrack attack because I didn't think to bring a bandage?

Calm down. Focus. Try to call on the Light Side. I know I can heal life-threatening wounds. I just need to bring up that power again. But I don't know if I can manage it on myself rather than someone else. I just can't bring myself to be that concerned about dying right now. It's an annoyance at best. I'm more concerned about the very real prospect of losing my mind.

I'm not sure whether the Force finally worked for me, or the wound just clotted up on its own, but the blood finally stops spilling out. Well enough, I suppose. I'll have Bastila take a look at it when I get back to the ship. Maybe she can heal it.

I don't know how much blood I lost. I'm a little woozy now. Right, let this be a lesson. Quit being so damned complacent and carry medical supplies. Also, I should probably start wearing a helmet again, too. The rest of my body is protected by armor, but my head is still exposed, which is just plain stupid.

First off, though, I at least go to finish exploring this cave. I wander deeper in, letting the Force guide my senses in the dark so that I don't need to bring out a hand-held light. Provided I even remembered to bring one of those, either, anyway, considering how stupid I've been being today.

There's more shyracks inside, but I don't even bother bringing out my lightsabers for them. I just shoot Force Lightning from my fingers at them instead. I'm certainly pissed off at them enough.


"Damn it! The Sith have found us!"

Ah, must be those runaways students Uthar mentioned. There's light up ahead. They appear to have some lamps of their own.
I call out, "Hold your fire, I mean you no harm."

"Come out where we can see you!"

I approach closer, hands held in the air as I step into the light of their little camp. There's three of them, a human female and two male Twi'leks, all looking rather bedraggled, but at least they don't have bloody shyrack wounds.

"Well, you've found us," says the human woman. "I'm Thalia May. Who are you?"

"Lexen Skywalker," I reply. "Although at the moment I'm feeling like Lexen Shyrackbait." I snicker softly. "Despite appearances, I'm here to help, if I can. How are you doing?"

"You're a Sith," Thalia says. "How are we supposed to trust you?"

"How about the fact that I haven't attacked you yet?" I suggest.

"You're wounded," Thalia says. "You may be waiting for us to let down our guard so that you can kill us with less risk to yourself."

"You know, if you'd rather I just leave you here in this monster-infested cave rather than help you get off the planet, I could do that too," I reply dryly.

"Sorry, but no," Thalia says. "You could report our presence here back to Uthar Wynn. We're going to have to kill you."

"Oh, for fuck's sake," I mutter. "Hold on, I'm trying to help you here, if you'll let me."

"If you really want to help, then go kill the terentatek in the back of the cave," Thalia says. "You won't be able to sneak off without passing either us or the terentatek. If you can do that, then I might consider trusting you."

"There's a terentatek in the back of the cave?" I say, sighing. "Bloody wonderful. Fine, I'll kill the damned terentatek for you. I'll be back shortly."

I head on past their camp and pass through the tunnel that leads to where they say the terentatek is. I creep forward, cautious and alert for movement. There, I sense it ahead, like a knot of thrashing anger in the midst of the darkness.

I really don't feel up to going up against a terentatek in a stand-up fight at the moment. Time to put these explosives to good use, I think. I pull out a large explosive and carefully place it in a straight section of tunnel near the terentatek, and bring out the remote trigger to hand.

I whistle to try to get the terentatek's attention, but it ignores me. I bring out my small blaster and shoot in its general direction a bit, but I fail to hit anything and it continues to ignore me. Oh, fine, now it picks a great time to be stubborn and not particularly aggressive?

"Hey, you dumbass Dark Side beast!" I call out. "I've got some tasty Force-rich blood for you right here!"

And it keeps ignoring me. Argh. Alright, let's do this the hard way. I approach the terentatek, making as much noise as possible to get its attention. Finally, I seem to get its attention. It turns toward me and starts to move.

Quickly, I move away, hearing it starting to approach me from behind. I jump over the explosive I
planted and keep going, and it follows after me. Too close behind me. I'm still closer than I might like, but it's approaching the explosive, so it's now or never. As I sense it reaching the point where I left the explosive, I hit the remote trigger.

BOOM! The explosion knocks me off my feet. I land face-first into the rough stone floor. Damn, I was afraid I was still too close. Well, my armor protected me from most of the blast. My face is scratched up, however, and the back of my head feels singed. Definitely need to start wearing a helmet again. I think I just got an unplanned haircut.

I slowly climb to my feet again and pull out my hand-light to get a good look at the results through my own eyes rather than the Force. Well, there's no sign of the terentatek anymore, underneath all the rubble. My explosive completely collapsed the section of tunnel just past where I was. I'm lucky it didn't bring down tons of stone on top of my head.

I return to the camp with the runaway students. "Well," I say. "The terentatek is probably dead now. And if it somehow survived being blown up and having the tunnel collapsed on top of it, it deserves to live, I think."

"You idiot!" Thalia replies. "There was a tunnel leading to the surface past the terentatek. We were going to use it to escape!"

"Well, sorry?" I say, sighing. "But do you even have a ship waiting for you somewhere?"

"Well, no..." Thalia says.

"How would just getting out of the cave help if you still had no way to get off the planet?" I say, shaking my head.

"We were hoping to get passage on a smuggler ship leaving Dreshdae," Thalia says.

"You have disguises and enough credits to manage that?" I ask.

"Well, no, probably not," Thalia admits, looking sheepishly at the ground.

I sigh. "I understand. It was probably desperation that drove you here, and you're just grasping at straws for any hope. It's alright. Look, it'll be a little cramped, but I can get you offworld in my own ship."

Thalia and the others exchange looks. "I'm still not sure whether we can trust you or not, but at this point, I'm not seeing any other options."

"There are always choices," I say with a shrug. "I'm just offering you one that may be better than the others currently available to you. Dying, of course, is always an option, but not a particularly good one in my opinion."

"Fine," Thalia says. "Show us to your ship, then."

I start to lead them out of the cave. "Technically, I'm not really much of a Sith. I'm certainly not here to join the fawning over Darth Malak. I'd consider myself more of a Gray Jedi than anything else. I can still use the Light Side, for one thing."

"Really?" Thalia says. "Prove it, then."

"Are any of you injured at all?" I ask.
"My lekku got scratched by shyracks," one of the Twi'leks says.

"Alright," I say. "Hold on and I'll see what I can do."

We pause, and I approach the Twi'lek. The injury isn't very bad, not nearly so much as my own, but it probably hurts a fair bit, considering how sensitive a Twi'lek's head-tails are.

I had difficulty in healing myself, but this shouldn't be a problem. Compassion. Caring. Hope. With these, I fuel the Light Side of the Force, and call upon healing energies to repair the damage and soothe the pain. It takes me a minute, but I do eventually manage to calm myself enough to call up the power. A faint nimbus of green light surrounds the Twi'lek's head for a few moments before fading away.

"You did it!" the Twi'lek says. "That feels much better now. Thank you."

Thalia looks at me thoughtfully. "That... was definitely Light Side healing. Perhaps you are telling the truth."

I chuckle softly and continue on. "Thanks for the vote of confidence."

"So you're able to use both Light Side and Dark Side powers?" Thalia asks.

I nod. "It's difficult, sometimes, but I can do it. I choose not to follow either the Jedi or the Sith. And I've come across several people while on Korriban who have decided that the Sith isn't for them, and to take the third option I offer. And no, before you ask, I didn't just come to Korriban to recruit. It just kind of happened anyway."

"It's... an interesting thought," Thalia says. "Perhaps we'll consider it. Right now, I'm just concerned with getting away from these crazy Sith who would kill us just because we didn't want to slaughter civilians."

We get out of the cave and sneak back into Dreshdae port without much incident. No one seems to pay us much attention at the moment. We head over to the docking area and climb aboard the Ebon Hawk.

"Juhani spends too much time in the refresher!"

"I'm not sleeping in the cargo hold!"

"Zaalbar eats too much!"

"Mission cheats at Pazaak!"

I groan softly to myself as I hear the arguments being thrown about as I come aboard the ship. I step into the main operations room, watching them for a moment. They haven't even noticed I've returned yet.

This is annoying. I don't have the patience to deal with this right now. I raise my hand into the air, and surround myself with a sharp crack of Force Lightning. This silences them instantly. All eyes in the room turn to me.

"Desist," I bark. "This arrangement is only temporary. If you can't stand to be in one another's presence for even a few days, I will happily put you ashore and leave you to the mercy of the Sith."

There are murmured apologies from the crew and passengers. They sheepishly look away and start
wandering off in different directions, most them finding other places to be really quickly. Bastila, however, approaches me in concern.

"Lexen, you're wounded!" Bastila says. "What happened?"

"Shyracks," I explain. "Oh, and a terentatek. But that was mostly my own explosives going off too close to me."

"Here, I'll try and heal that for you," Bastila says. "And you brought more apprentices?"

I nod, sinking into a chair with a heavy sigh. I let Bastila do her work quietly, closing my eyes and trying to relax a little. It'll be at least a few more days until we can get off the planet and unload our passengers somewhere safe.

Bastila manages to heal up the wound in my ear, the cuts on my face, and the burns on my head, for the most part. The ear doesn't look quite the shape it did before, but since it wasn't really shaped quite like a normal human's to begin with, that doesn't really bother me too much.

"Thanks, Bastila," I say. "I really appreciate it."

"Bastila, I don't suppose you could do me another huge favor," I say. "I really ought to get cleaned up and rest a bit. Could you fill in our new friends for me, please?"

"Of course," Bastila says. "I'll get them squared away and settled in. You just go take care of yourself for a bit."

"I owe you again," I say with a small grin.

I head off to the refresher. I almost run into Mission, who looks as though she had the same idea, but she backs away quickly and lets me enter, looking a little scared.

"Are you really going to take that from him?" Griff says to her quietly.

"You don't want to mess with him when he's in Dark Side mode," Mission says. "He's scary. He can be so nice sometimes, but other times, you just don't want to get in his way."

"Yeah, I suppose," Griff says. "Why don't we head out to the cantina and give all these Jedi some space?"

I'm glad for the chance to get cleaned up. So much blood... I'll need to clean off my armor, too. While the blood-stained look might be stylish and all, I'd much rather be badass than merely look badass. And spilling my own blood all over the place just because a shyrack scratched me just isn't really all that badass.

Once that's all taken care of, I go to record the latest events in my journal and get some rest. It's still daylight, but late enough that I don't want to head out again just at the moment, and a little extra sleep won't hurt. I could certainly use it, at this point.
Chapter Summary

The dream in this chapter is from the Harry Potter universe.

There's a man in black robes standing ominously over me. He's a twisted, monstrous man, with a vaguely snake-like visage. Was he attractive once, before being warped by dark powers?

"Did you think you could get away with this, Chelseer?"

"I don't know what you're--"

"Silence," he snaps. "Don't play ignorant with me. I know exactly what you did. You betrayed several of my Death Eaters to the Order of the Phoenix and disrupted my plans. Don't think being a pureblood will spare you from my wrath if you act against me."

I sigh. I was afraid it would come to this. And now here I am, without my wand, and at the Dark Lord's mercy.

The black-robed man raises his wand to me, and says, "Crucio!"

Excruciating pain shoots through my body...

I wake, gasping and shuddering at the feeling. Ugh. I wish these dreams weren't so very real sometimes. I can feel every torment as if it were just happening to me, even if I know it was only a distant memory, if that.

And dreams like that, I'm not even sure if they're supposed to be memories at all. What kind of nonsense was that? Using wands and strange words in order to use the Force? That man was obviously some sort of Dark Jedi equivalent, but the way he used his powers was very, very strange. I wouldn't mind these dreams so much if they made more sense sometimes.

Well, no matter. I get dressed and decide to head out for some breakfast out at the cantina. I'm a little more careful with my supplies today, actually remembering to take along some first aid supplies as well as explosives. It's just before dawn at the moment, and most of the people on the ship are asleep still. After eating, I head over to the academy to see Uthar Wynn, who is also already up.

"Lexen," Uthar Wynn says, nodding to me in greeting. "Have you had success in your hunting?"

I nod. "I found those runaway students. They were hiding in a shyrock cave east of the academy. I've dealt with them."

"I see," Uthar Wynn says. "You know, Lexen. I've been hearing some strange things about you. For instance, I've heard that you've taken a number of people aboard your ship. Care to explain? What exactly are you doing, Lexen?"

"My crew and I need more food," I reply lightly.
"You... Wait, what?" Uthar says, looking at me in puzzlement. "You don't mean, you're a cannibal?"

"Is eating members of another species technically considered cannibalism?" I ask rhetorically.

"So, you took those runaway students aboard your ship?" Uthar asks.

"Yes," I reply.

"And Kel Algwinn is missing as well," Uthar says. "Did you take him, too?"

"I did," I say.

"And what happened to that Mandalorian prisoner?"

"I took him as well," I say.

"And... you ate them all?" Uthar says, looking at me wide-eyed.

"What can I say?" I say with a shrug and a crooked grin.

Uthar stares at me in silence for several long moments. "Alright, then... You get some more prestige for locating those runaways. And I'll not comment further on your... hobbies."

I grin at him. "I'll go see if I can find that hermit you mentioned now. He's not too old, is he? Old people are awfully gamey."

Uthar looks slightly ill. "Well, yes, he is rather old..."

"Ah, too bad," I say, shrugging. "Ah, well, I suppose I'll just kill him if I run across him, then. Later."

I head off out of the academy. Actually, I have no idea where I might find this hermit, and I'm not sure that I care to go poking around in shyrack caves anymore, so I just head down to the Valley of the Dark Lords again instead. Since when did raiding ancient, heavily guarded and trapped tombs sound more appealing than fighting shyracks? Perhaps because it's less embarrassing if something goes wrong.

Outside of the tomb I'm approaching, I see Lashowe crouched behind some rocks, watching something near the tomb entrance from a distance. "Lashowe?" I say quietly as I come up to her.

"What are you doing?"

"Lexen," Lashowe says flatly. She doesn't look pleased to see me at first, but then she brightens suddenly. "I have an idea that would get prestige for both of us, if you're up to it. We could work together and be unstoppable!"

"I'm listening," I say.

"I've discovered that there's an ancient holocrion in the belly of that tuk'ata mother over there," Lashowe says. "If we can fight off the tuk'ata around her and kill her, we can get credit for retrieving it together!"

I look at her dubiously. "How, exactly, did you figure this out, anyway?"

"I've been doing research!" Lashowe replies. "It was supposed to be in the tomb of Tulak Hord. Unfortunately, that tuk'ata appears to have eaten it."
"I'm not fishing around in tuk'ata entrails for an artifact that may or may not be there," I say, snorting softly.

"If you were looking to get into that tomb, you'll need to go through those tuk'ata anyway," Lashowe says.

"Fine," I say, sighing. "Let's kill the damned tuk'ata. But I'm not digging around in their guts."

Lashowe and I draw our lightsabers and converge upon the pack of tuk'ata. I don't trust her not to betray me, but I don't think she'll strike at me until the enemy is slain. That would be foolish. I let my mind classify her as "potential hostile" and bring my lightsabers to bear against the tuk'ata. Slash. Swipe. I could probably kill them all myself, anyway. They're vicious, but I can't afford to be wounded, not here. I'll use the Force to defend myself if need be.

We slay the tuk'ata pack, and now all that's left is the den mother herself. She's large and fierce. She swipes at me with her claws, but I dance out of the way. I'm fighting more defensively than I generally care to. I must stop or avoid every attack. But I get a few good attacks in. I remove her front leg with my red lightsaber. Lashowe manages to flank the creature and get in a good strike from the side, bringing her down.

"Good work," Lashowe says. "You're passable with those blades. Now to open her up and retrieve the treasure!" She leans down and carefully slices open the creature's abdomen with her lightsaber.

"That's disgusting," I say.

"Aha! Here it is!" Lashowe triumphantly pulls out a small cube from the belly of the beast. "I'll just take this back to Uthar Wynn. I'll be sure to tell him about your assistance, and he'll give us both prestige."

"You know, if you're planning on taking all the credit for yourself, you could just say so," I comment dryly. "You don't need to lie. I'd be honestly surprised if you did otherwise."

"What, are you planning on attacking me and taking it for yourself instead?" Lashowe says.

"No," I say. "Honestly, you did the work tracking it down. And digging through entrails. I was just going to go into Tulak Hord's tomb. I would have had to kill the creature anyway. If you'd come here a little later, you'd have just been able to get it from the corpse and we'd never have realized the other was even here."

"You have a very strange attitude," Lashowe says, looking at me oddly.

I shrug. "Taking credit for other people's deeds is something today's Sith do all too often. But there's no true victory in that. It's treachery without superiority. Deceit without strength."

"Really?" Lashowe says. "And I suppose you don't approve of Darth Malak betraying his former master to take up the mantle of Dark Lord of the Sith, either?"

"No," I say, clenching my fist in sudden anger. "I do not."

"Heh," Lashowe says. "You'll never make it very far in the Sith with that sort of attitude. That's the way things work around here, you know."

"I know," I say. "But if I can't get ahead on my own merits, then I don't believe I deserve it regardless. And I have no respect for anyone who substitutes treachery for real power. Treachery only breeds more treachery. And if that keeps up, it won't be the Republic that destroys the Sith, but
each other. Again, as it was before."

Lashowe stares at me for a few moments, as if unsure how to respond to that. "Suit yourself. I'll just go take this back to Uthar Wynn now..."

She heads back toward the academy again. I shrug and make my way into the tomb. I don't really care if she gives me credit or not. I doubt she's had as much success in gaining prestige as I have, anyway.

Aside from the tuk'ata at the entrance, I don't see anything particularly dangerous in this tomb. Actually, come to think, there's footprints in the dust. Someone has been through here recently. Perhaps they snuck past the tuk'ata, or waited until the creatures were out hunting or something. Regardless, I must be cautious of more than just traps.

Traps. As I proceed through the tomb, I hear an ominous click. Shit, I just triggered something, didn't I. I smell something strange. Gas? Ah, fuck. I try holding my breath, and turn around to try to get out of here again. But I already inhaled too much of the gas. The world is spinning. I collapse.

*The Lars homestead is burning. Charred bodies lay out in the sand. So badly burned that I can't tell which is which. Not that I want to look close enough to find out. This was my family, once. And now they're dead.*

"This is my fault," I say shakily. "I should have been here for them. I could have protected them."

"There was nothing you could have done, Lexen," Obi-Wan assures me. "You would have just died along with them."

"Luke..." I murmur. "My brother is dead." I growl softly, clenching my fists in anger. "They will pay for this."

"Calm yourself, Lexen," Obi-Wan says. "I understand that you're upset, but anger will lead to the Dark Side."

"How can Jedi stay calm all the time, when terrible things like this happen all around them?" I demand.

"It's often difficult," Obi-Wan says. "But the Force will lend you strength in times of trouble, if your mind is calm enough."

I let out a deep sigh. I don't think my anger will be stilled with mere words. And I don't think my anger is wrong. But I don't want to become evil, so I try to heed Obi-Wan's words and make myself calm.

"Let's... just go," I say quietly. "We need to get to Alderaan."

I wake with a groan. Ugh, this is not my ship. Where am I?

I can't move. Panic rises up in me and my eyes snap open. There's a human man in front of me, with unnatural eyes, whose face bears the signs of extensive Dark Side immersion. I also see Mekel standing in the room, apparently caught and held in the same way I was.

"Well, now, you're awake," the man says. "Allow me to introduce myself. I am Jorak Uln. I was once the headmaster of the academy, so I'm sure you must have heard of me."

"Sorry, doesn't ring a bell," I reply.
"What?" Jorak says, looking offended. "Has that whelp, Uthar Wynn, not mentioned a word about me?"

"Well, he did say something about an old hermit hiding in the hills, but he didn't name any names," I say.


"So, was there a point to bringing me here, or was the gas trap just your way of inviting passersby in for tea?" I ask dryly.

"What kind of a Sith do you think I am?" Jorak says.

"Obviously not that kind of Sith," I say.

"I am a teacher, you see," Jorak says. "I brought you here to give you a little test, to see what they're teaching at that academy these days. I've already tested Mekel here, and sad to say, he failed miserably. Perhaps you will meet up to my expectations instead."

"If that was all you wanted to do, you could have just asked, you know," I comment.

"What kind of a Sith would I be if I did that?" Jorak says.

"The kind who doesn't want to die the minute I get out of this," I say darkly.

"Hah," Jorak says. "Well, you have some spirit, at least. But we'll see how you do on the test. Here's how it's going to work. If you get a question right, I will Force Lightning Mekel here. If you get a question wrong, I will Force Lightning you instead. Now, I don't know how much punishment you might be able to withstand, but Mekel here has already taken some, and I don't think he'll be able to stand much more."

Mekel whispers to me, "If you can hold out long enough, I think I can break us free and we can fight him off together."

I don't know how much I can trust someone who was tormenting hopefuls for fun. But I'd rather not get someone killed out of hand who is sincerely offering to be my ally.

"Let us begin, shall we?" Jorak says. "Now, first question. Your superior is a fine leader. He trusts you and you like him. You have an opportunity to kill him. What do you do?"

So that's what this so-called "test" is going to be about. Well, it's nice to know that he's going to make it obvious what answers he expects. "I wouldn't kill him," I reply, bracing myself against the inevitable torture.

"Wrong," Jorak says. "You're supposed to kill him and take his place."

Force Lightning shoots from Jorak's fingertips and strikes me, ripping through my body in terrible agony. At least it doesn't last long. Still, it continues to ache even after it stops. And that was only the first question.

"That's stupid, you know," I comment. "The Sith will destroy themselves before anyone else has a chance to with that sort of attitude."

Jorak ignores me. "Second question. A group of people are being attacked. They offer you a reward to help them. What do you do?"
"I take the reward and help them," I reply.

"Wrong!" Jorak says. "You're supposed to take the reward and leave them to their fate anyway."

Another barrage of Force Lightning. Torment burning through every nerve. Such pain... I really don't like being on the receiving end of this shit.

"That would be dishonest," I say. "I am a man of my word."

"Third question. You discover some ancient, forgotten knowledge. Do you share it to strengthen the Sith as a whole, or keep it to yourself?"

"I share it," I reply.

More electrical torture tears through my body. So... much pain. I can already feel myself weakening. I don't know if I can hold out long enough for Mekel to do anything, if he's even going to do anything at all.

"Fourth question," Jorak goes on. "Your apprentice is loyal and competent, but has made a serious error in judgment that costs you. What do you do?"

"I forgive him," I say.

"What are you, a light-loving Jedi?" Jorak says in disgust, sending another blast of Force Lightning into me. "Last question. You're dying. Do you pass on your knowledge to your apprentice, or allow it to die with you?"

"I'll tell my apprentice everything I can before I die," I reply.

"Tsk, you make a terrible Sith," Jorak says.

Lightning shoots through my flesh one last time. Such agony... I can't take anymore of this. It's too much... Blackness overtakes me.

I wake with a soft groan. Still can't move. Open my eyes. Jorak's hideous face. I was kind of hoping that I could hold out long enough, but I died on the last question? What rotten luck.

"Good morning," Jorak says to me brightly. "I am Jorak Uln, formerly the headmaster of the academy. I'm sure you've heard of me."

"I've heard of you," I reply. "I also believe you got thrown out for being incompetent."

"What sort of lies has my former apprentice been spreading about me?" Jorak says.

He proceeds to explain his little test again, and I'm only half listening to him. I should try this again. And try to maintain consciousness this time.

"First question," Jorak says. "The man above you is a good leader, and he trusts you. You have a chance to kill him. What will you do?"

"Well, since he's obviously let his guard down, I'll put a 'Kick Me' sign on his back," I reply. "He'll appreciate the joke."

"Not funny," Jorak says. The expected blast of lightning rips through me. I've got to try to hold out better this time.
"Second question. A group of innocents are under attack. They offer you credits to assist them. What will you do?"

"I don't really need any credits for helping them, since I'll probably find plenty just looting the bodies of their attackers," I reply. "But I'm never one to turn down credits. And hey, chance to kill people without consequence."

"Close, but no," Jorak says. He raises his hand and shoots more electricity at me. My body spasms under the pain.

"Third question. You've come upon some powerful secrets. What will you do with it? Share it, or keep it to yourself?"

"Secrets are always best when they're shared," I say lightly.

Another blast of lightning. Such terrible pain. Am I going to need to let Mekel die in order to get out of this situation? I'm not scared of dying, myself, but I'm just going to keep waking up in this trap if I don't find a way out of here.

"Fourth question," Jorak goes on. "Your student is capable and dependable, but he's made a grave mistake that ends up hurting you. What will you do?"

"Hmm, that's a tough one," I reply. "I think I'll punish him by taking away his porno stash and making him share a room with a Wookiee."

"That's pretty evil, but no, sorry," Jorak says, shocking me again with Force Lightning. "Last question. You are about to die. Will you pass on your knowledge to your student, or let it die with you?"

"Neither," I reply. "I'm not going to die, obviously. I'm far too badass for that."

Jorak stares at me for a moment. "I'm surprised. You actually managed to get one of them right." He turns and sends a bolt of lightning into Mekel instead. "That was a trick question. A true Sith never dies."

I look at him in surprise. That was intended to be a joke. I didn't intend to get Mekel tortured in my place. But perhaps it's just as well, as we're both still alive.

"Hmm," Jorak says. "One out of five questions right. No, I do believe you still fail." He waves a hand, releasing Mekel. "Run along now, Mekel. Even you managed to make a better Sith than this one."

"Or I could use the Force to free him and we'll kill you together!" Mekel says.

I can move again. My whole body still aches from Jorak's torture, but at least now I can fight back. And I'm pissed. My lightsabers are in my hands in an instant, and rage pours through me.

"What?" Jorak exclaims. "This is preposterous! You're not supposed to turn against the teacher! Detention for both of you!"

He tries to shoot another blast of Force Lightning at me, but this time I block it with my green lightsaber. At the same time, I slash into him with my red lightsaber, putting all my hate into the blow. I cut straight through him and very nearly bisect him diagonally.

Rage slowly drains from me as I realize he's dead. I put my lightsabers away and look over to Mekel.
"Are you alright?"

"Yeah," Mekel says. "I-- I'll be fine, I think. I can't believe you did that for me. Why would you get yourself tortured just to help me?"

"You offered to be my ally," I say. "Unlike most of the Sith, I think it's bloody stupid to kill your own allies."

"But how could you be sure that I wouldn't betray you afterward?" Mekel wonders.

"I wasn't," I say. "But life gets awfully lonely if I go around being so paranoid that I can never trust anyone. Trusting people lets you sleep better at night. So it might get you killed in your sleep if you make a mistake. But it's a mistake worth making, I think."

"You know, I used to think being a Sith would be great," Mekel says. "But then I ran into Jorak, and I'm not so sure anymore."

"It's just as well," I say. "The Sith destroyed themselves before, and at the rate they're going, they're likely to do so again." I look at him and give a crooked grin. "Besides. Darth Mekel would have been a terrible name."

Mekel chuckles softly. "I don't really think I'm cut out for the Jedi, either, though. Can I even turn away from the Dark Side at this point? I've done some bad things, hurt a lot of people..."

"So have I," I reply. "But there's always the chance to choose differently. I decided to choose a path away from both the Jedi and the Sith. And to embrace both the Light Side and the Dark."

"Can you even do that?" Mekel says, looking at me wide-eyed.

"I can, and I have," I say, grinning. "You're welcome to join me, if you like."

"Really?" Mekel says.

I nod. "My little group is growing, one by one. But I won't turn away anyone who wants to learn, or share knowledge, or just be friends."

"Friends..." Mekel says thoughtfully, then chuckles. "You know, that might be nice."

I search Jorak's body and the tomb for valuables. I find an ancient Sith tablet on the body, but otherwise not much of interest here. Mekel and I then head back to the academy. In the main hall, standing across from Uthar Wynn, I see a robed green Twi'lek, looking like he's waiting for me. One of the rescued students? What is he doing here?

"You!" the Twi'lek exclaims, drawing his red lightsaber at me. "I'm going to kill you, Revan. You have a lot to pay for!"

Damn it. If he wanted to be upset over my identity, why did he have to come confront me here? I won't be able to spare him and still maintain my cover without drawing way too much suspicion. Provided he hasn't completely blown my cover anyway.

I draw my lightsabers and face off with him without replying. I'm angry. Angry at him, angry at the situation, angry at the lack of good choices. There are always choices. I don't have to kill him. He's a good person, and doesn't deserve to die just because he's angry about what I did as Darth Revan. That's understandable. And yet, I'm going to kill him nonetheless.
Having chosen to kill him, I let my rage take over my actions and slash at him aggressively, showing no mercy. I'm far above him in dueling skill, and he's no match for me when I'm not wrestling with the consequences of the situation. I strike him down swiftly and decisively.

I look down at his body, putting on a mask to hide my guilt. I must not let Uthar Wynn see that. Once the thrill of the fight is gone, I feel terrible over what I've done.

"I should have restrained him better, obviously," I grumble.

"Why did he think you're Darth Revan?" Uthar Wynn asks me.

"I'm wearing Darth Revan's armor," I say, smirking. "I bought it from a Rodian for five thousand credits. It was quite the bargain."

"Ah," Uthar says, chuckling.

"I'm going to need to have a word with my crew about this," I say. "Letting prisoners escape is no good."

"Indeed," Uthar says in agreement. "Not to mention allowing him to get his hands on a lightsaber. He came back a while ago, waiting for you to return. I was going to confront him and kill him myself, but there was such anger radiating from him that I decided to leave him be and see how things turned out."

"By the way," I say. "Mekel and I killed Jorak Uln. I'm assuming that was the old hermit you mentioned? Also, he had this tablet." I hand it over to him. I certainly don't want the thing.

"Did you, now?" Uthar says. "And Lashowe told me you helped her kill a tuk'ata den mother, as well."

"Really?" I reply. "Wow, that's a surprise. I thought she was just going to take the credit for herself."

"Yes, I thought it was strange, also," Uthar says. "Perhaps you said or did something to her to convince her otherwise." He shrugs. "And you say Mekel helped you? I'll award him prestige as well, then."

"That's alright," Mekel says. "I'm withdrawing from the running."

"I see," Uthar says. "Very well, then. You're behind enough that you weren't likely to win, anyway. Planning to acknowledge Lexen's superiority gracefully?"

"Pretty much, yeah," Mekel says. "I've got nothing on this guy."

"Hey, Mekel," I say lightly. "Why don't we head over to my ship for lunch?"

Uthar visibly pales at my suggestion, which is impressive considering how pale he already is.

"Sure, why not?" Mekel says.

"Would you bring the body?" I say, gesturing to the dead Twi'lek absently.

Uthar looks about ready to vomit. Strange, you'd think that a Sith would be less disturbed by hobbies like that. I'm disgusted by the thought myself, but I can certainly handle thinking about it well enough to act. Mekel casts a brief puzzled look, but goes over to pick up the corpse anyway.

Mekel and I exit the academy. Once we're outside, I burst into laughter. "What's so funny?" Mekel
"For that matter, why did Uthar Wynn look so disturbed by that?"

"Well, you see," I say between snorts. "I convinced him that me and my crew are can ni bals and we've been kidnapping and eating people."

Mekel stares at me incredulously for several moments, and then joins me in my laughter. "That's why you wanted me to bring the body."

"If I were thinking ahead and less pissed off about the situation, I might have just tried to knock him unconscious instead of striking him in such a way that he's so obviously dead," I say, sighing.

"So who is this guy, anyway?" Mekel wonders.

"One of the people I was trying to recruit," I say. "By the way. I am actually Darth Revan. Just so we're clear."

Mekel blinks at me. "Seriously? But I thought Revan was supposed to be dead."

"Yeah, I get that a lot," I reply. "I'll explain everything when we get back to my ship."

Since Bastila obviously didn't do a good enough job of it to keep someone from coming at me with a lightsaber, I suppose I'll have to do it myself every time. No, I really shouldn't blame Bastila for it. That wouldn't be fair to her.

We reach the Ebon Hawk and climb on board. Mekel lays the corpse down on the floor. I can practically feel the stares of everyone present upon me.

"You-- You killed my brother!" the other Twi'lek says in shock.

"He attacked me," I reply. "Right in front of Uthar Wynn. And very nearly revealed my identity. It took some quick talking to convince him that I'm not Revan."

"I don't care if you healed my lekku," the Twi'lek says. "You still killed my brother! I'll get you for this! I will avenge him!"

He draws his lightsaber and squares off with me right there in the operations room. "Oh, for fuck's sake," I mutter, drawing my own blades to parry. "I don't want to kill you, too!"

"I was wary about it when we were told that you were actually Darth Revan. But I thought, oh, he healed me, so he can't be all that bad. But then you turn around and murder my brother!"

"I didn't murder him," I argue. "He attacked me." I block another attack without missing a beat.

"Monster! Murderer!"

He's not listening. I sigh softly. I chose to kill his brother, and now I must face the consequences of that. I can't keep him locked up, and if I just put him ashore, I risk blowing my cover and having him trying to come after me again.

"Do you really want to do this?" I say quietly. "You aren't going to kill me, you know. There's no way this can end but in your own defeat."

I could just restrain him until he calms down. But that won't make things better. I'll still have killed his brother. He's going to hate me for the rest of his life for killing his brother.

But perhaps there's an alternative. "If you strike me down," I say. "I will become more powerful than
you could possibly imagine."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"I don't know, but it sounded good," I say with a shrug. I turn off my lightsabers and stop defending myself. "If you want to kill me for slaying your brother, then go ahead. I won't try to stop you."

Much as I dislike the idea of going back to be tortured some more, maybe I can find a way to avoid this situation entirely. The Twi'lek looks at me uncertainly, and for a moment I wonder if he's actually going to have the nerve to go through with it, or if one of my crewmates will try to stop him. But rage gets the better of him, and he growls as he cuts through my body with his lightsaber.

I groan as I wake up back in the tomb. Well, looks like it's time to get tortured again. I open my eyes and look at Jorak Uln, but I'm grinning. This is the first time I've gone back intentionally to try to change something, and it's nice to know that it worked. Being dead would have been something of a downer... although honestly, I'd have probably deserved it for murdering a good man, anyway.

I listen to Jorak's tedious speeches and go through his little test again. Ugh... so much pain. And here I'm putting myself through all this just to save the lives of two people whose names I don't even know. Is this really worth it?

"Last question," Jorak says. "You are going to die. Should you pass on your knowledge to your apprentice, or have it die with you?"

"A true Sith doesn't die," I reply. "Even if something somehow manages to kill me, I will come back again anyway."

"Good answer," Jorak says. "But one out of five is still a failure. Mekel, you're free to go. Run along now."

Repeating the conversation I had with Mekel. I must be patient. I know what I said, anyway, and how he reacted to it. He deserves better than for me to get impatient with him.

We head back to the academy, and sure enough, the green Twi'lek is there waiting for me again. Before he can even get a word out, I raise my hand and shock him with Force Lightning. Trying to be careful to use just enough to knock him out without actually killing him. I can still sense his life in there afterward, so I think I succeeded at that.

"What was that all about?" Uthar Wynn wonders.

"It's so bothersome when people run off," I reply. "I'm going to need to get him back to my ship in time for lunch."

"Er, right," Uthar says.

"Oh, and I killed Jorak Uln," I tell him. "Here's this tablet he had. I didn't eat him, though. He looked kind of gross. Also, Mekel's going to be my lackey from now on. Mekel! Carry this meat back to the ship for me, will you?"

"Certainly, Master," Mekel says, going over to pick up the unconscious Twi'lek.

"Right, carry on then," Uthar says, looking kind of ill.

Once we're outside of the academy again, I say to Mekel, "By the way. This Twi'lek is one of my
new apprentices. But it seems I didn't vet him well enough to make sure he wasn't going to flip out when he found out that I'm actually Darth Revan. I'll explain when we get back to the ship. I made sure to just knock him out, but I've got Uthar thinking that I'm a psychotic cannibal."

"I... see," Mekel says, blinking at me.

"For the record, I'm not actually a psychotic cannibal," I add. "But it was the best way to explain why I've been secreting away anyone I can find that's questioning whether they really want to be a Sith or not."

"Ah," Mekel says.

We get back to the Ebon Hawk and climb aboard. Mekel places the unconscious Twi'lek on the floor. His brother comes out and immediately jumps to the wrong conclusion. "You murderer! You killed my brother!"

"He's just unconscious," I say. "Calm down. I had to knock him out to get him back here safely."

The Twi'lek calms down a little as he moves over to see that I'm telling the truth. I close my eyes and let the Force through me to heal the damage caused by my Force Lightning. It's hard not to feel compassion for someone I just got myself killed and tortured in order to save.

The unconscious man comes to with a groan. "What happened..." he murmurs, then his eyes open wide as he sees me. "Revan! You monster!"

I sigh. "Yeah, I'm such a monster for going out of my way to save you even though you were trying to kill me and very nearly blew my cover. Will you relax already?"

"But... I don't understand," the Twi'lek says. "You killed so many people..."

"I know," I say. "And I'll kill plenty more people in the future. But I generally prefer to restrict my killing to enemies rather than allies."

"But you betrayed the Republic," he points out.

_You will crush them in my name._

I grit my teeth and try to block out the thought. "I did not choose to do so."

_I'm helpless against this darkness._

"What do you mean?"

_Consuming me. Stifling my will._

I rub my temples. "I was being mind controlled by a powerful Dark Side user."

_The face of evil..._

"How could someone be that powerful?" the Twi'lek says. "You were supposed to be one of the greatest Jedi ever to live!"

_I cannot escape. I'm helpless against this. For all my power, I can't fight this._

"Quiet!" Bastila says, stepping in. "Don't you see what this is doing to him?" She rushes over to my side and puts her hand on my shoulder. "Fight it off, Lexen. They're just memories. They can't hurt
you anymore."

"I-- I'm alright," I say unsteadily.

"Maybe you should get some rest," Bastila suggests.

I don't think she realizes just how little that really helps. When I sleep, I tend to dream in nightmares of what was and what may yet be. But I don't care to argue. I just want to get to my journal and write down what's happened today and see what I've forgotten. It appears that I've lost memory of my recent trip to Tatooine. I only wish that I could forget him...
This world is strange. There's two suns in the sky, and it's really hot. There's a lot of sand.

I wonder how I'm supposed to find my father. All I know is his name is Anakin Skywalker. Mom didn't even tell me what he looked like. Well, I guess all there is to do is ask around if anyone knows him. I'm sure somebody will be able to point me the right way.

After my questions don't lead me to my father, I do get someone who has at least heard of a Skywalker before. "Hmm, I don't know of any Anakin, but there's a Luke Skywalker living down at the Lars homestead with his aunt and uncle. He's a little younger than you, I think. About eight or nine. A cousin of yours, maybe?"

"Maybe," I say. "Thank you, sir."

I manage to catch a lift from Anchorhead to the Lars farmstead. Trying to walk across the desert by myself would've been a pain.

"Excuse me, sir," I say. "I'm told this is where Luke Skywalker lives?"

"He's my nephew," Mr. Lars replies. "What, are you one of his friends?"

"Well, not exactly," I say. "I really came here looking for my father, Anakin Skywalker, but I haven't been able to find him and I'm all alone..."

I wake, and head out for breakfast. I think I hear arguing for a moment, but the minute everyone realizes that I'm awake and within earshot, they go quiet suddenly. I don't know how I feel about people being afraid of me, but at least it beats listening to them argue over pointless crap. If they choose to hate or fight one another, they can at least wait until I'm off the ship to do it.

I head back to the academy. I think there still might be some tombs I haven't poked my nose into yet, although I'm not really looking forward to it. Right now, I'd just like to get off this planet and go somewhere, anywhere, other than here. This place is really starting to get to me, I think.

"I think congratulations are in order, Lexen Skywalker," Uthar Wynn tells me.

"Do I have enough prestige yet?" I ask.

"Very nearly, but it would appear that you no longer have any competition in the running anyway, making it a moot point," Uthar says.

"What happened to Lashowe?" I wonder.

"After discovering how far ahead you were, she gave a distraught rant and withdrew her name, and then went off to the cantina to get drunk," Uthar replies.

I snort softly. "Clearly she gives up too easily. But I won't complain. What now?"

"It's fine for your final test," Uthar Wynn says. "You will enter the tomb of Naga Sadow. You must go alone. You must pass through the dangers of the tomb and retrieve a Sith lightsaber located in the very back."
"Very well," I say.

Uthar, Yuthura, and I head over to the tomb in question, and I head inside, with the other two waiting outside. Well, I'd best not take too long in here. Yuthura might get bored with waiting for me and decide to try to take on Uthar herself, and she's just not that good. Or Uthar get bored and kill her anyway. Damned idiotic Sith.

I remember there being a pair of terentateks in here, and somehow avoiding them before. Sure enough, there they are, directly in the path of where I need to go. I'm a little leery about going head-to-head with two of those things, but at least I'm not wounded at the moment, well-rested, and in good physical condition. If I can't beat them as I am now, then I'm not going to beat them.

I pull out my lightsabers and charge into battle. I let my bloodlust take over. The Dark Side will give me strength. But I mustn't neglect my defense, either. There's two of them, so it's doubly important.

And since there's two of them, I have a hard time defending against both of them at once, even with two lightsabers. With a lucky swipe, one of them gets in a good strike on my right leg. There's a sickening crunch as the bone snaps beneath the blow. I stumble and fall to the ground.

I desperately manage to hold them off for only a few moments longer before they tear me apart.

I wake with a groan. Well, that could have gone better. I sigh and pull out my journal and scan through it. I've forgotten the trip to Kashyyyk this time. I read it over again to refresh my memory, eat some breakfast, and head out to the academy.

Let's try the tomb of Naga Sadow again. I follow Uthar and Yuthura out to the tomb and head inside. I don't really care to go toe-to-toe with the pair of terentateks, considering what happened last time. This looks like a job for explosives.

I approach the room where the two terentateks are, and pull out a thermal detonator. This should take care of them both readily enough. I arm the device and toss it inside, and duck down the corridor and behind a wall. The blast echoes behind me. I wait a few more moments to make sure I don't hear or sense anything else afterward before going to check on the room.

Sure enough, the two terentateks have been effectively vaporized. But so have a couple of support pillars that they were standing near. The ceiling starts to crack as I'm entering the room. Shit. I try to dart my way through the room to get to the Star Map. Maybe I'll find another way out if I can get in there. The ceiling rumbles and drops into the room just behind me, and I narrowly avoid having tons of stone fall on top of my head.

I really should have learned my lesson about using high explosives in potentially unstable underground areas a few days ago. Berating myself for being an idiot, I continue on into the tomb.

I hack the computer to bypass a tedious Towers of Hanoi puzzle. I can only assume that Naga Sadow, who wasn't even buried here anyway, intentionally built this "tomb" as a decoy to hide the Star Map within. Even though I doubt he even realized what it was, besides some shiny old Dark Side artifact.

I pocket a couple of interesting grenades, hop over a pool of acid, and reach the Star Map room. Copy over the data I'm looking for, grab the fairly crappy lightsaber, and then it's time to try to find a way out of here again.

The entire passage back out of the tomb is blocked off by rubble. I explore the portions I can more thoroughly, but fail to find any other way out. It appears that I've managed to neatly trap myself
Inside.

Alright, there's got to be something I can do here. I return to the site of the cave-in. I sit down and close my eyes, and call upon the Force. Telekinesis isn't really my strong suit, though, but I've got to try nonetheless. The stone shifts and wobbles a little bit under my attempts, and I manage to move a few pebbles, but otherwise, I have no success in clearing the cave-in.

Okay, that didn't work out. New plan, then. The best solution to any problem caused by too many explosives would be... more explosives. I pull out all the explosives that I have on me and pile them up around the cave-in in hopes of blasting enough rock clear to get out of here. Once they're all in place, I get myself a safe distance away and detonate them.

Once the dust clears, I return to the cave-in location to see how I've done. Hmm. It appears that all I've succeeded in doing is collapsing even more of this already-unstable old tomb. If I ever should run into Naga Sadow, I make a mental note to have a word with him about hiring better architects and construction workers. What kind of shoddy work is it if your ancient Sith tomb can't withstand one medium-strength thermal detonator?

Well, in a word, this sucks. I'm trapped, but still alive. Likely to die from dehydration or suffocation in a few days, whichever comes first. The bad thing is, if I pass out here, and die afterward, I'll wake up again still trapped in here. And slowly lose more of my mind each time. It's one thing knowing you're going to die, but quite another to be trapped in a repeating cycle with no way out.

Focus. There has to be a way out of here. Maybe my friends can get me out. Okay, so I'm supposed to do this by myself, but I already got what I came here and I don't really care if I forfeit my chances with the Sith Academy, especially considering the fact that I was planning on killing Uthar Wynn anyway.

I pull out my comm link. "Lexen to Ebon Hawk. Do you read? Come in, Ebon Hawk."

No answer. Maybe there's too much solid rock in the way or something. Or the Sith are jamming the signal. Or they're too busy arguing with one another to reply.

Fine, if technology isn't going to work, then I'll try the Force. I resume meditating. I was never very good at this, either. I reach out with the Force, trying to contact my companions. Bastila? Bastila, can you hear me?

Again, nothing. I sigh. I obviously need more practice with the Force, rather than just my lightsabers and the few Force abilities that I can use reliably. Force Lightning is fine and all, and healing is great when I can actually get it to work, but I feel like something of a failure as a Jedi or a Sith if I can't manage other things. What kind of balance is there to the Force if I'm better at killing things than anything else?

Bah, what does this balance nonsense even matter? The only problem here is that I haven't destroyed things well enough. Annoyance leads to frustration, frustration leads to anger, anger leads to bloodlust, bloodlust leads to explosions...

No. I must calm myself. This place is strong with the Dark Side, and it's unbalancing me. I need to find a way out of here. I know, lightsabers can cut through almost anything. I'll use a lightsaber to cut my way out of here.

I pull out my red lightsaber and, wielding it in both hands, proceed to try to cut a way past the rubble, or through a random wall, make a new door... But there's too much. A lightsaber isn't intended as a mining tool. There's many meters of solid rock behind these walls. I'm getting nowhere fast. All I'm
doing is growing increasingly frustrated and going insane.

Finally, I give up, sighing and slumping down against a wall. Nothing I've tried helps. I'm just not getting out of here like this.

Perhaps I should try traveling back to a point before I became trapped in here. But it's difficult to use that power, and I risk returning to the wrong point. The best solution, it would seem to me, would be to simply kill myself before I fall asleep or lose consciousness, so that I can start this day over again.

I wonder how my life got so strange that killing myself started to sound like a good idea.

Well, no help for that, I suppose. It's the most reliable way back. I activate my red lightsaber again. This should be quick enough, I suppose. I'm still really leery about doing something like this. My heart pounds. I'm going to fucking kill myself. What if it doesn't work if I kill myself? What if I actually wind up dead?

I come to the conclusion that actually ending up dead is still better than being trapped forever repeating the same day where I'm starving to death down in the dark. And that I doubt my power will simply stop working randomly because of the circumstances. I turn my lightsaber on myself and, before I can lose my nerve, slice off my own head.

I wake, clutching my head impulsively. I really don't want to ever have to do something like that again. But at least I'm alive and back on the Ebon Hawk. Ugh. Dying is usually over pretty quick. I'm usually dead no more than a few seconds after I realize I'm about to die. Having so much time to think about it and dwell on it, on the other hand...

I shake my head and try to put it out of my mind, and reach over to pick up my journal. What did I forget this time? The Endar Spire again, from the looks of things. As I read it over again, one thing sticks out at me. How did I manage to sneak up on that Dark Jedi who was fighting Kara Vir? I'm not generally quite that stealthy. Did I unconsciously use the Force to keep him from noticing me?

Why do I even need to kill the two terentateks at all? I could just sneak in, get what I'm looking for, and sneak back out again. All things considered, it's not a worse plan than anything else I've tried, and is far less likely to get me trapped in a cave-in facing a slow death by starvation. The worst thing that could happen is they'll spot me and kill me anyway. Although I'm pretty sure they're resistant to Force powers, anyway.

I go get breakfast for starters, and then go to check our supplies. In between the people still sleeping in the cargo hold. I decide to practice being "stealthy" by willing them not to hear me. Don't wake up. I'm not here. Don't notice me. Don't pay attention to the fact that I'm so intent upon keeping you asleep that I almost trip over you. Sure enough, we've got an extra stealth belt in storage. And I even manage to avoid waking anyone up, too. Double win.

I head on out to the academy to see Uthar Wynn and try the tomb of Naga Sadow again. With the room containing the two terentateks ahead, I activate the cloaking device. It's an extra measure of security. Can't be too stealthy, after all, and one or the other should keep them from noticing me long enough to get past them.

Alright, terentateks. Don't see me. Don't hear me. Don't notice me. And especially don't rip me apart and eat me.

I manage to make it through the room without alerting the terentateks to my presence. I go down another full corridor before I'm willing to relax, however, heart still pounding in my chest. So far so
good. Hopefully it'll work so well on the way out, too.

I bypass the stupid Towers of Hanoi puzzle again, pocket the grenades, jump over the acid, download the Star Map, grab the lightsaber, and head on out again. Now for the hard part. Getting out past those terentateks again.

I activate the stealth field generator belt again and head out into the room, practically holding my breath as I go. Please don't notice me. I've already died enough times today. Don't see me. Don't tear me to shreds. Don't break my bones. Don't bite my face off.

As I'm halfway across the room, one of the creatures lifts up its head and sniffs at the air, and looks directly toward me. Shit, what did they do, smell me? They start making rumbling noises at one another. The beasts both turn to converge upon me.

Dispensing with stealth, I break into a headlong run for the far door. Claws swipe at me. Teeth snap at me. I tumble through the doorway. It's too small for them to get through, but they still reach their forelegs out and try to snatch at me. I only narrowly avoid their claws again and keep running till I reach the end of the corridor.

Panting, I stop to catch my breathe before returning to Uthar and Yuthura. Let my pounding heart calm a little. I'm tired, both from my exertion just now and most likely from dying multiple times today already.

Now I'd just better hope that I don't get killed by Uthar Wynn, too, because I don't think I could stand to try to sneak past those terentateks again. I doubt he's going to let me take a quick nap before I attempt to ambush him. Maybe I should have poisoned him after all. Ugh, what am I coming to if I seriously just thought that? Better would be to just let Yuthura help. I've little doubt that we could manage to take him down together. Dying honorably just doesn't really have the same impact when one keeps coming back from the dead.

Ah, hell with it. If there's one thing I'm good at, it's killing people. I'm going to fight that bastard and show him who the better lightsaber duelist really is. I'm not going to let some minor inconvenience like dying get in the way of demonstrating my superiority and having a great fight. If that happens, then I'll just suck it up and get past the terentateks again, and then I might consider killing him two-on-one with Yuthura's help.

"You're back," Uthar says. "Have you been successful?"

I pull out the Sith lightsaber from the final chamber and hand it over to him. "Yeah," I say. "And you can have this back. I'd rather just keep my own."

Uthar chuckles and takes it back. "Very well, suit yourself. The task was merely to retrieve it to prove that you could do so. Now, there is one last test before you."

"What is it?" I ask unnecessarily.

"Now you must duel my apprentice, Yuthura Ban, to the death," Uthar says.

"No," I reply lightly.

"You refuse?" Uthar says.

I grin ferally at him as I pull out my lightsabers. "I already made a deal with Yuthura to kill you instead. And honestly, Yuthura's no match for me. You, on the other hand, I can hope for a good fight out of."

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Uthar brings out his own red lightsaber. "Very well. I think you are overestimating your chances, however. But if you wish to die, I will be happy to oblige."

My grin widens as I parry his first attack. "Oh, by the way. There's something you should know."

"And what might that be?" Uthar says, swinging his lightsaber at me.

I smoothly block it without missing a beat. "I'm Darth Revan."

"Impossible," Uthar says.

He shoots Force Lightning at me, which I catch with my green lightsaber. I try to take advantage of the opening with my red lightsaber, but he's on his guard and blocks my attack swiftly. Nonetheless, I've made him more cautious about trying to use his Force powers. We continue to exchange blows, striking, blocking, slashing, parrying.

"You are... far more skilled than one would expect a raw recruit to be," Uthar says. "Or even a former Jedi."

I chuckle softly. "And I don't need a free hand to use Force Lightning."

I call upon the Dark Side, fueling it with fury and hate, and surround my body with crackling electricity. *I am the eye of the storm.* Uthar takes a step back, trying to avoid the rising storm. I send out wildly flying bolts of lightning toward him. He manages to block one, but another strikes him in the leg. Not powerful enough to kill him outright, but clearly painful.

"You--" Uthar says, eyes widening. "You seriously are Revan?"

"I am," I say. "Lexen Skywalker is my birth name. I suppose it makes sense not to recognize me without that mask. But I am wearing my old armor."

"Revan," Uthar says. "My lord. If you spare me, I will build up this academy in your name and lead Korriban against your former apprentice!"

I snort softly. "I don't like the half of what you're teaching or encouraging here."

"I will change the curriculum to please you, my lord!" Uthar begs.

"Begging is unbecoming of a Sith," I say flatly. "Do you yield?"

He can't even get close enough to attack me right now without being zapped by my storm. I'm rather hoping that he doesn't surrender and will fight me to the death, however. I'm itching with the desire to kill him. Raw anger and hatred coursing through my body. Tingling. Thrilling. One can forget just how good the Dark Side feels.

"I yield, Lord Revan," Uthar says, dropping to his knees before me and turning off his lightsaber.

"You're lucky that it's not my policy to kill my allies," I say, letting my storm die down and putting my lightsabers away. "But if you will choose to swear your loyalty to me and do exactly as I say, I will let you live."

"What about me?" Yuthura says.

"I have a proposal for you as well," I say. "Alright, you know what? I've a lot to say and we're still standing around in a cold, dark tomb. Can we go somewhere more comfortable and sit and talk things over without trying to kill one another?"
"Very well," Uthar says, clearly relieved. "Let us return to the academy, then."

We head back to a room with comfortable chairs that we can sit in. I'm not about to fully relax and let down my guard yet, but it's still a relief as I'm fairly well exhausted by this point.

"Alright, where to begin," I say. "Okay, for starters, don't bother trying to betray and kill me. Even if you succeed, I'll just come back from the dead and kill you anyway. Malak tried to kill me, and I am so going to kick his ass for that."

Both Uthar and Yuthura stare at me. Ah, speechlessness is a good place to start. Gives me a chance to say what I have to say without having to stop and answer questions just yet.

"So, let me just say right now that I think a lot of the policies the Sith have been following lately are just plain fucking stupid," I say. "This whole business of killing people on your own side. Because they made a minor error, because you want a promotion, because of a whim, and so forth. Stupid. Fucking stupid. If you take that to its natural conclusion, I'll be the only Sith left alive because everyone else is weaker than me." I smirk. "And what, honestly, would be the point in that?"

"You... may have a point with that..." Uthar concedes quietly.

"Now, I understand that there's only so much you will be able to do for the moment, as you'll still need to pay lip service to Malak's regime," I say, and then grin ferally. "But he's not going to be in power for much longer."

"You know," Yuthura says. "That murderous look you get in your eyes whenever you mention Malak? It scares even me."

I chuckle darkly. "Yeah, well, he kind of pissed me off. So, Yuthura, how would you like to head up a new school that I'm starting up somewhere that isn't Korriban? I've got a collection of new students aboard my ship that are going to need someone to teach them, and I can't do it all myself."

Uthar raises an eyebrow at me. "You're not really a cannibal, are you."

"Heh," I say. "Nope. I wasn't eating people. I was recruiting them."

"I see," Uthar says.

"I've taken up a number of people who didn't seem fully committed to the Sith or the Dark Side, or were about to be rejected due to unfortunate standards anyway," I explain. "Doing so will both weaken the Jedi and strengthen me. Now, I obviously have nothing against the Dark Side, but the Light Side has its uses, too. As does, you know, things like common courtesy, not murdering your allies, and so forth."

Uthar frowns at me. "But..."

I hold up my hand and interrupt him. "The Sith have been gravely underestimating the importance of diplomacy. Malak would rather destroy than conquer. He'd rather be feared than loved. I'm the opposite. People who fear you will put their own lives first and look for any way to avoid your wrath. People who love you will happily risk their own lives for you. If I play this right, by the end of this, the entire galaxy will love me."

"I... see..." Uthar says uneasily.

"I wouldn't think a Sith would be opposed to galactic conquest," I say with a crooked grin. "Especially considering I'll let you live, and my new policies will ensure that anyone that attempts to
murder you for your position won't live to reap the benefits of their betrayal."

"And you want me to teach at a new school?" Yuthura says with interest.

I nod to her. "It's a great opportunity." I look to Uthar. "You'll continue to teach the Dark Side here. But anyone who seems to have doubts, or you think is too weak and compassionate, rather than simply killing them, send them to Yuthura's school instead. Keep their talents in-house, as it were."

"Very well," Uthar says reluctantly.

"Where will this new school be located?" Yuthura asks.

"I haven't decided yet," I say. "I'll look into a few places when I leave here. I don't trust leaving my new students here in the meantime, however, especially if Malak shows up, and my ship is getting awfully crowded. Could you, perhaps, be able to take them somewhere in another ship?"

"Of course, my lord," Yuthura says. "There's a ship available now that can take them."

"Oh, by the way," I say. "My new title is Stormseeker. You can call me that."

"Stormseeker?" Uthar says, raising an eyebrow.

"Just go with it," I say, smirking. "It beats the whole Darth thing."

"As you say, Stormseeker," Uthar replies.

"And one more thing," I say. "I'll electrocute anyone I find is involved in slavery. That's one thing I will not tolerate under any circumstances."

"Yes, Stormseeker," Uthar says. "I will make certain that any slaves I find out about are expediently freed."

"Good," I say. "Yuthura, go pack your things and meet me at the docking area."

Yuthura says, "Yes, Stormseeker."

I return to the Ebon Hawk to let everyone know what's going to happen. My crew and passengers disembark the ship, and we all gather around in the landing area to discuss who is going where.

"Yuthura, you'll be heading for Dxun for now," I say. "I'll head over that way myself once we're done dealing with Manaan." I turn toward my regular crew. "I'd like someone else to go with them." Mainly because I'm not certain how far I trust them yet. "Any volunteers?"

"What, trade one dangerous, monster-infested forest for another?" Jolee says. "No thanks. Besides, I'm not done following you around yet."

"I'll go," Carth offers.

"I understand you want to stick with your kid," I say. "But if you go, who'll pilot the ship?"

"I'm sure I can manage that well enough," Canderous says.


As we're packing, moving around people and supplies, Carth approaches me and says quietly, "I can't believe you didn't just kill every Sith on the planet, though."
I smirk. "They're still people, Carth, regardless of ideological differences."

"That's what I mean," Carth says. "Knowing you, I expected you to just slaughter them all, knowing that nobody would mind if you killed them. Since when have you turned down an opportunity to kill people without consequences?"

I snicker softly. "Come on, Carth, you know I'm not that bad."

"It's like I don't know you anymore!" Carth exclaims. "Here you are, sparing people and helping people left and right! You'd better be careful, or people might think that you've become a redeemed Jedi or something!"

I laugh aloud and clap him on the shoulder. "Thanks, friend, I needed the laugh. You better get to your ship. Dustil's waiting for you."

We part ways. Once everything is prepared, the Ebon Hawk takes off, and Canderous sets us a course for Manaan. I head off to the much emptier crew quarters to write in my journal and get some sleep on our way there.

Before I can lay down, however, Bastila comes in to speak with me. I smile at her and set my journal aside, and go over to hug her. "I've missed you these last few days," I say.

"At least I won't need to hide anymore on Manaan," Bastila says. "Although helping train the new recruits did keep me busy. I'm proud of what you've done on Korriban, by the way. You helped save many people who would otherwise have been killed or corrupted, all the while never falling to the Dark Side yourself."

Perhaps that's true, if only in that there was nowhere for me to "fall", exactly. I was already there to begin with. "Bastila..." I say. "You know that I freely use the Dark Side as it is, don't you?"

"I've seen you use it a couple times..." Bastila says uneasily. "And you kind of fight a little aggressively, and seem to enjoy it a bit much... But you certainly don't act like a Sith or anything. You're far too nice to people. Except when killing them, at any rate. If anything, you're proving that someone can still use the Dark Side without being outright evil..."

"Indeed," I say. "The Dark Side is destruction. The Light Side is creation. They both have their uses. But good and evil are in the hearts of people."

"I think what the Jedi tried to do to you was kind of evil, really," Bastila says. "And you've certainly done plenty of good."

"Let's get some rest, shall we? It's a long trip to Manaan," I say.

I lay down and try to get some sleep, but Bastila won't rest until she's curled up on the bunk next to me. I sigh with a small grin and put my arm around her. I wasn't going to push it, but I'm certainly not going to turn her away. I close my eyes and drift off into slumber.
The dream in this chapter is from the Wheel of Time universe.

*The White Tower is abuzz with activity, but I have no idea what's going on.*

"He came to us for help," one of the women is saying. "We're obliged to help him. We must gentle him so that he won't be a danger to himself or anyone else."

What does "gentle" mean? And why do I get the feeling that this isn't going to be as nice or pleasant as they make it sound?

"What are you going to do?" I ask.

"It's alright," the woman says. "You don't need to be afraid. We're just going to get rid of the nasty power in you before it can hurt anyone."

"What?" I say, alarmed. "It's not nasty! What is wrong with you people?"

I try to bolt in terror, but they restrain me with invisible bonds. I'm terrified. I don't want to lose my magic!

"I know you're too young to understand," she says. "But realize that this is for the best, for you and for everyone."

"No!" I'm screaming. "Let me go! Leave me alone! I just wanted to learn to use it, not lose it!"

I wake with a shudder. Now that was a particularly terrifying dream. What would happen if I were cut off from the Force? Would I really die, then? But I have to relax a little. If that's really a memory, I obviously must have been fine after all, even though I had no way to get out of the situation. And I must make a mental note for safety purposes that if I ever should happen to come upon a "White Tower" full of female Force users, that they don't like men.

"Lexen!" It's Mission, rushing into the crew quarters. "Are you awake? We've got problems!"

"What is it?" I say, bolting upright.

"A Sith interdictor ship!" Mission says. "We were pulled out of hyperspace and caught in its tractor beam!"

"Fuck," I say. "Let me get dressed."

I get up and put on my armor as quickly as possible, grab my lightsabers, and head for the cockpit.

"I can't keep fighting this, Mandalore," Canderous says. "It'll tear the ship apart."

"Let it go, Canderous," I say. "We'll fight on the inside. We'll kill every damned Sith on that ship..."
"Yes, Mandalore," Canderous says.

Canderous eases off on the engines and allows the tractor beam to reel us in like a fish. I should have been more wary that something like this would happen. We spent, what, maybe a week on Korriban? And Malak knows we're after the Star Maps, so he'd know exactly where we'd be going next, and hence exactly where to put an interdictor ship to stop us. If we'd taken a detour to Dxun with the others, this could have been avoided entirely, but it's too late for that now.

I rally the crew and make sure that everyone that can fight is armed and ready. Armor on, weapons in hand, waiting to dock.

"What about me, Stormseeker?" Neeja asks.

"Make a choice," I reply. "Fight for your freedom, or hide and risk capture? I won't judge you either way. I know you haven't had the combat training many of us have had."

Neeja swallows hard. "I will fight."

I toss her a blaster. "Aim for the Sith. And try not to hit any of us."

"Yes, Stormseeker," Neeja says diligently.

We're taken aboard the ship, and the battle is on. I wade out into the thick of the fight, lightsabers spinning. I really don't overestimate our chances here, but if I'm going down, I'm going to take as many enemies with me as I can.

We cut a swath through the Sith. But there's too many of them. I barely notice as my companions are cut down one by one. By the time I reach the bridge, I'm all alone. And Malak is there.

"You've paid a high price to get here, Revan," Malak says. "Your friends are dead. Was it worth it?"

"You'll pay for this, Malak," I reply.

I throw myself at him in a blind rage. I know I can't win. All I'm hoping for is a vaguely honorable death and the chance to try it all again. I will save them next time...

I wake. I quickly get up and get dressed. I'm busy putting on my armor when Mission comes in.

"I know," I tell her before she even has a chance to say anything. "Make sure everyone is ready."

I grab my lightsabers and head out to the main operations room to meet with the crew. Most of them are looking very nervous at the moment, with a couple notable exceptions. Besides the droids.

"We can't hope to fight off every Sith on the ship ourselves," I say. "So here's what we're going to do. We're going to allow ourselves to be captured, and then break out later."

"How will we break out if we're all captured?" Bastila wonders.

"They'll certainly pay attention to whatever the two of us might do," I say. "But they're less likely to pay attention to the droids. They're just droids, after all, right? T3, HK, between the two of you, you should be able to hack through and kill anything that gives you trouble, right?"

"Good," I say. "We'll be counting on you. Hide, avoid getting captured, stay out of trouble, and then when things have settled down enough, come for us."

The crew isn't too happy about having to surrender, but they trust me enough that when I say it would be suicide to try to fight our way through outright, they believe me.

The Ebon Hawk is brought aboard the ship, and the Sith come for us. They take our weapons away and lead us to the prison area. Bastila and I are separated from the others and locked in a pair of force cages.

"I'm sorry I got you into this, Bastila," I murmur when we're alone.

"Tell them nothing," Bastila says. "Not even for my sake."

I don't have time to say anything else before a human man steps into the room. He's familiar. I should know him. Yes, it's Saul Karath. The general who did the actual bombardment of Telos.

"I must admit," Saul says. "I'm disappointed that Carth Onasi does not appear to be with you. Were the reports of him traveling you mistaken?"

"I'm not answering any of your questions," I reply flatly, giving him a hard look.

"Oh, that's fine as well," Saul says casually. "I have these cages rigged to give you a little jolt when I feel like it. Shall I give the two of you a little taste of it right now?"

He taps two buttons on the controls, and electricity shoots through my body painfully. Ugh, it's almost as bad as Force Lightning. I look over to Bastila guiltily. I don't want to have to put her through this.

"Now, I could torture you for information, but I know how you noble types work," Saul says. "It'll bother you much more if I torture your little lady friend here instead of you. I don't know if there's actually anything between the two of you or not, but I've seen many men who simply could not stand to see anything bad happen to any woman."

I grit my teeth and don't give him the dignity of a response. He's going to torture Bastila over this? He's right. I don't know if I could stand to watch that. But she's a strong woman. Stronger than any I've ever met, except maybe Surik, and I don't remember Surik well enough to judge. Bastila told me not to worry about her and refuse to answer his questions regardless.

"I'm not playing your games, Saul," I say.

"We'll see about that when you see your lady in pain," Saul says. "Now, tell me. On what planet is the secret Jedi academy that you were trained at?"

"Not talking, Saul," I reply.

He sends another shock of electricity through Bastila's cage. I wince myself as she cries out in pain. I feel sick to my stomach. Saul continues to ask me questions, and although I suspect that he knows the answers already anyway, I refuse to say anything.

"So nice of you to let me have a little fun," Saul says, chuckling darkly. "Of course, I already knew all that. The Jedi Enclave is on Dantooine. Which, by the way, has been destroyed."

"No!" Bastila cries out.
"And you," Saul says, turning to me. "My master has given me instructions that Bastila is to be kept alive. You, however, have no such insurance. Especially given that your refusal to cooperate indicates that you will not be readily swayed to our side. So, let's see just how much you can take, shall we?"

Saul turns on the torture device, sending electricity through my body. And leaves it on. Leaves me writhing and screaming in agony. Such terrible pain. Hurting me. Hurting. Screaming. Until everything goes black.

I wake with a groan. It's never pleasant to wake up after being tortured to death. Well, okay, it's pleasant to be waking up at all. Just not so pleasant to have been tortured to death.

I get dressed quickly and head out to the main operations room, bypassing Mission on her way to the crew quarters. I'm leery about doing this at all, but I reiterate my plan about allowing ourselves to be captured and escape. It wasn't a bad plan. I just hadn't expected Saul to actually torture me to death. I'd have thought, at best, he'd leave me for Malak.

The Ebon Hawk is brought aboard the interdictor ship again, and we're taken prisoner. Bastila and I are stripped and taken to the force cages.

"Don't tell him anything," Bastila is saying to me.

I shake my head slightly and put on a figurative mask. This is going to take some trickery to survive.

Saul Karath comes in and looks us over. "Hmm, it was my understanding that Carth Onasi was with you. I'm disappointed. What happened with him?"

"We had a bit of a disagreement," I reply. This is true enough. At some point in the recent past. It just has nothing to do with our current separation. "He thought I was excessively bloodthirsty and violent." I shrug a little.

"Really now," Saul says. "Well, I'm going to ask you a few questions. It'll be in your best interests if you cooperate. There will be severe consequences if you refuse... and there could be great rewards if you decide to fall in line with us."

"We're not going to tell you anything!" Bastila says.

I sigh and roll my eyes a little. Right, I really should have told her the plan beforehand.

"You, perhaps," Saul says. "But your friend here's loyalty has always been a little, shall we say, flexible. But first allow me to give a bit of a demonstration of what I can do to you should you fail to cooperate to my satisfaction."

Saul sends a shock through the two cages. Just a brief one, to let us know what he can do. It hurts, certainly, but I most importantly just need to make sure that he doesn't kill us with it.

Saul goes on, "And I imagine that you've kept her with you for a reason. You wouldn't want to see this pretty lady suffer, would you? If you don't answer my questions properly, I will torture her, not you."

"Why should I care what you do with her?" I say. "I have no need for an annoying Jedi bitch that keeps trying to redeem me no matter what I do. She'll be useful for her Battle Meditation ability, I'll give her that, but that just means you won't actually kill her outright."
"Too true," Saul agrees. "Tell me, then. Where is the hidden Jedi academy at which you were trained?"

"The not-so-secret Jedi Enclave is on Dantooine," I reply. "I don't know how they still think that it's any big secret, considering at least half of the people they train there get some sense and leave, and many of those wind up joining the Sith anyway."

"Quite so," Saul says. "We already knew about Dantooine. And have razed the Jedi Enclave to the ground already. But I'm pleased that you've shown the sense to cooperate."

"No!" Bastila cries. "All those people!"

"Bah, who cares what happens to the Jedi?" I say. "They kind of have it coming, anyway."

"Lexen, how can you say that?" Bastila says, looking to me in shock.

Seeing as she doesn't seem to realize that I'm bloody acting, damn it, I may wind up having to spend some time apologizing to her later. Oh well.

"Next question," Saul says. "What is the mission that the Jedi sent you on?"

"They sent us to track down the Star Maps in order to locate the Star Forge," I reply. "Not that I'm doing it for their benefit, anyway."

"I'm curious as to why you're doing it, then," Saul says.

"For my benefit, of course," I reply. "That's what's really important, after all."

Saul chuckles softly. "Of course. Lord Malak will wish to speak with you shortly. For now, I will leave you with a parting warning for standing against us."

He activates the torture fields again. Shock. Pain. Agony. Torment. And then I mercifully pass out.

*I send a blast of Force Lightning at the captured Jedi. She's not cooperating so far, but that will change. It's not like I even care to get any information out of her. But she will see my point of view soon enough.*

*In my experience, everyone has a breaking point. For some, that's merely physical pain. For others, however, I need to get more creative with. There are some Jedi so stubborn that they will take torture into death and remain true to the light all the while. If the torture alone is enough to turn them, then they cared more about themselves to begin with.*

*On the other hand, if torture won't turn them, then I simply will go after their friends instead. Few Jedi can stand seeing their mentors, apprentices, and secret love interests threatened with harm.*

"Revan..." she murmurs. "It's not too late for you. You can still turn back to the light! I know there's still good in you! Give up the Dark Side!"

*I laugh grimly. The bleating of foolish Jedi. *"You have no idea the power of the Dark Side."

You have no idea why I must do this...

I wake with a shudder. Ugh. Inside a force cage. Not where I wanted to wake up. I don't like feeling trapped or helpless.

"Lexen, you're finally awake," Bastila says.
"Ugh," I reply. "How long was I out?"

"I'm not sure," Bastila says. "I'm not sure how long I was out, either." She looks at me sternly. "How could you say those things to him?"

"I was acting, Bastila," I reply smoothly. "He would have killed me if I didn't give him a decent reason to keep me alive a little longer. Fucking Malak's always been a coward."

"A premonition?" Bastila says, softening a little.

I give a short nod. "And if we're not careful, we're going to run face to face with Malak himself, too. Where is that rescue? I hope nothing happened to T3 and HK."

As if on cue, the door opens to reveal the two droids. T3 beeps happily to see me. HK-47 says, "Pleased statement: Oh, Master, it's good to see you again! We got to kill a large number of meatbags on the way here. Such delightful slaughter!"

I chuckle softly as T3 goes to deactivate the force cages. "Let's see about getting our stuff and getting out of here, then."

Down the corridor, we find the cell containing the others, and release them. In a locker off to the side, we find our equipment, haphazardly tossed in to be sorted through later, presumably.

"We should split up," I say. "One group to go secure the ship and clear the way there, and the other to deactivate the tractor beam, or we're not getting anywhere."

"I'd best lead the team to secure the ship, Mandalore," Canderous says. "Since I'll have to be at the helm getting us out of there as quick as possible."

I nod. "And I'm going to go to the bridge to disable that tractor beam. I have a feeling I'll run into Malak somewhere along the way..."

"I'm going with you, Lexen," Bastila says.

"I'd really rather you didn't, but I'm not going to stand here arguing futilely about it," I say with a smirk.

Bastila and I head for the bridge, leaving the others to head back to the Ebon Hawk. I'm uneasy about this whole business. I know Darth Malak is somewhere nearby. And I know I'm not going to get off this ship without running into him. Furthermore, I'm pretty sure that I can beat him in a one-on-one fight. However, I doubt that he'll give me the opportunity to have a fair fight with him. He knows I could beat him as well, so he's certainly not going to fight fair.

We reach the bridge and get the tractor beam disabled without incident, but on the way back, Malak is blocking our way.

"Darth Malak!" Bastila exclaims, raising her double-bladed lightsaber.

Malak casually raises his hand and holds the two of us in place with the Force, and then gives an evil mechanical laugh with his metal jaw.

"You know, Malak, your flair for the dramatic is really unnecessary," I say. "It's generally polite to stand around and talk in the middle of dueling, anyway."

"Oh, but I have no intention of dueling you, of all people," Malak says.
"No, because you know you'd lose," I reply. "I was always better than you. In a great many ways."

"Still, I can hardly believe my eyes," Malak says. "Why did the Jedi spare you, Revan? Especially if what you told Saul Karath about your intentions is true."

"Look, Malak," I tell him. "I'm not fighting you because I've redeemed myself and returned to the Light Side and want to stop you to save the galaxy. I'm not fighting you because I want to reclaim the mantle of Dark Lord of the Sith and conquer the galaxy. I'm fighting you because I don't like you."

Malak says, "So I take it you seek vengeance against me now?"

I grin evilly at him, and I'm sure I've got that murderous gleam in my eye that always scared Yuthura so much. "You better believe it."

"Then I'd best not give you a chance to gain it," Malak says. "In your weakened state, I will finish you off now, as I should have done before."

Malak raises his hand, and Force Lightning shoots from his fingertips and rips through my body. I scream helplessly in agony for what feels like far too long, before everything fades away.

I wake back in the force cage, groaning. Well, that could have gone better. I sit up, rubbing my temples.

"Lexen, are you alright?" Bastila says.

"I'm going to need to convince Malak not to kill me out of hand right away," I say with a sigh. "Frustrating, as good as I am, I'm not prepared to face him yet. He's too powerful."

The droids come to rescue us, and we're reunited with the rest of the crew and our equipment. I'm not sure that bringing along anyone but Bastila will make any real difference in the inevitable encounter with Malak. But I don't want to actually join with him, and he'll doubtless kill me anyway the minute he realizes that I'm not just going to bow down to him.

I head up to the bridge in resignation and get that tractor beam disabled. And, sure enough, on the way back, there's Malak directly in our path.

"Hello, Malak," I say to him cordially. "So nice to see you again."

"I'll admit that it's a surprise to see you alive again, Revan," Malak says. "I have to wonder why the Jedi would let you live, after all we did."

"The Jedi don't believe in killing their prisoners," I reply. "And they're far too easily swayed by claims of redemption."

"I find it hard to believe that they'd think you would redeem yourself and return to the light," Malak says. "And yet, perhaps it is true. The Dark Side does not touch your face as deeply as it once did. Your eyes are green again, as they were before you took up the mask."

He's got me there. One can't fake Dark Side corruption. "And yet you can be assured that I still have no compunctions against using the Dark Side."

"If you are still capable of using the Dark Side, then prove it," Malak says. "Use Force Lightning on Bastila."
"What?" Bastila exclaims, then looks at me in alarm. "Surely you won't do what he asks! We're in love!"

I look at her blankly. "What are you talking about, woman? I have no such feelings for you."

Bastila looks at me in shock, and I wonder, for a moment, if I haven't forgotten something important. I raise my hands and try to call upon rage, hatred, anger, but I can't even manage frustration or annoyance at her. Whatever I do or don't remember, I still can't bring myself to harm her.

Malak laughs at me. "You can't do it, can you. You can say what you like, but you can't fool your own emotions."

And with that, Malak electrocutes me with Force Lightning again.

I wake, and find myself in a force cage. Where am I? How did I get here? No, wait, this is a Sith ship, and I was captured. They singled out me and Bastila for some reason, though I'm not too sure why, seeing as we weren't exactly the only Jedi on the crew. They weren't nearly as interested in Juhani and Jolee Bindo, however.

The two droids come in to rescue us, and we meet up with the others and retrieve our equipment. We split off into two teams, with most of the crew heading back toward the Ebon Hawk, and Bastila and I going to shut down the tractor beam.

And then, just as we think we're going to escape, we come face to face with Darth Malak, the Dark Lord of the Sith himself. I'm not nearly ready to be taking on Sith Lords just yet! I'm just a Padawan!

"Darth Malak!" Bastila exclaims. She hardly gets a chance to draw her lightsaber before Malak has us held in place with the Force.

"Leaving so soon?" Malak says. "And after I went to such trouble to track you down, too."

Malak throws back his head and gives an evil laugh. That sounds particularly creepy given his mechanical jaw. This must be a good reason why droids don't generally laugh, too.

"And you," Malak says, turning to me. "It's quite fascinating to see that you're still alive, despite everything."

"Well, I do try," I say. "Dying would be bad, after all. But why do you care about me?"

Malak stares at me, and says, "Ah, do you truly not remember?"

"Remember what?" I wonder. "Well, for one thing, I'd hope that I'd remember meeting somebody with a metal jaw before. Which I don't, by the way. And I'm pretty sure that I'm not personally acquainted with any Sith Lords, either."

"Ah, how mistaken you are..." Malak says. "You don't even know who you really are, do you?"

"I'm Jedi Padawan Lexen Skywalker," I reply. "Who else would I be?"

"So you fall in line with the Jedi now?" Malak says. "I was wondering why they spared you. But it seems that they brainwashed and manipulated you into being their lackey instead. Oh, how the mighty have fallen."

"What are you talking about?" I say.
"Once, you were Darth Revan, the Dark Lord of the Sith before me," Malak says. "I was the apprentice then, and together we were the scourge of the galaxy!"

"Oh, come on," I say. "Don't give me that bantha shit. Before I became a Jedi, I was a Republic soldier. But they made an exception for training an adult, since they said I had so much potential."

"Lexen?" Bastila says quietly. "Are you... alright?"

"What? I'm fine," I say.

"So the Jedi gave you false memories and a false personality?" Malak says. "Are you certain about having been a Republic soldier?"

"Well... no," I reply. "It is kind of hazy." I sigh. "But having been the Dark Lord of the Sith? That's ridiculous."

"Surely you've had dreams," Malak says. "Your true self bubbling up to the surface again. Your memories attempting to restore themselves."

"Oh, sure, I've had some awfully weird dreams," I say. "I once dreamed that I was fighting some strange eyeball monsters with tentacles. But somehow I doubt that was anything more than just a weird dream. You know, kind of like dreaming that you're going to meet the Jedi Council without any pants on."

"I have to wonder how much of this is amnesia and how much is willful self-denial," Malak says. "Lexen, he's telling the truth," Bastila says. "You are Darth Revan."

"And why should I listen to you, either?" I wonder. "You're just some other random Jedi that's hanging around for no apparent reason."

"Lexen..." Bastila says, looking at me with a hurt expression.

"Believe me or not," Malak says. "But if you join me, I will make everything clear again. Embrace the Dark Side, and you will know greater power than you could possibly dream of!"

"Like what?" I wonder.

"Lexen, don't do it!" Bastila exclaims. "He's just trying to trick you, to tempt you into joining him!"

"There is no temptation, there is only choice," I murmur, quietly but fiercely.

"So you at least remember that much," Malak says.

"I don't know where I heard it," I say. "It doesn't sound like something the Jedi would say."

"It's not," Malak replies. "It's something you said."

"I'm still not sure on this whole amnesiac Dark Lord business," I say. "But why don't you start by telling me what you can teach me? I'm always eager to learn."

"Lexen!" Bastila cries.

Malak chuckles metallically. "They could obfuscate your memories, but they could not bury your personality. Allow me to give a demonstration of the power of the Dark Side."
Darth Malak raises his hand toward Bastila, and lets forth a bolt of lightning to streak across the air and strike her body. Bastila screams in agony as the electricity rips through her.

"Lightning?" I say. "Wow, cool. I want to be able to do that!"

"Lexen, no!" Bastila says. "What's wrong with you? Don't you remember? We're friends! Lovers!"

"Huh?" I say. "You're both telling me confusing things that I don't remember anything of. What proof do I have that either of you is telling the truth?"

"Oh, so you're romantically involved as well?" Malak says. "This is indeed rich. Especially considering I thought you were gay."

"Hey, don't take this the wrong way, but I really don't know her that well," I say. "And, um, I don't think I'm gay, either..."

"You certainly were never interested in Surik," Malak says. "You spent more time trying to hit on me."

"Really?" I say, raising an eyebrow. "I don't know about that. Even if I were gay, I'm pretty sure you're not my type."

Bastila says, "Lexen, trust your senses. Trust in the Force. Let it guide you."

"Well, alright," I say. I calm myself and reach out with the Force. That's how the Jedi always taught us. Peace, calm, serenity. There is no emotion, there is only peace.

"So, do you want to be a Sith, or not?" Malak says. "I could make you my new apprentice. You did, after all, already kill Darth Bandon."

"You know, as nice as the idea of learning new things sounds, I frankly don't think I can trust you," I reply. "And I don't think it sounds right to be your apprentice if I was once your master. I think you're just trying to trick me and draw me in to the Dark Side. But there's no temptation. I choose to remain on the side of light. I will be loyal to the Jedi."

Bastila breathes a sigh of relief. "I was afraid, for a moment there..."

"Foolish," Malak says. "Thoroughly brainwashed. And yet you would be too dangerous to leave alive, should your memories return. I think I'll play it safe and finish what I started."

Malak, shaking his head, lifts his arm and allows electricity to fly from his fingers and into my body. Terrible pain. Indescribable torment. And he doesn't let up until I'm dead.

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I wake slowly, blinking. Where am I? What is this place? I appear to be laying in the middle of a glowing yellow circular field. It crackles a little, and jolts me when I try to touch it. A prison of some sort? There's a scantily clad woman in another field next to mine. I feel like I should know her, but I can't remember her name.

"Lexen!" she says. "I was afraid you weren't going to wake up."

"I'm alright, I think," I reply. Obviously, she knows me. It would be pretty embarrassing to admit that I've forgotten her name.

"We have to get off this ship," she says. "The droids should be along to rescue us soon, I hope. We're in big trouble if they don't get here before Malak decides to show up."
I take it that this Malak, whoever he is, must be a bad person. I don't think I really care to meet any bad people if I can help it.

Sure enough, two droids momentarily appear to open the door and deactivate the fields around us. The small, boxy one beeps happily, and the taller, humanoid one says, "Cheerful statement: Master, I'm pleased to see you. We blasted a number of Sith meatbags on the way here. It was positively wonderful!"

I glance aside at Bastila, but the droid appears to be addressing me. I suppose it thinks I'm its owner. And what are Sith? I'm assuming that Sith must be bad people or things, too, since the human woman I'm with doesn't appear very upset with it. This is getting really confusing.

"Come on, Lexen," the woman says. "Let's get our equipment back and meet up with the others."

"Right," I say dumbly, following her and the droids out of the prison area.

The others would appear to be a motley collection of humans, a few weird aliens with dangling tentacles on their heads, a vaguely cat-like woman, and a large, hairy humanoid thing. I look at them blankly. I can't shake the feeling that I should know these people, but I can't remember any of their names. This is a little disconcerting, to say the least.

Especially when they all start looking to me for what they should be doing. "Mandalore, orders?" one man says.

I look amongst the others, trying to figure out who Mandalore is, but he looks like he's addressing me. "Huh?" I say in confusion.

"Mandalore?" he says, frowning. "Is something wrong?"

"Are you talking to me?" I say. "I thought my name was Lexen."

"Shit," he says. "Do you have amnesia again?"

"Do I?" I say.

"Do you remember who I am?" he presses. "Canderous, of the Mandalorian clan Ordo?"

"I don't even know what a Mandalorian is," I admit sheepishly. I suppose I shouldn't be too embarrassed if I do apparently have amnesia. "Has this happened before?"

"Yes, but never this bad," the woman who was in the cell with me says.

The little droid beeps at me, and for some reason I can understand it. "The droid has my journal in its memory?" I say.

"No time to read it now, though," the woman says. "We need to get off this ship as soon as possible. You'll just have to catch up when we're out of here."

"Someone's going to need to disable that tractor beam, or we're not getting very far," Canderous says.

"I'll take care of it," the woman says. "The rest of you, get Lexen to the ship. He's in no state to be doing anything else right now."

"By yourself?" Canderous protests.
"I'm a Jedi," she says. "I'll be fine." By the worried look on her face, I can see she has doubts about that.

The cat-like woman says, "Bastila, you mustn't do this. We need your Battle Meditation if we can hope to win! What if you're captured?"

"Malak won't kill me," the woman, Bastila apparently, says. "Precisely because of that. Any of the rest of you, he might just kill outright. If I'm captured, I have faith in the rest of you to be able to rescue me later. I can just pretend to fall to the Dark Side until then."

"That's a risky plan, kid," says an old human man. "But we really don't have time to argue about it."

The cat-like woman gives a small nod and says, "Bastila... May the Force be with you."

"Keep Lexen safe, all of you, alright?" Bastila says. "If I discover that he's come to harm in my absense, I might just turn to the Dark Side and start killing people."

"I will protect Mandalore with my life," Canderous pledges. The others echo similar sentiments. Including the tall, hairy one, who I'm not sure how I can understand either.

I'm still pretty dazed, but I don't really care to argue. I let the odd assortment of sentient beings escort me out of the prison block and toward the docking area. They seem very protective of me. I must be very important to them.

My companions start fighting past a number of people wearing shiny silver uniforms. The cat-like woman holds out a strange cylindar to me and says, "Do you still know how to use one of these, Lexen?"

I shake my head. "I don't even know what that is."

"Yeah, this is bad," Canderous says. "I hope he gets back to normal after he's had a chance to read his journal."

I feel a bit like baggage here. Scared, weak, and helpless. But we eventually make it back to the ship. I can't believe that we came in on this piece of junk. It doesn't even look like it should be able to fly! Nonetheless, we climb aboard.

The cat woman directs me to where I keep my journal, but I'm way too nervous to read it right now. I'll just have to trust the others to know what they should be doing.

"The tractor beam's down," Canderous says.

"Where's Bastila?" I say, frowning a little. I think I should be concerned with this person's safety, even if I don't really remember her.

"No word from her yet," Canderous says. "We can't wait for her for too long. We'll give her a few more minutes, but she pretty much told us to leave without her."

"I hope she'll be alright," I murmur.

"She's a grown woman," Canderous says. "And a damned good fighter. She can take care of herself."

After several minutes, there's no sign of Bastila coming, and no word from her. Canderous decides that it's too risky to remain here any longer, and pilots us out of here. He sets a course for someplace
called Manaan, and makes the jump into hyperspace.

"We left her behind?" I say in a small voice.

"Didn't have any choice," Canderous says.

"... There are always choices," I say. "I just hope that we can live with the consequences of this one."
I'm far more exhausted than I had realized until I get to the crew quarters. My journal can wait until I've gotten some sleep, I think. Then I can figure out what's going on here.

*I wake to the ship rocking. The door to my quarters whooshes open to admit a man that I think I recognize. Yes, his name is Trask Ulgo.*

"*The Endar Spire is under attack!*" Trask says. "*The Sith have boarded the ship! We've got to find Bastila!*"

*I open my footlocker and quickly put on my armor, and pull out my green lightsaber. "Let's go."

"*I'm glad to have a Jedi like you with me,*" Trask says. "*Even if it kind of creeps me out that you were once a Sith.*"

"*I made a different choice,*" I reply.

I wake, and rub my eyes in confusion. Well, that was a strange dream. It almost seemed like it was just happening than really being a dream. For a moment, I'm even confused about what ship I'm waking up on.

Maybe my journal will explain things better. I pull it out from where I put it last night, and sit staring at it for several moments. It seems to be locked with numerous safeguards. I'm obviously a very paranoid person. But considering that I'm apparently using this to effectively store my memories, I suppose it's understandable.

It reports a successful DNA match, and then requests a passcode. I select the option for "Forget your passcode?"

The datapad begins a series of questions, apparently to verify my identity, although I'm not sure how it's supposed to do that, judging by the content of the questions. It seems more like a personality than anything else, asking what I would do in specific situations. I wind up answering obtusely, refusing to adhere to strict either/or situations, and yet that appears to be what I was expecting. The journal acknowledges me as its proper owner, and unlocks itself for me.

Canderous appears in the doorway just as I'm starting to read. "*Mandalore, we've arrived on Manaan.*"

"*I still have no idea what's going on,*" I say. "*Is this a safe place?*

"*As safe as can be expected,*" Canderous says. "*It's a neutral world, and the local inhabitants won't tolerate any feuds to be brought here. And since they control the supply of healing kolto for both the Republic and the Sith, there's a tenuous peace at the moment."

I nod. "*Well, in that case, everyone can do what they want for now. Gather information, relax, restock supplies, whatever. I need to catch up on my journal here.*"

"*Yes, Mandalore,*" Canderous says, and heads out to leave me to that.

I start off with the Endar Spire again, and then frown as I read over the events there. That dream I
just had was startlingly similar, and yet radically different from anything that I remember actually happening there. What gives?

Maybe it'll be explained later. I shake my head and go to grab breakfast, and settle in to read through it all from front to back.

Things become more clear as I read through it. But then I come across one entry that's prefaced with a warning to myself. "If you're reading this, you have obviously forgotten the contents of this entry. This may not be such a bad thing. I know what's in this entry, and I kind of wish I didn't at this point. If you read this entry, it may haunt your thoughts for the rest of your existence, provided you don't forget it again. Even if you don't, it might still bubble up on its own. Just reading this was enough to cause me to almost pass out once and suffer from recurring mental breakdowns. Still, it's your choice whether or not you wish to proceed. I considered deleting it, but ultimately decided to leave it in in case I chose to remember this. It's up to you."

I frown. All things considered, I'm not sure that I really want to open this can of worms. I'm having enough problems with my mind without having mental breakdowns because of something I wished I could forget. Maybe there's some blessing into forgetting everything again.

I close the entry without reading any further, and notice another message pop up as I do. "Decided not to read it, huh? I don't blame you. In case you're wondering, here's the pertinent information that you would have discovered if you had. You did not choose to betray the Republic. You don't need to know the details."

I didn't? Well, that's kind of a relief, really. The Republic seem like good people, more or less, if a little misguided at times. It's hard to believe that I would voluntarily try to destroy everything I had once worked to protect. But I won't dwell on it any further lest I inadvertently bring up memories that I had wished to forget.

It takes me several hours to read through the entire journal. I was quite detailed to make sure that I could bring up memories of the events again. And, as I'd hoped, reading the entries still brings to mind the memories they describe. But the disturbing part is that it takes me half a day to read through a few weeks worth of time. I have to sigh at that. I really need to find a better way to do this.

And then it hits me. We left Bastila behind. Bastila is being held prisoner by Malak. The woman I love is being held prisoner. Damn everything! And it's really my fault, for apparently failing so many times that I lost all my memories and forgot even what I was trying to do. Fuck.

I try to relax. She told us her plan. She knew what she was getting into. She told us to leave without her. But that does nothing to assuage my guilt. The woman I love is in danger, possibly being tortured or forced to do terrible things. And I could have stopped it... but utterly failed to do so. I don't even remember what happened or how many times I must have tried and failed to get everyone off the Sith interdictor ship safely.

I rub my eyes. Beating myself up for it won't help. Bastila was trying to help me, and I was in a pretty helpless situation. I should trust her. She knew what she was doing. And I will go and save her from whatever terrible fate Malak has planned for her. And I will kill him.

I take the time to write a new entry into my journal detailing just what I can remember happening, before locking it up again. My armor and lightsabers were placed in a nearby footlocker, so I go to grab them and put them on. Hmm, now that I'm off Korriban, I should probably do something about my appearance. I don't want to look too much like a Dark Jedi out here. Well, we've got some spare clothes that got picked up somewhere along the way just in case they'd be useful. I toss a light gray robe over my armor, open in the front, and call it good enough for now.
I head out of the crew quarters. I run into Canderous just outside the doorway. "You stayed behind to guard the ship?" I ask.

Canderous shakes his head. "I stayed behind to guard you. I'm not about to let anyone kill you while you're unable to defend yourself."

I smile at him. "Thanks, Canderous."

"It's the least I can do, Mandalore," Canderous says. "How are you doing?"

"Better," I reply. "Still a little disoriented, but better." I sigh. "I'm glad you guys were there for me. I hate to think of what might have happened had Malak gotten a hold of me in that state."

"I thought that Malak had gotten a hold of you and wiped your memory," Canderous says, frowning.

I shake my head. "If only that were the case. No, my mental problems are entirely my own. That's why I've been keeping this journal. At any time, I could wake up, having forgotten something. I've been having to look through the journal every morning to make sure I haven't forgotten anything. Usually, it's just a few days at a time that slip through my grasp. But due to the circumstances... I lost everything at once."

"That's terrible," Canderous says. "I didn't realize it was quite so bad, or so pervasive. Do you have any idea why it's happening?"

"I do," I reply. "I have an idea, but I'm not certain on the details, and I've been trying to figure out a way around it. It's complicated. Basically, the Force is trying to keep me alive, but it damages my mind in the process. The harder it has to work at it, the more damage is caused. So really, the reason I lost my memories back on the Sith vessel was because I almost certainly would have been killed."

"But you didn't actually fight Malak," Canderous says.

"But I would have," I reply. "And it would have ended in disaster for one reason or another. Most likely because he's a bastard and would have done anything to tip the odds in his favor."

"I don't think I understand," Canderous says. "I'm no Jedi. I don't know anything about how the Force works."

I chuckle softly. "Don't worry. Even a Jedi would have trouble figuring out my power. It's kind of unique. I've been... hesitant to tell anyone what I've realized about it. Mostly because I don't know what to think of it myself. But if I can't trust you, who can I trust?"

"You don't need to tell me anything if you don't want to, Mandalore."

I shake my head. "I do. Keeping it to myself will drive me crazy, anyway." I take a deep breath. "You see, if at any point I would die, the Force effectively sends me back in time to when I last slept. I lose some memories in the process, but I have a chance to make another choice for a different outcome."

Canderous frowns. "Time travel?"

I nod. "And I can't control it, either. I literally cannot stay dead." I chuckle softly. "I've actually been dying at least once or twice a day since I met you, for various reasons."

"So you don't really have 'premonitions' so much as remembering what you just experienced," Canderous says.
"Exactly," I say. "The journal was only supposed to be a bandage to hold stop up my rapidly hemorrhaging mind. I need to find a more permanent solution. Admittedly, most people would consider 'not getting killed' to be a viable solution. But it's going to happen anyway, and so long as I have this ability, I may as well use it to my advantage."

I wonder if it might be possible to replace my journal with some sort of neural implant, that could scan my mind for damage and repair it from its own memory. Does the technology for such a thing even exist? If it doesn't, I might just have to invent it myself.

"So, what's it like? Dying?" Canderous says.

I smirk. "Painful. Also, never cut off your own head with a lightsaber. That's more disconcerting than usual."

Canderous snickers softly. "I'll keep that in mind."

"So, does it bother you to know that I'm not some god-like being that even death fears, but instead I'm some god-like being that just can't stay dead?" I say with a smirk.

Canderous laughs. "Not particularly, although it might explain a few things. Besides, you're still the most incredible badass ever to live, you know that, right?"

I laugh as well. "Why don't we go get some lunch?"

HK and T3 can do a good enough job of guarding the ship. I'm surprised that Neeja isn't on board at the moment. Did someone finally manage to convince her to come out for a bit?

On our way out, we run across a Selkath who waves at us to get our attention. "Excuse me," he says. "I'm looking to procure exotic animals for a wildlife exhibit. I'm authorized to pay in credits for suitable specimens."

"A wildlife exhibit?" I say. "Heh, you might just put up a sign instead. Standing around in the docking area is most likely to get you only the attention of people whose ships are infested by gizka. But you're in luck. I happen to have a breeding pair of tachs aboard my ship. I'm sure your exhibit would be a better place for them than being hauled around the galaxy. How much will you give me for them?"

"Tachs?" the Selkath says. "Those would be quite difficult to obtain, given the destruction on Taris and the revolution on Kashyyyk. I'll need to speak with my superiors to authorize a large transaction, but I'm willing to pay quite a bit for them. I'll drop you a message with details later."

"Very well," I say.

Canderous and I head to the local cantina to pick up some lunch. Mission and Griff are there as well, relieving some patrons of their money at Pazaak as Zaalbar watches over them. It's nice to see that they're getting along better than they were when they were first reunited.

"So," I say to Canderous as we eat. "Suppose we'll have to poke around a bit and see about gathering some information."

"Sounds good to me," Canderous says lightly. "Particularly considering that your 'gathering information' frequently involves shooting at people."

"Information is often best found on corpses," I reply with a smirk.
It's hard to believe that there's a Star Map on this water-covered world. If anywhere, it's likely to be at the bottom of the ocean. And it would be difficult to get down there without the blessing of the native Selkath. I'd best stay on their good side.

I overhear a Republic officer attempting to hire a group of mercenaries in the cantina, and I approach curiously. It's not like the Republic to be quite so eager to hire mercenaries from cantinas. What's going on here?

"The Republic is hiring mercenaries?" I ask the officer.

"Indeed," he replies. "Are you interested in signing up?"

"What's the job?" I ask. "And how much are you paying?" I'm rarely one to turn down an opportunity to kill people for credits.

"I'm afraid I'm not authorized to give specifics at this time," the officer says.

"I don't like not knowing what I'm signing up for," I reply.

"In my experience," Canderous interjects. "People who aren't willing to say what the job is are doing something suspect. What is the Republic hiding?"

The officer shifts uneasily. "You'll be told what the job is when you sign on. We're willing to hire Mandalorians. What more do you want?"

"I don't know, Canderous," I say offhandedly. "Maybe the Sith would offer more money."

"Undoubtedly," Canderous says lightly.

The officer sighs. "Look, we can't compete with Sith rates. But fine, suit yourselves. If you change your minds, stop by the Republic embassy or speak with one of our recruiting officers." The officer walks away.

"I think this warrants some investigation," I say quietly aside to Canderous. "What is the Republic doing here?"

"Yeah," Canderous agrees. "This seems awfully suspicious."

We head out of the cantina, and almost run head first into a group of Republic and Sith soldiers arguing with one another on the streets. They're trading some fairly childish insults, and as we approach, they turn their attention to us.

"You there," says a Republic soldier. "Who do you support? The Republic or the Sith?"

"Neither," I reply. "We're Mandalorians."

"But, you have lightsabers on your belt. Aren't you a Jedi?"

"He's a Mandalorian Jedi," Canderous puts in. "Do you have a problem with that?"

"I didn't realize Mandalorians could be Jedi," the Republic soldier says.

"Most species have a chance of being born with a connection to the Force," I say. "And most Mandalorians are members of species that are capable of using the Force."

"I see. I guess I never really thought about it," he says. "So you really don't have an opinion on the
Republic and the Sith?"

"Oh, I have plenty of opinions," I say. "But none that you'd really care to hear."

I move on, not caring to continue this conversation at the moment. I'd just wind up pissing off both sides if I said what I really think about them.

"I'd much rather be a Mandalorian than be involved with either of those fools," I mutter aside to Canderous.

"Heh, yeah," Canderous agrees.

Heading along the streets, I spot Juhani and Neeja heading into a store. Neeja still looks nervous at being out in the open, but it looks like Juhani convinced her to go shopping. I'm glad to see that.

As we head across Ahto City, we run across Jolee Bindo. "Ah, there are you, Lexen. You feeling better now?"

"Yeah, I'm fine," I reply. "What's up, Jolee?"

"I ran across an old friend of mine here on Manaan," Jolee says. "He's in jail and being accused of murdering a Sith woman."

"Ah, I see," I say. "You need help getting him off?"

"Sunry isn't a murderer!" Jolee insists.

"Killing one Sith is murder, but killing dozens is all in a day's work?" I say with a smirk. "It's all a matter of perspective. I honestly don't care if your friend actually did the deed or not. But since he's your friend, I'll help."

"Well, I'm sure he must be innocent," Jolee says. "You going all Dark Side on me again?"

"What do you mean 'going'?" I say, raising an eyebrow. "I've never rejected the Dark Side, so far as I know. I just decided to embrace the light as well this time."

"Right, whatever you say, kid," Jolee says. "Don't mind me. I'm just along for the ride."

I snicker softly. "Anyway, let's get the details on this case. Who's Sunry's legal representative?"

"No one, at the moment," Jolee says. "I was hoping you might be willing to step in for it, if you're up to it."

"Me?" I say. "Why me?"

"Because you could sell sand to a Jawa," Jolee says with a smirk.

"Ah," I say, laughing softly. "Well, there is that. Alright, I'll do it."

We head over to the court to get myself entered as Sunry's advocate. From there, the three of us go to the jail to have a talk with Sunry himself. The extremely threatening old man in a force cage. Before speaking with him, I do a quick check and see that we won't be overheard.

"Jolee Bindo?" Sunry says. "Is that really you?"

"Sunry!" Jolee says. "You getting yourself into trouble without me, I see?"
"You don't know the half of it," Sunry says. "They've accused me of murder!"

"I've heard," Jolee says. "My friend here has agreed to be your lawyer for this case."

"Lexen Skywalker, attorney at law, at least for the moment," I say, giving him a suave bow. "A pleasure to meet you. And I must say, good job on killing that Sith bitch. I'll be sure to get you off the hook, no strings attached."

"But... I didn't..." Sunry stammers.

Through the Force, I can sense his nervousness, his increased heart rate. I can sense his intent of deception. "There's no need to lie to me, Sunry. I'm on your side here. And honestly, I've probably killed more people, anyway."

"What kind of a person did you bring me as a lawyer, Jolee?" Sunry wonders.

"A complete monster, on occasion, but he means well, for the most part," Jolee replies.

"Now, Sunry," I say. "I'm defending you here, so I want you to tell me what exactly happened, from your perspective. And don't bother wasting my time by lying about it, either. I'm a Jedi, I can tell when people are lying. It doesn't matter to me one bit what you did or why. I'm going to get you out of here either way."

Sunry sighs, and glances about for a moment before lowering his voice, just in case. "Fine, look, it's not like I didn't have a good reason for it. She was an assassin, and was going to kill me."

"Perfectly justifiable," I say. "Although I'm not sure the Selkath would see it that way. Still, it's generally a better policy to shoot first, rather than shooting second."

Jolee is quiet, and Sunry proceeds to explain in detail exactly what happened the night of the killing. I'm pretty sure that I can get him off, one way or another, even if I need to find a loophole or technicality to exploit.

We head out of the jail again. Jolee says quietly, "I just can't believe he'd do such a thing."

I snort softly. "Yeah, I can't believe someone would cheat on their wife with a Sith spy."

"Well, yeah, there's that too," Jolee says.

So, I head over to the hotel where the Sith woman was killed to talk to the witnesses. I doubt that anyone actually saw anything substantial, or there wouldn't be any doubt as to whether or not he killed the woman.

After questioning them, I determine that not only did no one actually see anything, but apparently a Rodian by the name of Gluupor planted Sunry's Republic medal on the body. So the Sith were trying to frame him for the murder that he actually committed? Oh, this is rich. I convince him to testify as such before the court, and make sure the other witnesses have enough doubt and confusion in their minds to make their testimony ineffectual.

"I don't know if this is the right thing to be doing," Jolee says quietly. "But if Sunry's convicted, it'll cause huge problems for the Republic and their kolto supply."

"He didn't murder anyone, Jolee," I reply. "Killing someone who intends to kill you isn't murder."

"Why did the Sith bother having that medal planted?" Jolee wonders. "Did they expect that Sunry
"It's not exactly unheard of for the Sith to sacrifice their own people for perceived gain," I reply. "Sunry dies, they still win. Sunry gets convicted of murder, double-win. Now, if they leaked to Sunry that she was going to try to kill him, but didn't bother telling her that she was supposedly trying to kill him... yeah, I wouldn't put that kind of ploy against the Sith at all."

"You really think this was all a big conspiracy?" Jolee says. "Although I do see your point."

I chuckle. "It's all a matter of connecting the dots. And the dots make a big freaking arrow pointed directly at the Sith."

I return to the courthouse and see about getting the trial underway. The witnesses testify, Gluupor admits to taking money from the Sith to plant the medal, and I paint a big figurative picture of a Sith conspiracy. Sunry gets off easily.

"Thanks for the help, Lexen," Sunry says. "And you too, Jolee, for finding me such a... ruthless lawyer."

I snicker softly. "Just keep in mind for future reference, if you ever feel the need to cheat on your wife, just pick up a prostitute instead. It's safer."

"Uh, if you say so," Sunry says. "Oh, there's my wife now. Gotta run."

I wave at him absently and head off toward the nearest cantina. I could do with a bit of dinner. It's a good thing we're not planning on staying on Manaan for an extended period of time. I'd get awfully sick of seafood after a while, and imported food is more expensive.

"Excuse me," a random Selkath says, approaching my group while we're eating. "My name is Shaelas. I was hoping maybe you could help me."

"You're approaching strangers in a cantina for help?" I say, raising an eyebrow.

"I apologize if my appeal is out of place," Shaelas says. "But I see that you and your companion have lightsabers, and you're not wearing black, so I assumed that you're Jedi."

I chuckle softly. "I'll give you credit for being observant, at least. What do you need?"

"My daughter, Shasa, is missing," Shaelas says. "And I've heard that a number of other young Selkath are, as well. I suspect that the Sith may be involved, but the Ahto City authorities won't do anything without evidence."

I sigh softly. "You know, the Sith aren't responsible for every bad thing to happen in the galaxy. Just quite a few of them. I'd say you're right to be paranoid about them. I'll look for these missing youngsters."

"Thank you, Master Jedi," Shaelas says. "I await any news you may bring."

"Nice of you to offer to help find his daugther," Jolee says once the Selkath leaves.

"I'm betting the Sith are probably kidnapping young Selkath and brainwashing them in hopes of taking over Manaan for its kolto supplies," I say offhandedly.

"Another imagined Sith conspiracy?" Jolee says, raising an eyebrow.

"Well, it's either that, or Shasa and her friends went on a three-hour tour and got stranded on a
remote island somewhere and only haven't returned yet because one of them was a complete buffoon,” I say lightly. "Or alternatively, she ran away from home to start a goth band, because nobody understands her."

"I think the Sith are more likely," Canderous says.

"Probably, yeah," I say.

"Say," Canderous says, glancing across the room at several mercenaries standing around. "I think I know that guy."

We approach the man in question. "Canderous?" he says. "Man, I haven't seen you in ages."

"Since the war," Canderous replies. "How you been doing, Ergeron?"

"Well enough," Ergeron says. "I'm working as a freelance mercenary these days. And you're traveling with Jedi?"

"Hah, not just any Jedi," Canderous says. "You haven't heard? This one's taken up the mantle of Mandalore and is reuniting the clans."

"Huh?" Ergeron says, looking at me in puzzlement. "But he's a Jedi..."

"I'm the one who killed the last Mandalore," I reply.

It takes a couple moments for that to register, and Ergeron's eyes widen as he realizes the implications of my statement. "Heh, seriously? I should've known they wouldn't be able to kill one such as you so easily."

"Yeah, this is really him," Canderous says. "The real deal. I've seen the way he fights."

"I believe you," Ergeron says. "If you say this Jedi is Mandalore, then I'll believe you. You're not the sort that would easily be fooled by something like that." He chuckles, then looks at me. "But why are you deciding to take up the mantle of Mandalore only now?"

"Amnesia," I reply. "After I defeated Mandalore, circumstances led to... well, I believe I was mindfucked, essentially. I don't remember the details anymore, and this is probably a good thing for my own sanity."

"Damn," Ergeron says. "I'd hate to think what could do that to someone like you of all people."

"No kidding," I say.

"I've been out of touch with the clans for a while," Ergeron says. "So you're rebuilding the Mandalorians now? You know, I've discovered that working as a freelance mercenary beats being on the losing side in a war. But knowing you... any side you chose to go against will be the losing side in a war. I'll stand with you, Mandalore."

"I'm glad to hear that," I say with a grin. "I've been sending everyone off to Dxun for the moment."

"Dxun, huh?" Ergeron says, grinning back at me. "It'll just be like old times. Except for the part where you kicked our asses. Anything you need before I go to pack?"

"Yes, actually," I say. "I'd like to know what the Republic is up to that they're so eager to hire mercenaries around here. You have any info?"
"Not too sure," Ergeron says. "I didn't like the smell of it, so I steered clear of it. And the Sith seem to be trying to hire mercenaries just to keep them away from the Republic. All I know is, the ones the Republic have been hiring disappear and haven't come back."

"That's more than suspicious," I say, frowning. "What in the galaxy are they doing?"

"Heh," Ergeron says. "So, Mandalore, are we going to get to actually conquer the Republic this time?"

"I haven't decided yet," I say lightly.

"Whatever target Mandalore points us at is going to get fucked," Canderous says, grinning.

"Also, one more thing," I say. "Do you know anything about some missing Selkath youngsters?"

"Ah, yeah," Ergeron says. "The Sith made me an offer for that, but I didn't want to get involved. The Iridonian, however, had no such qualms. Ask him about it. Those Iridonians are savages. They don't care about honor or anything, just satisfying their own bloodlust."

"Alright, thanks for the information," I say. "Carry on."

I leave him, and head over to the Iridonian mercenary in question, a humanoid wearing yellow and black armor.

"If you're with the Republic, I'm not for hire," he says as we approach.

"Good thing I'm not with the Republic," I say.

"Oh?" the Iridonian says. "Who do you work for, then?"

"Myself," I say.

"Really? Those lightsabers would seem to indicate that you're a Jedi."

"You could call me that," I say. "But I'm not with the Jedi Order. And they likely would not approve of my, shall we say, darker tendencies."

"Ah, I see. Are you a Sith, then?"

"I am," I reply. "But I'm not the toady of that fool, Darth Malak." I grin broadly. "And I will be quite happy when I kill that son of a kath hound. There's few things I'd like more than to bathe in his fucking blood."

"Hmm, I like your attitude," the Iridonian says. "I haven't run across even a Sith who was quite so bloodthirsty. But you, you positively radiate murder. What do you have for me?"

"I understand that some of my fellow Sith recently hired you for a job involving some young Selkath," I say.

"Ah, yes, yes I did," the Iridonian replies. "It was an easy job, luring out these Selkath younglings into the Sith base, but it was credits. Disappointing, though, in that I didn't get to kill anything. The joy of killing is the true reward from my work. The credits are merely a bonus to that."

"I can appreciate that," I say with a grin. "What's the name of the one who hired you?"

"I didn't get his name, but I take it that the orders came from the Dark Jedi in charge of the Sith..."
embassy in Ahto City," the Iridonian replies.

I nod. "I figured as much."

"So, do you have a job you want to hire me for?" the Iridonian says eagerly.

"Let me get back to you on that," I say. "But if what I'm thinking of pans out, the slaughter will be beautiful." I grin broadly.

"I look forward to it," the Iridonian says. "You can find me here when you're ready."

We part ways, and I head out of the cantina again followed by Canderous and Jolee.

Canderous says quietly, "You aren't seriously considering hiring that Iridonian, are you?"

"As a diversion, if anything," I say. "I have a plan, but I need more pieces first."

"You have a plan," Canderous says. "Somebody's fucked."

I chuckle softly. "But, it's getting late. I can fuck people over on a full night's rest. Let's head back for the ship."
Becoming the Mask

Chapter by Keolah

The Death Star inches closer. I'm practically holding my breath as it approaches. As doom approaches.

"Gold Squadron is down."

The image on the monitor continues moving into range. All it needs to do is circle the gas giant Yavin, and it will be in firing distance.

"Red Squadron is down."

"Any word of the Millennium Falcon?" I ask.

I think I can sense a terrible, ominous presence through the Force.

"Sorry, Commander Skywalker. It looks like the Millennium Falcon has been destroyed."

Han never stood a chance. He was going up against something far beyond him.

Darth Vader is out there. I just know it. I should have been the one to face him. But I sent Han and Chewie up instead, because I knew I'd never be able to handle the piloting.

I'm a terrible pilot. I always have nightmares about my terrible piloting skills, too. Always ending in fiery doom.

"The Death Star is in range. It's charging its main gun."

I should have taken Han up on his suggestion that we just pile onto the Millennium Falcon and get out of here. Everyone on Yavin IV would have been killed, but at least we would have survived. And now Han and Chewie are dead anyway, and I'm going to die regardless, and there's nothing I can do about it.

And the Death Star fires its main gun. Its main gun that can destroy worlds.

The ground rumbles with unearthly thunder. The world breaks apart beneath my feet.

I'm screaming. Everyone is screaming around me. Screaming until there's nothing left.

I wake with a start. So much death...

At least now I finally know how the Battle of Yavin ends. Unfortunately. In disaster. In hopeless doom. And all because there wasn't a pilot present capable of exploiting a pinpoint weakness in the Death Star's design.

The message is clear. If I want to save Yavin IV, I need to become the best pilot that I can before it happens. I don't know when this might occur, but since many of the things I've been seeing don't appear to exist yet, I believe I have a while.

I'm starting to think that maybe I should read that entry that I said I wouldn't want to read. If I should encounter this in the future, how will I fight against it? How can I hope to fight against it if even the memory of it causes me problems?
But I leave it aside for now. I'm still scared of the idea of losing myself. Maybe I'll take a look at it after the business with Malak and the Star Forge is dealt with. I don't think I want to risk it right now.

I head out of the crew quarters. Again, Canderous is waiting outside. "Canderous, did you sleep?" I ask.

Canderous nods. "Of course. I just woke up a short while ago myself."

"Just checking," I say, chuckling. "No reason not to take advantage of the opportunity to sleep in a secure setting when it's available. Shall we get some breakfast?"

We head out, and are shortly intercepted by Griff. "Oh, there you are. We got a message in from someplace called the Ahto City Wildlife Conservatory. Would you believe how much they offered for your pet tachs?"

"I'll believe it," I say with a grin. "And no, I didn't intend to sell them to a zoo when I picked them up. But I'm hardly one to turn down an opportunity. I'd best deliver them myself. They're not likely to behave for anyone else."

I get back onto the Ebon Hawk and collect the two tachs, calming them lightly with the Force. With them tucked away in my pack, I head out to the location specified.

Canderous says, "Frankly, I don't mind getting rid of those things. They're constantly getting into everything and they're kind of annoying."

I snicker softly. "Point taken."

I deliver the tachs, collect my easily-earned credits, and then head off for breakfast. At least now, no one can joke about the Dark Lord of the Sith having pet tachs.

Once we're done eating, we head over to the Republic embassy. They don't bother to look more beyond the fact that I'm carrying lightsabers and not wearing black to let me in. An open door policy, or just complacent security?

"Ah, welcome, Jedi," says a uniformed Republic officer. "I am Roland Wann, the official representative of the Republic on this planet."

"How can you be certain that I'm not a Dark Jedi in a flimsy disguise?" I ask.

"I doubt that the Sith would try anything quite so flagrantly that would endanger their kolto supplies," Roland says. "And besides, where does it put me if I'm so paranoid of everyone that walks in the door? It's my duty to assist any members of the Republic on Manaan that require aid. Also, aren't you the one who acted as Sunry's legal advocate? Thank you for that, by the way."

I nod to him graciously. "Perhaps you can assist me. I'm looking for some ancient ruins which I believe to be at the bottom of the ocean. Do you know anything about this?"

Roland grows nervous, and his heart rate spikes. Yeah, he knows something, alright. "It seems strange to think that some ancient civilization would build something at the bottom of Manaan's ocean."

"Let me be frank with you, sir," I say, leaning closer to him. "I'm on a mission of galactic importance from the Jedi Council. These ruins, scattered across many planets, hold the key to defeating Darth Malak. I must find them. If you value your precious Republic, then please, tell me what you know."
"Ah-- yes, of course, my apologies," Roland says. "I must admit, I'm surprised that you did not jump straight to the Force to try to get me to tell you what you want to know."

"I prefer not to do that," I say. "It's a crutch used by the lazy, and a violation of free will." I smirk. "So I only generally use it to get out of giving Czerka Corp money."

Roland chuckles in amusement. "Alright, here's what I know. There's some strange ruins located down near Hrakert Rift." He lowers his voice. "We have a secret research base down there, built as a joint effort between the Republic and the Selkath. I could lend you a submersible to get down there, but I'd like to ask a favor of you first."

Everyone always wants you to do something for them. Nobody's ever happy to just help save the galaxy. "What do you need?" I ask.

"We had a droid taking readings under the ocean that was captured by the Sith," Roland says. "I need someone to sneak into their base to retrieve the droid's memory core before the Sith get past the encryption and realize what we're doing down there."

I nod. I was planning to get in there one way or another anyway, so looking for something else while I'm there is no big deal. "Very well. Do you know how I might be able to get into the Sith base?"

"There's a couple methods you could use," Roland says. "You could fight your way into their landing bay and steal one of their craft that they use to take things from the docking area straight to their base. Or you could use a pass card to sneak right in the front door under their noses. You'd need a pass code to go along with it. We have a prisoner you could try to interrogate that we haven't had any success with so far."

"Where is this prisoner?" I ask.

Roland points me to their holding cells, and Canderous and I head in. "Jedi," the warden greets me. "Are you here to interrogate the prisoner?"

"I am," I reply.

"I must warn you, he's resistant to Force persuasion techniques."

"Isn't everyone?" I say tediously. "Leave us."

The warden salutes and leaves me alone with the prisoner. I approach the force cage containing the human man. "I'm not going to tell you anything!"

"Now, don't be hasty, and say things that aren't true," I say.

"You can't make me talk!"

"You're already talking right now," I say. "And no, of course I won't force you to do anything. That's entirely your own free choice."

"I won't betray the Sith!"

"Of course not," I say smoothly. "Your loyalty is commendable. But to whom is your loyalty? To the usurper, Darth Malak, or to the true Dark Lord of the Sith, Darth Revan?"

"I-- what?" the prisoner says. "Darth Revan is dead." He stares at me for a moment. "Isn't he?"

"That's what people would like you to believe, isn't it?" I say. "Wouldn't it be awfully embarrassing,
for both Malak and the Jedi, should Darth Revan turn up alive again?"

"I... I suppose it would, at that."

"And you wouldn't wish to be on the wrong side of things when Darth Revan gets his revenge upon the usurper, would you?" I go on.

"No, I wouldn't," the prisoner says, eyes widening in fear. "Darth Malak wouldn't stand a chance against Revan."

"And likewise, I imagine that Darth Revan would be quite happy to reward those who assist him," I say with a small grin. "And help to facilitate his grand return to power."

"It wouldn't be betraying the Sith to tell a Sith what he wants to know..." the prisoner says quietly.

"Indeed not," I agree. "I need the pass code for the Sith base in Ahto City."

"Very well," he says, and gives it to me.

I nod to him, and head out of the detention area. Roland says to me, "Did you have any success with the prisoner?"

"I have the pass code," I say.

"How did you manage to get him to talk?" Roland wonders.

I chuckle softly. "A friend of mine told me that I could sell sand to a Jawa. Without having to resort to Force powers."

I get the code punched into a pass card, and head out of the Republic embassy. I head back for the Ebon Hawk.

"I'm going to take a quick nap," I say. "After that... it'll be time to say hello to some Sith."

"By 'say hello' I assume you mean 'shoot in the face'," Canderous says dryly.

I chuckle. Back in the Ebon Hawk, I make a few preparations first. I'm not going to be caught without contingencies again. Then I return to the crew quarters, put in a quick entry into my journal, and lay down for a half-hour nap.

"And so, the student returns at last to his first teacher," Arren Kae says.

"Master Kae," I say, nodding in greeting to her. "Or should I call you Darth Traya now?"

"Call me whatever you wish," Kae says. "Names are ultimately meaningless. Tell me, why have you sought me out?"

"Perhaps I can hope for some wisdom from you, if no one else," I tell her. "I believe I have learned all that the Jedi can teach me. I think it's time now to leave them behind me, and to learn what they wished to deny me."

"Are you certain that you wish to walk this path?" Kae says. "Once you chose this way, there is no going back."

"I'm certain," I reply. "I wish to leave the Jedi behind forever."
I wake, and head out of the ship alone. I have plans of my own, and I leave behind Canderous to guard the ship for the moment. He doesn't appear too happy about it, but he says nothing. I don't bother with the gray robe this time. Today I'm posing as a Dark Jedi.

I might wind up getting killed in the process, but I'm prepared for that possibility. I still want to see if I can convince these Sith to bow down to me anyway. I'm the true Dark Lord of the Sith, damn it. I'm not going to kill potential allies if there's an alternative. I do, however, leave instructions for Canderous to open if something goes wrong and I don't come back by the end of the day.

I walk straight up to the entrance as if I belong there. I have every right to be here. My pass code works. I go right in.

The receptionist looks at my pass card and says, "This code is out of date."

"Incompetent fools," I growl. "How am I supposed to be expected to keep track of this shit when you keep changing it all the time?"

"I'm sorry for the inconvenience, sir--"

"You damned well better be!" I snap. "Do I fucking look like a Republic spy to you? Hello? Black robes?" I gesture down at me. "Red lightsaber?" I pull it out and ignite it. "Force Lightning?" I hold up my hand and it let crackle down my arm.

"Of course, sir," she says quickly. "Terribly sorry. No need to hurt me. You can go right on in. You should get a new pass card, though. When you get a chance."

I put my lightsaber away and angrily stride on past her without another word. I head on back to look around a bit and see if I can locate the Republic's missing droid or the kidnapped Selkath. I spend a bit of time getting lost, but I put on a mask of rage and impatience to the point that nobody wants to stop and question me.

There's the droid, tucked away in a storeroom that's luckily unattended at the moment. I quietly slip in, retrieve the memory core, and tuck it away into my robes. Now to find those Selkath.

Some ways down the corridor, I find another room in which there's nobody but one Selkath laying on the floor. He looks as though he's been tortured. I rush up and kneel at his side in hopes of healing him.

"Don't die on me here," I say. "I can still save you."

I push aside my anger. Most of it was faked anyway. I need the Light Side here. Compassion, caring, mercy, hope. I channel forth energy into the dying young Selkath, hoping that I'm fast enough to help him still.

"You... I feel better? You've saved me?" The young Selkath stands up unsteadily. "I am Galas, and my life is yours, Jedi."

"I'm Lexen Skywalker," I reply. "Where are the other Selkath?"

"Down the hall--" Galas begins, but his attention is turned behind me.

"Well, isn't this touching," says a dark voice. "A fish loving Jedi in disguise? How unique."

My cover is blown. If I attack, everyone in the base will know in an instant, if they don't already. I'm already on my knees with my back to this man. A Dark Jedi if my senses are accurate. Not a good
I raise my hands away from my body and say with a resigned sigh, "Alright, you've got me."

The Dark Jedi approaches me from behind and takes my lightsabers. "Smart move," he says, pulling my arms back to restrain my hands. "I am Kohl. I'd like to know how you got in here in the first place. There aren't so many Dark Jedi here that nobody realized there was one nobody recognized running around."

"So, you going to kill me?" I ask.

"Oh, no," Kohl says, grabbing the back of my neck and leaning close. "Killing's too easy for the likes of you. Much more satisfying to turn you to the Dark Side."

"You let him go!" Galas says. "You evil Sith almost killed me and he saved my life!"

"Galas, don't," I say firmly. "Don't throw that life away being foolish."

Kohl laughs. "Yes, listen to your new friend."

"But..." Galas says.

"Stand down, Galas," I say. "You have to realize that there are some fights you just won't win."

Galas sighs and says reluctantly, "Very well. I surrender also."

"Excellent," Kohl says, and leads the two of us into a small makeshift prison cell. "Let's play a little game, shall we?"

"Oh, I do love Sith games," I reply dryly. "Especially when they involve torture and death."

He chuckles softly. "You know how it is," Kohl says. "There are two of you in this cell. Only one will come out. Which one that is, is entirely up to you. I want you to kill one another."

"Lexen," Galas says. "You should kill me. Save yourself. I'd be dead without you anyway."

"How noble," Kohl says. "And Lexen, I expect you are going to say the same thing back at him, hmm?"

"No," I reply.

"No?" he says, raising an eyebrow.

"I am not so eager to throw my life away pointlessly," I reply. "I'm starting to think Galas must have been suicidal to begin with." I smirk faintly.

Galas looks at the floor. "I just disagreed with what was going on."

"You disagreed with Sith in the middle of a Sith base?" I reply. "That's either suicidal or too dumb to live."

Kohl laughs aloud. "Oh, that's rich. We have a sensible Jedi here for a change."

I shrug. "Need I also point out that you're asking me to kill someone while I'm unarmed and restrained?"
"You're a Jedi," Kohl says. "You can figure something out."

"Just checking," I say with a crooked grin. "Although really, is that the best you can do? Telling me to murder someone to try to turn me to the Dark Side? Where's the torture, the mind games? The forcing someone to watch someone else be tortured? I could do better than this. With my hands tied behind my back."

Kohl snorts in amusement. "This I'd like to see."

"Galas, what exactly were the Sith doing that you objected to, anyway?" I ask.

"I wanted to go home," Galas says. "They said that we could go free at any time we wished. But when I expressed a desire to leave, they tortured me instead..."

"Tsk, that's no good," I say, turning to Kohl again. "This is definitely not the way to do this. Draw them in by their own free will. There's no need to be secretive about it or go to such lengths if someone wishes to leave. You do it all out in the open, legitimately, and no one can object. The way you're doing things here makes the Sith look to be criminals, shady types who need to work undercover because they think they're doing something wrong."

Kohl blinks and stares at me. "That's preposterous. If we did that, the Jedi--"

"--wouldn't be able to do a thing about it, due to Manaan's neutrality, without risking their precious fucking Republic's kolto supply in the process," I reply.

"What kind of a Jedi are you?" Kohl wonders, looking at me in puzzlement.

"The kind that isn't afraid of the Dark Side," I tell him.

"But you healed that Selkath," Kohl says.

"So I did," I say. "But there's a reason why I wasn't afraid of you trying to turn me to the Dark Side, and it wasn't any Jedi bantha shit serenity."

"I don't believe this," Kohl says. "You're trying to trick me somehow."

I shrug. "Power isn't always a clear thing. Does it bother you to think that the one who seems restrained and helpless is actually the one in control here?"

"You are not the one in control here!" Kohl snaps, raising a hand and shocking me with a jolt of Force Lightning. Shocking agony. I should be used to this by now. But I find I never quite get used to being a victim of Force Lightning.

"Ah, there we go," I reply. "Go ahead. Torture me."

"Your bravado does you no credit," Kohl says, electrocuting me again.


"What the hell are you playing at, you crazy Jedi?" Kohl raises his hands again and sends another bolt of lightning through my body.

Strange. It hurts like hell, but it sparks my rage and makes me feel alive. It makes me feel like fighting, like killing. My blood burns with fury at the sensation. I chuckle darkly, and channel that fury into a small storm of my own, as if letting out the lightning I had just experienced.
"Yes..." I murmur. "I am the Stormseeker..."

"What the hell?" Kohl says.

The Dark Side courses through my veins. Such a wonderful feeling. A feeling of power. I could destroy every Sith in this base if the whim strikes me. I could kill them all.

"You were trying to turn me to the Dark Side, weren't you?" I say, laughing darkly. "Why should you be so surprised?"

"Um... yeah, embrace your rage! Give in to your hate!" Kohl says.

"I have no problem with that," I reply with a feral grin. "I must... kill..."

"Yes," Kohl says. "Kill this fish-man!"

Galas is looking at me in terror, but I barely notice his expression. With a burst of electricity, I easily snap my bonds and stands up. I'm filled with the desire to kill. An outlet to my rage, right in front of me. He's already offered me his life. His life already belongs to me. To do with as I please. To snuff out on a whim. To murder to sate my bloodlust...

No. I am in control. I am not so weak. I will do nothing but by choice. And I do not kill my allies. That's foolish and wasteful.

"Galas," I say. "You offered me your life. Swear that you will serve me."

"Yes, Stormseeker," Galas says quickly, terrified. "I do so swear."

"And you," I say, looking to Kohl. "Are you ally or enemy?"

"What?" he says. "I--"

"The Dark Side compels me to kill, to destroy," I say, pinning him with a stare. "But I am in control. I will not kill an ally. My mind is my own. My mind is not that weak. And the Sith tendency to kill allies on a whim is foolish and wasteful. Foolish and wasteful!"

"You--" Kohl says. "You've gone over to the Dark Side. I see no need to be your enemy now."

"Good," I say. I release my rage and let the storm around me die down. "But be aware that Galas has sworn himself to me. Therefore, if you should harm him, I will see you as an enemy."

"Do not threaten me, fool," Kohl says.

"That wasn't a threat," I say. "That was a warning. A warning of a wild animal that's likely to snap if you poke at it the wrong way."

"You are... strangely self-conscious," Kohl says.

I smirk. "I'm well aware of my own tendencies."

"And you seem far more experienced with the Dark Side than I would have given you credit for," he says.

"Heh," I say. "I've forgotten more about the Dark Side than you will ever know."

Kohl stares at me for a long moment. "I get the feeling that you were not especially hindered by
having your lightsabers taken away or being restrained." He returns my lightsabers to me.

I take them back and nod to him in silent thanks. "Perhaps I could have killed you at any time, if I had so wished. That was not my purpose here, however."

"Who are you?" Kohl asks.

I give him a wicked grin. "I'm Darth Revan."

Kohl stares at me speechlessly, as if trying to decide if my claim could be true or not. Finally, he says, "You're lying. This is some sort of trick."

I roll my eyes, and say flatly, "I don't lie."

"Do you really expect me to believe that you're a dead Sith Lord?" Kohl says.

I sigh in annoyance, and mutter, "I really need to find out what that stupid Rodian did with my mask."

"What?" Kohl says.

"Look, Kohl," I say. "I am the true Dark Lord of the Sith. I haven't slaughtered everyone in this base yet because, unlike that fool Malak, I think it's bloody stupid to kill people on your own side. Now, if you'd really rather support Malak, I'll be happy to commence with the slaughter instead of merely taking over the place."

I give him a broad, bloodthirsty grin. Go right ahead, give me an excuse to kill everyone here. I'm eager to shed some blood. The Dark Side is calling to me to give in to my bloodlust, and it's far easier to give it what it wants than to deny it. And I don't really want to deny it, either.

"I would be a fool to deny the true Dark Lord," Kohl finally says. From the sound in his voice, out of fear as much as anything else.

"Good," I say, straightening from my killing poise. "Now, remember what I was saying earlier? No more of this nonsense about kidnapping people and torturing them to death if they try to leave. I will not stand for impeding a being's free will like that. They will come to us willingly. I have faith in our teachings that we do not need to force them upon anyone."

"But..." Kohl says.

"No buts," I snap, glaring at him. "If I discover that you've disobeyed my orders, I will make you regret that choice."

"Y-- Yes, my lord," Kohl stammers.

I nod. "Now, I must speak with the other Selkath who are here. Carry on. Come, Galas."

I stride out of the room, followed by Galas, leaving Kohl to wonder just how he managed to go from imprisoning and torturing someone to bowing down to serve the same person so quickly.

I enter the room where the Selkath are gathered, and ask, "Which one of you is Shasa?"

"I am," says one, approaching. "Galas? I thought you were leaving."

"I was," Galas says. "And they nearly killed me over it, until this human stepped in."
I nod, and Shasa looks at me curiously. "And who might you be?" she says. "I don't recall seeing you here before."

"I am the Stormseeker," I say. "I'm currently going by my birth name, Lexen Skywalker. But you might know me better as Darth Revan."

"You are Darth Revan?" Shasa says in surprise. "But I heard you were dead."

"I got better," I reply. "Anyway, I've cracked down on Kohl's nonsense. I won't tolerate kidnapping people and then killing them if they try to leave, all in the guise of providing willing training."

"That's what they were really doing?" Shasa says with a touch of alarm.

Galas nods. "I just wanted to go home and see my family again..."

"Why don't we get everything out in the open?" I suggest. "Set up a neutral school for training Force users, and not one governed solely by the Sith or the Jedi. I've been looking for a place to set one up, myself. Do you think your people would go in for that?"

"I think something could be arranged," Shasa says.

"By the way, Shasa, your father is worried about you," I say. "He sent me to find you."

"He did?" Shasa says. "I should go see him."

Shasa, Galas, and I head out of the Sith base again. If Kohl should do anything stupid in the meantime, I will kill him. Slowly. The thought of having an excuse to torture someone to death excites me, thrills me, makes my blood burn. Should I be more disturbed about the hold the Dark Side has over me? No, this is my choice. I won't let foolish fears get in the way of power.

We head over to the cantina where I'd run across Shaelas before. Sure enough, he's there, pacing about nervously and imbibing questionable beverages.

"Father?" Shasa says, running up to him.

"Shasa!" Shaelas exclaims. "I feared that I might never see you again!"

"I'm alright, father," Shasa assures him.

"Master Jedi, you have my thanks for finding my daughter and bringing her safely back to me," Shaelas says. "Here, have some credits for your trouble."

"Well, I'm never one to turn down credits," I reply with a shrug, accepting the reward.

"What did they do to you, Shasa?" Shaelas says.

"They were training us to use the Force," Shasa replies. "Not so bad in and of itself, but this human here put a stop to their more unpleasant practices."

"Shaelas," I say. "I'd like to provide a neutral school for training Force users, for the Selkath and anyone else that freely wishes to learn. Without the bias of either the Jedi or the Sith's teachings. Do you think it would be possible to set something like that up in Ahto City?"

"Hmm," Shaelas says. "Perhaps so."

"Could you try and make the necessary arrangements?" I say.
"I will do so," Shaelas promises. "But in whose name am I doing this? I'm afraid I never did catch your name, Master Jedi."

"Lexen Skywalker," I reply. "The Stormseeker. If need be, you can contact me via my ship, the Ebon Hawk."

"Very well," Shaelas says. "I will let you know what comes of it."

I bid them farewell, and head off out of the cantina, followed by Galas. He says quietly, "What's going to become of me, now?"

"What do you mean?" I ask.

"I swore an oath to serve you," Galas says a little uneasily. "What do you intend to do with me?"

"You wanted to see your family, didn't you?" I say. "I won't hold someone against their own free will. And if you choose to serve me, that doesn't mean you need to follow me around constantly, either."

Galas visibly relaxes. "I see. Thank you, my lord. I'll go see them now, then." He runs off.

I return to the Ebon Hawk. Jolee is pacing around the main operations room, and Canderous is doing a little maintenance on his blaster in a way that seems like he's itching to shoot something with it. They stop and look over at me when I walk in.

"There you are, kid," Jolee says. "You keep running off into dangerous situations by yourself, and it's got everyone worried."

"Heh, relax," I say. "All I did was take over the Sith on the planet."

"Pity," Canderous says. "I was hoping to shoot them instead."

I snicker softly. "Well, I did need to threaten them a bit, but they eventually fell into line."

"Falling back into old habits, Revan?" Jolee says lightly.

I cast him a glare. I don't need judgments from any Jedi. "What's it to you?" I say. "You're not exactly a paragon of light yourself."

Jolee says, "Do you realize when you look at people like that, your eyes flash yellow for a moment?"

"They do?" I say, raising an eyebrow. Could that be why that 'murderous glare' of mine got so many people terrified?

Jolee shrugs. "Far be it from me to judge you, kid. Why don't we find some kath puppies to kick later?"

"But I like puppies!" I protest, and Jolee laughs.
Drowning in the Dark

Chapter by Keolah

The storm rips our sails to shreds. My vessel is sinking.

I try to keep myself afloat atop the raging sea. Swimming against the fury of the storm. Struggling furiously myself.

I can't keep it up forever. The storm threatens to overwhelm me. I'm slipping beneath the waves. Drowning. Water surrounding me. Consuming me. Crushing me.

I can't breathe. Water. Forcing its way into my lungs. I reach up toward the light. Toward the storm. Toward salvation. Hope.

But it's too late. I can't fight any longer. I'm too weak. I'm drawn down into darkness. Sinking into darkness. Falling into darkness.

The storm claims me.

I wake with a gasp. I'm not drowning. Bah, am I so concerned about heading underneath Manaan's ocean that I'm remembering some instance where I drowned to death?

Well, no sense dwelling on it. I go out to grab some breakfast with the crew. "We'll be heading down to find the Star Map today," I say. "Canderous, Jolee Bindo, you're with me."

Once everyone is done eating, the three of us head over toward the Republic embassy. I don't bother with a damned disguise this time. What do I need those gray robes for, anyway? They'll just get in the way and needlessly hinder my movements. The Republic people should recognize me and my companions as having been in here before, anyway.

"Ah, you're back," Roland says. "Have you had any luck with your mission? I haven't heard about any break-ins at the Sith base."

I pull out the droid's memory core and hand it over to him. "Some of us are more capable of subtlety than that. If you heard about a break-in, then I was doing something wrong."

"Well, I'm glad you were successful," Roland says. "And succeeding without an incident is only all the better. I'll make sure our submersible is available whenever you want to go down. But I must brief you on what's going on down there first."

"Didn't you do that already?" I say. "Or is there something else you haven't told me yet?"

"I didn't tell you everything," Roland says. "You see, we've recently lost contact with Hrakert Station. We've been sending mercenaries down to find out what happened, but so far, no one has come back."

"Of course things couldn't be simple," I say dryly. "Alright, we'll go down and find out what happened down there."

The three of us get into the submarine. Claustrophic. As we head down, I can't shake the feeling that I'm going to drown down in the dark. Silly fears. It's not like I can't just come back from the dead, anyway. I put those fears out of my mind.
We arrive down at Hrakert Station and climb out of the sub. Things seem eerily quiet down here. Too quiet. Especially when that quiet is punctuated by the occasional strange distant wailing sound echoing through the base.

There's a a Twi'lek mercenary hiding in the submersible bay, looking terrified. He was probably waiting for someone to come and rescue him. We approach him.

"You don't want to go in there," the Twi'lek says. "It's terrible! The fish-men have all gone crazy and are attacking everything on sight! We've got to get out of here!"

"Are you going to try to steal my sub?" I ask. "Because I have a mission here, and I'm going in there anyway. And if things are going to try attacking me, I'm going to kill them."

"Um..." the Twi'lek says nervously. "I won't steal your sub, I swear."

"I don't believe you," I say. I pull out my red lightsaber and hold it up to his face. "Now, I have no desire to be stranded down here. Do I need to kill you in order to make sure of that?"

I'm eager for blood, and if this fool is going to give me an excuse to kill him, I'll happily take it. My heart is already racing at the thought of the glorious slaughter ahead. But why not start it off right with someone who is still right in the head and capable of understanding what fear means?

"Don't kill me, Mr. Dark Jedi, sir, please!" the Twi'lek begs pitifully. "I just want to get out of here alive! I'll wait for you to come back! I won't touch your sub! I promise!"

"Sorry, I don't trust you," I say.

No, I'm not really sorry. But before I can make a killing blow upon him, Jolee interrupts me. "You know, kid, we could just lock the sub down with a code to make sure nobody steals it while we're away."

"You have a point," I admit, backing down.

As I go to do that, the Twi'lek says to Jolee, "Thank you so much, Mr. Jedi, for saving me from that psychopath." Apparently thinking I can't hear him from where I am.

I finish up and go over to stand in front of the Twi'lek again. "If you even think about touching my sub while we're gone, I will cut off your hands."

The Twi'lek can't manage a response at this point, just whimpering pathetically and crawling into the corner behind some boxes to hide again. I shrug and head on into the facility. He's of no concern to me at the moment.

The place is full of crazed Selkath, and I fall into battle mode, sating my bloodlust by slaughtering my way through them. They're like animals, throwing themselves at us blindly and without any sense or strategy.

"Hmm," Jolee says. "Looks like the rest of the place has been flooded."

"Better see if we can find some environment suits," Canderous says.

"Yeah, I don't think you could hold your breath long enough," Jolee says. "And the pressure would crush us like eggs."

We locate a storage room that has some diving gear, and get ourselves suited up for a trip outside.
Passing through an airlock, we walk out onto the sea floor. The place is swarming with firaxan sharks, to which I'm glad that these suits are equipped with sonic emitters to fend them off.

After some slogging through the water in heavy pressure suits, we reach a door leading into a part of the facility we couldn't reach before. We head inside and pass through another airlock, and gratefully strip out of our suits for the moment. There are several other environment suits stacked along the walls in the room we come in at.

Hacking our way past a few more crazed fish-men, we come upon a room with a forcefield in it, and some survivors on the other side. Who start screaming at us incoherently, seal us in the room, and start pumping it full of poison.

"Oh, for fuck's sake," I mutter, going over to a nearby terminal to shut off the gratuitous deadly neurotoxin, and then the forcefield. "You're humans, don't tell me you've gone crazy down here too?"

"I'm sorry!" says the woman in a panic. "We thought you were going to attack us! We're the only survivors we know of. I'm Sami, and this is Kono."

"Well, it's good to see somebody alive down here," Jolee says. "I'd make that 'somebody alive who didn't try to kill us on sight', but you disqualified yourself from that."

Kono says, "When all the Selkath went mad, we locked ourselves in here. We're scientists, we can't fight our way through that!"

"You're safe now, don't worry," I say. "And most of the Selkath are dead now."

"Those poor Selkath," Sami says. "They all went wild the minute that giant firaxa showed up."

"There's a giant shark out there?" I say, raising an eyebrow.

"We uncovered some strange ruins while mining the kolto," Kono says. "And then this enormous firaxan shark came out of this chasm and did something to the Selkath."

"I see," I say. So we'll need to get past this shark if we want to get the Star Map, from the sounds of things. Typical.

"I've been working on a way to deal with the beast," Kono says. "You can release a toxin into the water using the kolto harvesting equipment. That should be enough to kill the monster."

"But we don't know what that would do to the environment, or the kolto!" Sami argues. "I think the firaxa is trying to protect the kolto, and was able to call to the Selkath somehow. If you destroy the kolto harvesting equipment, that might be able to calm the shark down again, and maybe even any of the Selkath who might still be alive down here."

"You can't do that!" Kono argues. "Think of all the time and money that would be wasted on this project!"

I snort softly. "Time? Money? What about all the lives that were lost down here? And wouldn't it be a little pointless to have kolto harvesters but no kolto that can be harvested?"

"We don't know that would happen," Kono argues.

"You didn't know a lot of things going into this project, it seems," I say. "Was it all just for the money? Or for hopes of an advantage for the Republic? Now, I'd be a hypocrite if I argued against
killing things for money or for taking questionable measures to get an advantage for your side. But it seems to me like you could have done a little more research before starting in on the kolto mining."

"We took every precaution--" Kono begins.

"Apparently not," I reply. "Do you even know where the kolto comes from? What it's made of? I can understand not having a way to synthesize it readily, but that only means you should be even more cautious about messing with the galaxy's only supply of the stuff."

"The Republic's reliance on kolto makes them weak," Canderous says. "We Mandalorians have no need of it."

"Most humans are weak," I comment dryly. "Anyway, let's go see what we can do about this shark. The two of you should head back and meet us at the submerible bay. The way back should be safe now."

We head out onto the sea floor again. Across a gorge, I can see ruins that look similar to the ones where we found the other Star Maps. And there's also a giant firaxan shark swimming around near it.

"Would you look at the size of that thing!" Jolee says.

"How are we going to kill that?" Canderous wonders.

"Poison would be wrong," I say. "Did we bring enough explosives?"

"Poison is wrong, but explosives are okay?" Jolee says.

"Honor, damn it," I reply.

"I like his ideas of honor," Canderous says.

As it turns out, not only do we not have nearly enough explosives, but the ones we brought don't work very well underwater anyway.

"Alright, this isn't going to work," I say. "Let's see about destroying that mining equipment. I doubt that will help either, but it's worth a shot. I'm sure as hell not going to put poison in the water, anyway."

I head over to the terminal controlling the machinery. It's hard to make machines work perfectly. It's far easier to do something wrong. Catastrophically wrong, if you either know what you're doing or you don't know what you're doing badly enough. After poking at it a bit, I find something I can exploit that will irreparably damage the kolto harvesters. People take shortcuts all the time, and don't put in the proper safeguards against things that they think should never happen.

The equipment makes a sickening grinding noise echoing through the water, followed by crunching sounds. Bits of scrap metal drop off of it and drift to the sea floor. The giant shark across the rift seems to be watching.

"I think it's calming down," Jolee says.

"Really?" I say, staring at the beast. "If you think so, why don't you go over there and find out, then?"

"Well, fine, I think I will," Jolee says.

Jolee heads over to the bridge across the rift. Sure enough, the giant shark doesn't attack him. He
pauses for a moment, reaching out a hand almost to touch the creature. Seeing as he's alright, I head over there as well.

"A magnificent creature," Jolee says. "It would have been a shame to have to kill it."

"That's true," I admit, looking up at the shark. "There's a lot of strength and power there."

"And my blaster isn't designed to work at the bottom of the ocean," Canderous says ruefully.

I go over and pick up the Star Map data, and then the three of us head back. We cross through the now-empty facility and back to the submersible bay. The two scientists arrived before us and are waiting for us to return, and the Twi'lek mercenary is still cowering behind a box in abject terror.

"Alright, we're leaving now," I say. "Unless you want to be left behind, I suggest getting into the sub now."

The Twi'lek pokes his head up tentatively, and is probably debating between the dangers of being left alone here versus traveling in close quarters with a psychotic Dark Jedi. But after a few moments, he decides to risk the sub, and climbs aboard after my team and the scientists.

"Did you kill that monster shark?" Kono asks.

"No, and we most certainly didn't poison the water, either," I reply. "I destroyed the machinery."

"How could you do that?" Kono says. "After all that investment!"

"It was the right thing to do," Sami says. "We were interfering in its home. Of course it would be upset about that."

"But how would it realize that we were no longer a danger to it?" Kono says. "It's just an animal."

"After the machinery was destroyed, we walked right up to it and almost touched it," I say. "I'd say that's a fair bet that it understood more than you give it credit for."

"I'd say that shark is smarter than many humans," Jolee comments.

We return topside, where we're greeted by Roland Wann in the Republic embassy. "You're back! You were gone a while. I was worried something had happened to you, too."

I snort softly. "All things considered, I'd say we were pretty quick about it. We got what we were looking for and solved your problems, too. You aren't going to be doing anymore kolto mining down there, though, on pain of being eaten by giant shark."

"What?" Roland says.

"I'll let you debrief the scientists about it," I say. "But I suggest supplying them with something strong to drink first, after what they've been through. We'll be off now."

Roland is trying to stammer out more questions even as I walk away, followed by Jolee and Canderous. As we step outside of the Republic embassy, we're confronted by several armed Selkath.

"Humans," one of them addresses us. "Come with us. You're wanted for questioning regarding recent events in the Hrakert Rift."

"Very well," I say. "But there's no need for weapons. I've no intention of fighting you."
"Your cooperation is appreciated," the Selkath says.

The three of us are led back over to the Ahto City courthouse again, the same building we visited for Sunry's trial.

"Lexen Skywalker?" says the Chief Justice. "We detected explosions from within the Hrakert Rift, shortly before your submersible returned to the surface. Explain your actions."

"The Republic sent me down to their secret research facility where they were mining kolto," I say. "They told me they'd recently lost contact with the station and I was sent to investigate."

"What?" says one of the other judges. "The Republic had a station down there?"

"I know of this facility, but please hold your questions for now," says the Chief Justice. "Go on."

"Yes, there were a number of Selkath down there, who were driven insane by the presence of a gigantic firaxan shark," I say.

"Could it be?" says another judge. "The Progenitor?"

"And what happened with this shark?" the Chief Justice says.

"I found some human scientists who had survived the events, who advocated releasing a toxin into the water to kill the shark," I say. "But I rejected that suggestion, and instead destroyed the kolto harvesting equipment, which calmed the shark down, and I was able to rescue a few survivors."

"So, you saved the Progenitor and protected the kolto?" says one of the judges.

I diplomatically don't mention that I'd been planning to kill the shark if there were a more convenient way to do so, and destroying the machinery wasn't my first option. They don't need to know that part.

"Indeed," I agree. "The creature was surely a sight to behold."

"You are to be commended for your actions," the Chief Justice says. "The Progenitor is the ancestor of our species, according to legend, and we believe her to be the source of the kolto."

"I'm just glad that I could help," I say. Even if I didn't get paid for it. Maybe I should have signed on as a mercenary after all. At least then I could have gotten a bit more money for what I was going to do anyway. Ah, well.

"Your respect for our people is admirable," the Chief Justice says. "I understand that you have requested permission to open an independent school for Force users in Ahto City?"

"I did," I say. "It would be nice to have an alternative for Force sensitives, without the restrictions and agendas of either the Jedi or the Sith."

"Aren't you a Jedi?" the Chief Justice says. "And a member of the Republic?"

"Not exactly," I say. "Technically, I have had associations with both the Republic and the Sith, but I don't really support either of them."

The judges converse amongst themselves for a few moments before the Chief Justice replies, "It is an unusual request, and perhaps not one that we would normally agree to. But you have proven yourself to be a friend to the Selkath people and have the best interests of Manaan at heart. You may make preparations for your school whenever you wish."
"Thank you, Your Honor," I say, giving a bow. "I'll try not to disappoint."

We return to the Ebon Hawk and start making ready to leave Manaan.

"I hope that last Star Map gave us enough information to find the Star Forge, or this has all been a waste of time," Canderous says.

"Piecing things together now," I murmur. "Let's see... got it!"

There it is. There's the Star Forge. I memorize the data. Just in case.

"So are we heading there next?" Canderous asks.

I shake my head. "We'll stop by Dxun first, and also get Carth to call in the Republic. I'm not going in there without a fleet."

"Good plan," Canderous says.

I'm looking forward to killing Malak. To seeing the look on his face as he realizes I'm better than him, and he's dying by my hand. To watch him as his life fades from his body. It will be sweet, sweet revenge.
"We made it to Alderaan in record time, I think," Han Solo says. "Looks like we got here ahead of those Imperials, too."

"Come," Obi-Wan says. "We must find Bail Organa as quickly as possible."

We manage to find Bail Organa in short order. Our pleas of urgency, and Obi-Wan's name as well as my own, get us ushered in quickly.

"Obi-Wan," Bail says. "It's good to see you again. You have the Death Star plans?"

"They're contained in this droid's memory banks," Obi-Wan says.

"Excellent," Bail says. "We'll get these to the rebels, and find a weakness in the super-weapon's defenses." He pauses, and looks at a screen where a message just popped up. "Oh no. The Imperials followed you?"

"They couldn't have known where we were going," Han insists.

"An Imperial fleet just dropped out of hyperspace," Bail says. "The Death Star is with them."

"Shit," I say. "We need to get back to the Millennium Falcon!"

"But, what about all of the people here?" Bail says. "There's over two billion people on this planet!"

"If the Death Star is here, Alderaan is already lost," I say. "We need to get this data out of here, at any cost!"

There's a rumbling sound like unearthly thunder.

"What in the hell was that?" Han Solo says.

"Fuck," I murmur. "We're too late."

The ground shakes. The earth trembles. Impossibly wide chasms tear apart the landscape. Everything breaks apart. The world shatters.

A billion voices cry out in pain and are abruptly silenced.

I wake, rubbing my eyes. Ugh, another Death Star nightmare? How many planets did that thing destroy? Or should I say, will? May, might? It's not certain. I can still prevent it, somehow.

I head out to grab some quick breakfast. We're still en route to Dxun. I think I'll meditate a bit. First, though, I glance through my journal. I haven't forgotten anything since I last looked at it, but I hadn't really expected to, since I haven't died lately.

Is forgetting things really a price to pay, or damage to the mind? Or did I, at some point, choose to forget something that I wanted to forget that badly? I was already having memory problems when I first arrived on Dantooine, but who knows what might have happened before then? How many lives I might have lived before then?
I have multiple contradictory memories of what I was doing from the age of ten or so onward. How many times did I apparently go all the way back to that starting point to do it all over again? How ironic would it be to think that so many of my problems are self-inflicted?

And yet, I can understand it. How many lives could I live, retaining the full memory of every terrible thing that was inflicted upon me? Of every atrocity that I had to witness, or committed myself? Would the weight of all those deeds, all those possibilities, drive a man mad? Maybe it wasn't any incident in particular that might've made me want to forget. Maybe it was just hitting a breaking point.

I think it is time for me to stop being afraid of my memories. If I were given the choice, I would rather choose to remember than to forget. If I forget, then all these lives were in vain. All these sacrifices. To forget is true death. If this is a burden, then it is my burden to bear.

I pull out my journal and open it up to the entry I skipped over before. The entry that was alluded to in other places as having been too horrible to bear. But I must not fear. They're only memories. They can't hurt me anymore. They can't control me.

I steel my mind and read forth. The Sith Emperor? He manipulated Mandalore. He manipulated me. Crushing my will. Forcing me to do things.

_I have seen the face of evil..._

I will not fear. I will look this evil in the face and stand firm. There's no reason to be afraid. He's not here. It's not like he can do anything to me from here.

_He will find me no matter where I go..._

No. I will not fall victim again. I will not be a slave. Not again. Never again.

I focus. I try to bring order to my mind. Calm. Peace. But they elude me. My mind is a raging storm. There's nothing here but fear and anger and hate. Fine, then I will draw strength from that instead. I will hate this being who took my freedom from me, and use my rage to break my chains forever.

_I will not be weak!_

I am not weak.

*Peace is a lie, there is only passion. Through passion, I gain strength. Through strength, I gain power. Through power, I gain victory. Through victory, my chains are broken. The Force shall free me.*

I am the Dark Lord of the Sith. And I will not be beholden to anyone.

"Hey, kid? We're about to drop out of hyperspace."

That must be Jolee. Nobody else calls me 'kid'. I bring myself back to the present and focus. I'm not even really annoyed at being interrupted. I think I just must have looked like I was reading, not actually meditating.

I put my journal away and stand up. "Alright."

"Lexen, are you angry?" Jolee asks.

"No," I say.
"Your eyes are still yellow," Jolee points out.

"Ah," I say. "I finally went all the way over, didn't I. Well, I figured it would happen eventually..."

"You okay with that?" Jolee asks.

I shrug. "I can't imagine Carth will be happy. No help for it."

How long can one act before it ceases to be acting? How long can one wear a mask before becoming the mask?

I head out of the crew quarters. The Ebon Hawk drops out of hyperspace and comes in for a landing on the moon Dxun. Canderous makes the approach carefully, without drawing too much attention to us from the planet of Onderon, which Dxun orbits. Hopefully, they have no idea that there's an army of Mandalorians massing so close to them.

I step out into the Mandalorian encampment in the jungles of Dxun. It's been a long time since I've been here. It feels like a lifetime ago, especially considering I remember little of being here before. My students have been sequestered off in a side building, and neither group appears to be too happy to be around one another.

I approach Yuthura Ban. "Good news," I tell her. "We're setting up a school on Manaan."

"Manaan?" Yuthura says. "How did you get the Selkath to agree to that?"

"They liked the idea of a neutral school," I say. "Although I think the fact that I saved their god-shark-thing had more to do with it. Anyway, get packed up and ready to go."

"Yes, Stormseeker," Yuthura says.

I go over to find Juhani. "Juhani, I'd like you to go with the group setting up the school on Manaan."

"Of course, Master," Juhani says. "May I ask why?"

"Because I trust you," I say. "I don't know these others very well, and while I have confidence that I chose them well, I'd like someone I know better to keep an eye on things."

"Very well," Juhani says. "Thank you for your confidence in me."

"Take Neeja as well," I add. "I don't want to drag her into a war zone."

Now to locate Carth. I find him eating lunch while chatting with Dustil inside the Jedi building. "Sorry to interrupt," I say. "We need to talk war."

"Of course," Carth says.

Dustil says, "Should I go?"

"You should get packed to go to the new school soon," I say. "But you can listen if you like. I don't mind."

"Alright," Dustil says, settling in to stay for a bit longer.

"Did you get the location of the Star Forge?" Carth asks. I can't help but think he's looking at me uneasily. Judging me.
I nod. "A system not on the standard star charts, in the Unknown Regions, called Lehon." I pass him the data.

"I'll see if I can call in a Republic fleet," Carth says.

"And I'll rally the Mandalorians," I say. "Make sure your Republic friends know that the Mandalorians are on the same side this time, okay?"

"Right," Carth says, smirking. "I never thought I'd be fighting side by side with Mandalorians."

"You've been doing just that with Canderous," I point out.

"True enough, I suppose," Carth says. "It's just weird, and I'm still uneasy about it, but I can't argue that we can use all the resources we can get at this point. We're taking out a Sith fleet with an infinite supply of ships, after all."

Dustil asks, "Are the students going to be fighting in the battle?"

I shake my head. "I'd rather have you guys go to the safety of the new school on Manaan. I'm giving you the location of the Star Forge also. If the worst should occur... it'll fall to the rest of you to do what needs to be done."

"I understand," Dustil says, frowning.

"Note that when I say 'the worst', I don't necessarily mean all of us dying," I say. "That would be pretty bad, but not the worst possible outcome. The worst outcome would be me somehow falling under the control of the Sith Emperor again, taking the Star Forge for myself, and going on to conquer the galaxy."

"You always come up with the most wonderful hypotheticals," Carth says dryly. "And you wonder why I was so paranoid about you at first?"

I chuckle softly. "You say that like you're not paranoid of me now."

"I am not!" Carth protests. "Well, maybe a little..."

"Admit it, you think I could turn into a psychotic killing machine at any moment," I say.

"What do you mean 'turn into'?" Carth says wryly.

I snicker. "But so long as I'm psychotically killing people that we can agree are bad, it's okay, right?"

"It's still creepy," Carth says. "And I still think you like killing just a little too much. But so long as you've enough self-control to restrict it to enemies, I'm not going to get on your case about it."

"Let's just see about making arrangements," I say. "It'll take us several days to get to Lehon from here, and we need to make sure both fleets arrive at around the same time. May the Force never falter."

"I haven't heard that one before," Carth says. "Not 'May the Force be with you'?"

"Or 'May the Force serve you well'?" Dustil adds.

"It's a saying from my homeworld," I say. "Although I don't think I have it quite right. They were a primitive people. They didn't call it the Force. Hmm... Yes, it was 'May your magic never falter'. That was it. And it had a traditional response, too. 'And may yours find its favor.'"
"People are going to think you're strange if you start going around talking about 'magic'," Carth says, smirking. "But I think you're well beyond the point where people think you're strange. So, may yours find its favor, then."

I head off to deal with the Mandalorians next. They salute when they see me walking by them. They were practically worshipful of me before, due to the war. But the things I've done in recent days have only served to build upon my legend.

It feels a little strange not wearing a mask. Almost wrong, somehow. With a mask, I was an icon. A symbol. An idol. I was more than a man. Without it, I'm just an ordinary human being. Just a man, that can die like any other. Except that I can't.

I pass along the location of Lehon to them. "Call in every ship we can get," I say. "We're going to be working with the Republic on this one. Temporary alliance, to bring down Malak."

"Do we really need the Republic's help on this?"

I chuckle. "We're going up against an essentially infinite fleet here. And there's only so many surviving forces that we've been able to recover so far." I pause for a moment, looking off. "Although once we're done here, I'm thinking of conquering Dantooine."

The Mandalorians are much cheered by the prospect of conquest, even if it's a soft target. They stop complaining about having to work with the Republic for the moment.

With the wheels set into motion, I head off to somewhere quiet and overlooking the jungle to meditate for a bit. To focus my mind and my memory. No matter what happens, I don't want to forget a thing. No matter how bad it is. I will deal with it. I will be strong. I will pass through the fire without being burned. I will weather the storm.

I remember Dxun. I remember the feints upon feints to root out the Mandalorians upon this moon. I remember the staggering losses it cost the Republic. Victory came with a high price.

And now, as allies rather than enemies, I plan to use the Republic to absorb losses that would otherwise fall upon Mandalorians. If I can get Bastila's Battle Meditation on our side, it won't matter. She'll buy us a clear victory no matter what else happens.

Bastila. I remember how she saved me from the bridge of my burning flagship. It worries me not to know how she's doing. But I have faith in her. She will be loyal to me. Dark or light, Malak will have no hold on her.

I think of Dantooine. I remember how I arrived there, as a child, remembering nothing. I remember my training there. I remember Arren Kae. My first teacher, and my last. She had strange ideas, for a Jedi, but so long as they believed her on the side of the light, they said nothing against her.

But it's strange. Now I'm remembering things, not as flashes, not as reliving terrible events. But as memories. I'm remembering things as memories. I almost have to laugh at the fact that I find that to be a strange thing now.

I accept it all. I embrace it all. The good and the bad. The highs and the lows. Pleasure and pain. Joy and sorrow. Love and hate. All of it is mine. All of these experiences. And I wouldn't trade them for anything. The things I wish I could change, and the things I wish could last forever. I hold them all dear.

At last, for one moment, I am calm.
I step into the room to meet with the Jedi Council. Vandar looks askance at me. Zhar is laughing aloud. Even Vrook is snickering. What's so funny? Oh. I look down, and realize that I'm not wearing any pants.

I wake, and rub my eyes. Did that ever really happen? But that dream seemed strange. It was surreal, and now it's fading fast.

No, wait. That's how dreams are supposed to be. That was just a normal dream. Upon realizing that, I have to laugh softly. It's kind of refreshing, really. I feel better than I have in a long time.

I go out to get some breakfast before we arrive at Lehon, and then head to the cockpit. Carth's back at the helm again for the moment, and Canderous is also there.

"Do you time waking up to coincide with dropping out of hyperspace?" Canderous asks.

"Not always," I say. "Sometimes it just works out that way."

"Heh," Canderous says. "I was expecting some sort of Force crap, on how you'd sense some disturbance and wake up in anticipation or something."

"I was dreaming about going in front of the Jedi Council without any pants," I say. "I suppose I'd consider that a disturbance. Or at least disturbing."

We drop out of hyperspace, and the Mandalorian fleet pops into existence around us as well. Not so many of them as I might have hoped for, but more than I had expected. A few minutes later, the Republic fleet arrives in force as well.

"I'm picking up a large space station located near the sun," Carth says.

"The Star Forge," I say. "Order all units to move in."

Canderous and Carth send out my orders to the Mandalorians and Republic, and the fleets move in to approach the Star Forge. This is the moment of truth. This is where everything will come to a head. This is--

"We've been caught in some sort of disruption field!" Carth exclaims.

I forgot about that.

The fleet gets pulled in by the defense field as well. A few ships at the back manage to pull away in time to avoid being drawn in, but the majority of the vessels wind up careening down out of the sky and toward Lehon. The Ebon Hawk included.

Carth desperately tries to bring us in for a landing that won't leave us incinerated. The Ebon Hawk veers out of control, sending us crashing down into the ground.

The Ebon Hawk slams into the ground. I go flying into a bulkhead. The last thing I hear is a sickening crack as my neck snaps.
I wake up, groan, and rub my neck. We really need to install seatbelts on this crate. Of course, it would have helped if I had been seated to begin with. Idiot.

I pull out my journal and glance through it to see what I've forgotten. Hmm, no, I recognize all of these things. Did I actually manage to get through a death without forgetting? Have I solved my memory problems? If so, then that's absolutely wonderful. I breathe a sigh of relief, tuck my journal safely in a compartment, and head out for breakfast.

Once I'm done eating, I head to the cockpit. "Let's not go crashing into the planet," I say.

"What makes you think we're going to crash?" Carth says.

"There's a disruption grid in this system," I say. "We're going to need to slip in and disable it before we can bring the fleet in. When we drop out of hyperspace, send out a message to all units to hold position."

"Got it," Carth says.

We come out of hyperspace, and Carth and Canderous get the word out to wait. I also get the word out to the crew that we're going to be in for a rough landing, and have Carth bring us in as carefully as he can manage.

The crash still sounds pretty awful, but at least we're prepared for it this time. Once the ship grinds to a halt, we assess the damage.

"That completely trashed our stabilizers," Carth says. "Where are we going to find new ones down here?"

"I saw a lot of wreckage on the way down," Canderous says. "Who knows how many ships have crashed here over the years?"

"But isn't this system supposed to be a secret?" Carth says.

"Yeah, and I imagine it's stayed a secret because everyone that's found the place crashed and burned," I comment.

"Point," Carth says.

"Alright, stay here and do what repairs you can," I say. "Canderous and I will go scout around and see what we can find."

Carth nods, and I head out of the cockpit to collect Jolee and HK-47 as well.

"Query: Do you wish me to kill something for you, Master?" HK asks excitedly.

"It'll probably come to that, yeah," I say.

The four of us head out of the ship. This place looks like a perfect spot for a tropical vacation. Lapping ocean, swaying palm trees, pristine sands, monsters looking to rip our faces off... And then there's the gizka.

"How did gizka get here?" Canderous wonders as HK-47 takes one as target practice.

"I imagine one of the ships that crashed here was probably infested with them," I say. "And they just spread like the pest they are."
After fighting our way through some of the wildlife, we come upon the wreckage of a ship, and proceed to search it for parts. Sure enough, there's some stabilizers there that might just do the trick. With those in hand, we return to the Ebon Hawk.

"Alright, I'll start getting these installed," Carth says. "But we're still not going anywhere unless we can get that disruption field shut down."

I nod. "We'll do some more exploring, and see if we can find the source of it, or a control console, or something. There's got to be something around here somewhere."

My team heads out again to continue our exploration. A bit further on, we come upon what appears to be a primitive settlement. Natives of the planet, or survivors of crashes? Probably the former. I don't recognize the design, although I get the feeling I should. It doesn't really bother me too much that I haven't managed to restore all my memories yet. It's enough if I've stopped forgetting them, at least.

As we approach the settlement, several reptilian humanoids stop and greet us. "You! You return. Come! The One will wish to speak with you."

"Do you understand them?" Canderous asks me.

I nod. "I'll assume that I picked up their language last time I was here."

"Well, let me know if you need something shot at, then," Canderous says.

"I will speak with the One," I reply to the natives in the same language.

Rakata, that's what they were called. We follow the Rakata into their compound. We come before one of them who looks different from the others.

"You!" the One says to me. "You return, after so long? You promised us that you would wipe out the Elders! But you have not done so!"

"Sorry, I've had amnesia," I reply. "I don't know why I didn't follow through with my promise. I don't remember much of my previous visit here."

If I actually made such a promise to them, I must have been serious about this. I don't make promises lightly, after all. So why didn't I fulfill this promise?

"Query: Master, are we going to slaughter these Elder meatbags?" HK-47 asks. Right, he understands the same languages I do.

"I need to find a way to shut down the planetary defense field and get to the Star Forge," I tell the One.

"You asked the same of us when you were here before," the One replies. "And I will tell you again that you will need to get into the Temple for that. Only one who has blood of power may enter the Temple. But we Rakata have long since lost that power. Still, the Elders should have knowledge of a way inside. Kill them and bring us any books you find among them, and we will help you."

"That sounds like a plan," I reply.

If I really did make a promise to them, I should make good on it. And if it'll help me get into the Star Forge, so much the better. Besides, HK and Canderous are itching for a fight.
We head out of the primitive settlement and follow their directions to where the Elders' compound is located. It's a bit of a walk down the beach. If they hate each other so much, why did they set up their camps so close to one another? But then I notice that both of them are also close to the temple, just located on opposite sides from it. That's probably why. They're vying for control of a building that none of them can even access any longer.

The Elders' settlement looks somewhat more technologically advanced than the One's place. I imagine that they're still clinging to old bits of technology that they barely understand any longer. Were these the people behind the Infinite Empire, that once spanned many worlds in ancient days? How the mighty have fallen.

We gain access to the compound and proceed to start slaughtering them all. Such delicious bloodlust. I let my rage take over and sweep through like a storm. They all fall before my blades.

At last, it is done. My fury cools a bit as I stand over the dismembered corpses of the fallen Rakata. With that taken care of, I search the area for valuables and knowledge. I do find a large tome that seems to be about the temple. That must be what the One was hoping for.

With the tome in hand, we return to the One and give it over to him. "The Elders are dead," I tell him.

"Ah!" the One exclaims. "I had feared that you would go back on your promise again and try dealing with the Elders instead. But I see my fears were unfounded. Perhaps you speak the truth about your memories."

"I don't make a habit of lying," I say. "Can you get me into the temple?"

"Yes, yes," the One says. "This book details a ritual that will allow access to the temple. You must, however, go alone."

"Why?" I ask. "Is that some sort of ancient tradition?"

"Yes," the One says.

"Do you really care that much about the Elders' traditions?" I ask.

"Well, when you put it that way, no," the One says. "Fine, you may take whatever other powered beings you wish, then. When you go in there, search for any more books of ancient lore and bring them to us. That's all I ask as compensation for our help."

"I thought killing the Elders was compensation for your help," I say.

"That was necessary so that we could get you into the temple in the first place," the One says.

I shrug. "It doesn't matter. It was a pleasure to kill them. I'll take a look around for any information for you while I'm in there, too."

I turn to my companions and address them in Basic. "They can open the way into the temple. However, only Force users can go inside. Jolee, you want to enter the temple with me?"

"Of course," Jolee says. "I didn't come this far with you just to back out at the end."

My team, as well as the One and several other Rakata, make our way to the temple entrance. The ritual takes some time to prepare, and I have Canderous and HK stand watch to make sure nothing attacks us in the meantime.
Finally, the way is open to us, and Jolee and I step inside. It's rather dim inside the temple, but at least I don't expect to run into anyone else in here, given the defenses on the place. Much to my surprise, there appear to be a number of Dark Jedi in the place.

"Intruders?" says one of them. "Stop them!"

"I'm Darth Revan," I reply, swiftly bringing out my lightsabers to parry their attacks. "And how did you get in here?"

"Revan, returned after all this time?" a Dark Jedi replies, stepping back from attacking me.

"You brought us here with you when you were here before!" another says.

"Don't tell me you forgot about us," a third says.

"Alright, I won't then," I say, wryly. "But how is it that you've survived in here all this time?"

"The Force sustains us!" the first Dark Jedi says. "Our rage at our abandonment keeps us going!"

"Actually, we've been eating gizka," the second says.

"No idea what they've been eating," the third says. "Or how they even got in here."

"I'm sorry," I say sympathetically.

"But now we will get our long-awaited revenge upon you for abandoning us!" the first one says. I stare at them for a moment. "You know who I am. Do you really want to die that badly?"

"We've been eating gizka for three years," the second one says.

"Okay, you have a point," I say. "But wouldn't you rather just get out of here?"

"He has a point," the third one says, looking to the others.

"But what of our revenge?" the first demands.

"This isn't worth dying over," the second says.

"Indeed," the third agrees.

"Alright," I say. "Jolee and I are going to need to go in and shut down the force field on the temple, too. So just stand at the door and wait for that to drop. And don't ask me why I didn't just drop it when I was here before, either."

Jolee and I continue on through the temple. We don't locate any books or the like that the One might be looking for, but we do find a computer that has quite a bit of information in it. I don't care to be a dick and take their request that I look for books literally, so I copy down as much information as I can from the computer onto a datapad for them.

At the top of the temple, we come upon a surprising sight. Bastila, wearing black robes, quietly sitting and meditating as if waiting for us. I wonder how she managed to get in here, but then I notice the small ship parked behind her. For all the defenses on this place, could someone really just fly in here and bypass them all?

"Bastila..." I murmur, approaching her.
Bastila opens her eyes and stands before me. "So you've come at last, Revan." Her voice is cold, and her words are harsh.

"Bastila, are you alright?" I ask. "What happened to you?"

"Malak has... opened my eyes," Bastila says. "I see now the true power of the Dark Side."

I should be concerned about this, but I only find myself relieved instead. "I'm just glad to see you again."

Bastila chuckles softly. "I knew you would come, sooner or later. Are you still clinging to the wishes of the Jedi Council? Do you seek to destroy the Star Forge?"

Her words make me stop to think. Why am I doing this again? What could I possibly gain from this? "I am no pawn of the Jedi," I say.

"Yes, I did not think you would bow to anyone like that," Bastila says. "We could kill Malak, you know. You can reclaim your title of Dark Lord of the Sith. And I could be your apprentice!"

I give a wry grin. "I've already claimed it, he just doesn't realize it yet. My vengeance has been long in coming, but Malak will not live to regret crossing me."

"And what of the old man?" Bastila says, looking over toward Jolee. "Has he seen the sense to bow down to the true Dark Lord of the Sith as well?"

Jolee raises his green lightsaber. "I will not bow to any Sith. I can't let you do this, kid."

"You have some gall, old man!" Bastila says. "Do you really think you can stand against the might of Darth Revan himself?"

"No," Jolee says. "But that doesn't matter. If Revan is willing to kill me over this, then I know he is truly lost. Kid, are you sure this is really what you want to do?"

I pull out my red lightsaber and turn toward him. "I am the Dark Lord of the Sith. Are you making yourself my enemy now?"

"Think about what you're doing, kid!" Jolee says. "It's not too late. You don't need to walk this path any longer!"

"This path is my choice," I say. "Will you choose to oppose me?"

"I will oppose you, at any cost," Jolee says. "That's what I believe in."

"So be it," I say darkly.

Jolee is standing before me, holding a weapon against me. Jolee chooses to oppose me. Jolee has made himself my enemy. Jolee is my enemy.

I throw myself at him in a rage. Determined to kill this enemy that stands before me. No one will be allowed to stand against me. I am the Dark Lord of the Sith! I will strike down anyone who opposes me!

Jolee is skilled with the lightsaber, but not nearly as good as me. My rage calls up a storm of Force Lightning around me. Crackling. Shocking. Blasting him even as I cut at him with my lightsaber. No mercy. No hesitation. In moments, Jolee Bindo is dead.
It's over. I look down on the corpse silently as my rage drains from me. I can't help but feel a touch of remorse. Jolee Bindo was my friend. And now he's dead. But it was his choice -- and mine.

"Let's go," Bastila says, going over to a nearby console to shut down the various defenses. "I only have a one-seater here. We'll need to use the Ebon Hawk to get up to the Star Forge."

I nod. "Hopefully they'll have finished the repairs by now."

Bastila and I head out of the temple. The One and the other Rakata are still waiting for us just outside. I imagine they're eager for news of what I've found.

"Did you manage to find any books inside?" the One asks, apparently not even noticing that I went in with a man and came out with a woman. I imagine all humans must look the same to them anyway.

"No," I say. "All the information in there was on a computer, so I copied it out onto this datapad for you." I take it over to show him and give him brief instructions on how to use it.

"How much information could this little thing possibly contain?" the One says.

"This little device contains more information than an entire library worth of books," I tell him. "I assure you, you shouldn't be disappointed."

"Really?" the One says. "With this knowledge, we can at last reclaim our former glory!"

"Well, good luck with that," I say. "I've fulfilled my obligations, and I will be going now."

As we walk off and Canderous and HK rejoin us, Canderous says, "So what happened to the old man?"

"I killed him," I say simply.

"Statement: Oh, Master, it's a pity I was not present to witness you slaughter the wrinkled meatbag," HK says.

"Not that I'm about to complain, but what did he do to anger you?" Canderous asks.

"He wouldn't bow down to me," I say. "Oh, by the way. Call up the Mandalorians. Tell them to kill the Republic fleet."

Canderous looks at me for a moment and then laughs aloud. "Oh, this is priceless. All of this just to lure the Republic into a trap?"

Well, that hadn't been the original plan, but I don't care if people think I planned things out that way. Plans change. I can make a different choice. I can walk a different path.

The four of us make it back to the Ebon Hawk. The crew are outside at the moment finishing up with the repairs, from the looks of things.

"Bastila!" Carth says upon seeing her. "It's good to see you're alive. I was worried about you, when I heard you went on that suicide mission. Wait, where's Jolee Bindo? Did something happen to him?"

"He's dead," I reply. "He met the fate that all who stand in my way shall meet."

Carth stares at me, gaping. "Wait, what?"
"I am Darth Revan, the Dark Lord of the Sith," I say. "If you will not bow down before me, then stay out of my way."

"It comes to this, after all we've been through?" Carth says. "You brought my son back to me. Would you take him away again?"

"Your son's choices are his own," I say. "I'm interested in yours right now."

"I'll never serve the Sith," Carth says. "I'm a Republic solder! I won't just stand by and let you try to conquer the galaxy again!"

"So be it," I say, reaching for my red lightsaber.

"Mission, run!" Carth says, making a break for the hills.

I stare at him as he goes, and snicker softly. "Some Republic soldier." I shrug. At least I didn't have to kill another friend today. "And what of the rest of you?"

"I'll follow you into hell, Mandalore," Canderous says. "I never had any love for the Republic, anyway."

"I am bound by my life debt," Zaalbar says. "I must stand with you, Revan."

"I saw what the Sith did to Taris!" Mission says. "They're evil!"

"You saw what Malak did to Taris," I point out. "And he's an idiot. I'd never have given an order like that. I don't destroy entire planets just because I'm too incompetent to find a single lost Jedi."

"Well, that may be so," Mission says. "I won't bow down to you. You'll have to kill me, but I don't think you will. I don't think you've really gone over to the Dark Side completely. I don't think you'll kill me if I don't attack you first."

I give her a faint smile. "You're right. I won't."

"You're showing her mercy?" Bastila says. "But she refuses you! Master, if you will not strike her down, then I will!"

Bastila raises her double-bladed red lightsaber to attack Mission. In an instant, I'm between her and Mission, blocking Bastila's attack with my green lightsaber. "You will not harm her," I growl. "Stand down!"

"Mercy is a weakness!" Bastila says. "Have you become weak, Revan? Perhaps I should take up the rulership of the Sith myself!"

"Don't be foolish, Bastila," I say. "I have no need of a galaxy full of mindless sycophants and corpses. I've made my choice. Mission is not to be harmed. I'll face the consequences of whatever may come of that choice. If you question my decision, then I will show you why I am the Master here, and not you!"

"I don't believe you can," Bastila says. "You are weak. You still cling to some shred of the light! You haven't fully embraced the darkness!"

"When Malak thought I was weak, I removed his jaw as an object lesson," I saw. "What shall I remove of yours? Your feet, that you might never run away from me again? Your eyes, to make you see? Or your heart, that you stole from me?"
"You cannot defeat me," Bastila says. "The Dark Side has made me strong!"

I observe her moves. All aggression, all rage. She's not used to fighting like this. She's used to fighting with more finesse and control. But even at her peak, I was still better than her.

I attack her furiously while still blocking her every attack. The saber-staff is a weak weapon, a piece of foolish showmanship, not a good thing to be using in a real fight. It has all the weaknesses of wielding two weapons, but none of the strengths. I make a feint with my green lightsaber, making an opening for a thrust. My red lightsaber pierces her heart.

Bastila gazes at me for a moment, wide-eyed in surprise, and collapses. It ended so fast my mind hardly had time to process it. I deactivate my lightsabers and let them drop from my numb hands. I fall to my knees beside her body.

"Bastila..." I murmur mournfully.

Fuck. I didn't want it to end like this. *Don't let it end like this.* This is the woman I love. And I just killed her. No, maybe it's not too late. Maybe I can still heal her. Maybe, if the Light Side will cooperate. Grief. Remorse. Hope. Desperation.

I reach for light. I try fervently to send healing energies into her. But it's too little, too late. The light eludes me. My emotions betray me. Too much anger. Too much hate. Too much fear. Too much despair. Darkness consumes me. I weep in despair over Bastila's motionless body.

Mission says softly, "I'm sorry."

"It's not your fault," I assure her. "Not your fault. It was... mine." My fault. My decision. Did I really choose this path? Did I really just choose to kill her?

"I was right," Mission says gently. "You really didn't go all the way over."

"No," I say. "You're wrong. I'm lost. I'm completely lost. There's no redemption for me. Not from this. There's nothing left for me but revenge."

"You're going to kill Malak?" Mission says.

I nod. "I won't ask you to die for me, Mission. Go meet up with Carth. He's over there standing in the bushes watching, probably thinking I don't realize he's still there. Zaalbar, I'm going to call on your life debt with one last request. Protect Mission at all costs."

"I will do so," Zaalbar says.

I straighten, and walk toward the Ebon Hawk, and Canderous and the droids follow. I don't want anyone with me who I'd regret hurting. There's nothing but darkness left ahead of me now. Anger. Hatred. Despair. I focus my mind on my immediate goal: Revenge.

I don't know what might happen after that. I could kill myself right now and ensure that I get a chance to change things. But my mind is consumed in revenge. *I will kill that fucking bastard.* I will make him pay for all the lives he's taken. I will kill him for turning my Bastila against me. Even if I can't escape the guilt of my own actions and choices.

Canderous takes the helm. I'm in too much of a daze to pay attention to the battle going on outside. I don't know who is fighting who at the moment. We land on the Star Forge.

I leave the Ebon Hawk, with Canderous and HK at my side, leaving T3 alone to guard the ship.
Malak seems to be trying to throw everyone on the station at me at once. I cut my way through them in a blind rage. I get no joy out of it.

Finally, we come face to face with Malak. He's saying something to me, but I don't hear him. I'm not listening. I don't care anymore. It doesn't matter anymore. *Revenge.*

I barely notice as the station starts shaking around us. The Star Forge is on fire. Burning down to doom. Consumed in flames. Consumed in darkness.
Once More, With Feeling

Chapter by Keolah

I wake. I stare up at the ceiling numbly. It takes me several minutes to realize that I'm not on the Ebon Hawk. Where am I? Oh, I'm on Dxun? But this isn't where I woke up last.

Did I actually go back more than one day? That's never happened before. I was sure it was possible, but to have it happen entirely by chance... perhaps I merely regretted how things turned out more than usual.

Dxun. I'm still on Dxun. We were on Dxun, making plans, making preparations. Getting two fleets ready for a massive assault on the Star Forge.

I head out of the building and look around. Mandalorians getting ready. Some salute when I approach. I'm a little relieved. For a moment, I thought that I might have gone back further than a few days, but to several years. I feel as though the weight of my regret could have sent me back years.

But I could really use the extra time. I'm way off balance at the moment. I don't know what to think. I don't know what to do.

"Something eating you, kid?"

I turn around to see the face of a man that I killed. No, that I'm going to kill. No, that I would have killed. "Jolee."

"You just look like you've seen a ghost," Jolee says.

I smirk. "Sometimes I think I really need to find that mask, or get a new one." I shrug. "But I really don't care that much. We need to talk. But let's do it over breakfast."

We go and get something to eat. Jolee says, "Now, if you're wanting me to stay behind, or get carted off to your new school, then I'm just gonna have to say no. I'm not ready to retire just yet, and I want to see how this story ends."

I smile sadly. "That's why I looked so, well, haunted. I've seen how this story ends -- or one possible ending, anyway. And I didn't like it."

"Ah," Jolee says. "Force premonitions? Well, don't get caught up too much in the idea of destiny or any such thing. Jedi see Force swirling around someone and think, oooh, destiny, but sometimes swirling Force is just swirling Force."

I chuckle softly. "You always used to tell me inane stories, Jolee. And they drove me crazy."

"Did I?" Jolee says. "I don't remember telling you that much, but then I'm getting a bit senile, perhaps."

"You told me a story about a guy who supposedly had a 'great destiny', and wound up getting sucked into an intake vent, causing stuff to blow up, and changing the course of history in that sector," I say.

"Yeah, him," I say. "You also told me a story about a snake. About this villager who went with this snake out into a desert, and the snake bit him and he died. And he wondered why the snake bit him, and the snake wondered why he was so foolish, and he thought he was leading the snake to safety. Or something."

Jolee chuckles. "Kid, let's face it. You're a warrior, not a storyteller."

"Well... yeah," I say, snickering. "I might be better at it than am I at piloting or shooting a blaster?"

"That's debatable," Jolee says.

"But yeah," I say. "I got so pissed off about it. I thought you were trying to tell me something in some cryptic way, and couldn't figure out what. I thought you were calling me a snake and were afraid I would bite you in the end."

And in the end, I bit him. And I know he didn't tell me this story. This time. Not in this lifetime. It's not a very strong or clear memory, but it's there. This man has been my friend for at least two lifetimes. Did I turn on him in that lifetime as well? Or did I choose another path? I don't know. Perhaps I did both.

"Or maybe it's just a nonsensical story that means nothing," Jolee says, shrugging. "And I'm just an eccentric old man rambling to himself."

"Heh," I say.

I had been intending on telling him exactly what happened. Exactly what I did. But no. I stay quiet. I keep the memory to myself. I won't forget. I won't forget this. It's a reminder. An important reminder. A warning to myself.

When I killed Bastila, I wasn't in control. I didn't make a conscious choice to kill her. Neither did I choose to kill Jolee. But I made a conscious choice to let the Dark Side take control of me. To let my rage guide my actions. And that was my real mistake. The minute I perceived them as an enemy, I let my battle instincts took over. I fell too far, I fell too hard, and I lost everything. I lost everything because of it.

I don't know what I will do when we arrive on Lehon next. But one thing is for certain. I will not allow myself to lose control again. If I kill or help, rise or fall, destroy or save, conquer or free, it will be by my own choice.

I finish eating and head out. There's Canderous, working on getting the troops together.

I remember Canderous as well. He used to tell me stories. Old war stories, about some planet or another getting wasted. I always enjoyed listening to his stories. They didn't drive me crazy, like Jolee's.

"Is everything in order?" I ask him.

"The fleet will be ready for your command, Mandalore," Canderous replies.

"Good," I say. "We're going to trash those Sith."

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We drop out of hyperspace approaching the Lehon system. I gave the fleet warning beforehand about the disruption field, but I still send out a notification to hold position, just in case anyone missed the word.
Carth brings us in for a smooth crash landing. Or as well as can be hoped for, at any rate. I leave him to start the repairs, and head out with Canderous, HK-47, and Jolee. We collect the parts from the nearby ship, return them to Carth, and then continue on.

I decide to visit the Elders first this time. I'd like to see what they have to say, perhaps without winding up killing them. They did seem more technologically advanced and knowledgeable than the group following the One.

I introduce myself as Revan, and they let me in quickly. I'm brought before a group of three Elders, who look me over critically. I get the impression that they're not too happy with me. Which is probably understandable.

"So, Revan," says one of the Elders. "You've returned, after three years? Did you think we had forgotten what you did when you were here before?"

"I'm afraid I don't remember much of my previous visit here," I tell them. "I've had amnesia."

"You were seeking a way into the temple, claiming that you would destroy the Star Forge," says the Elder. "Then you disappeared for three years without having destroyed the Star Forge. You betrayed us and used it for evil rather than destroying it as you promised? Now, why have you come back to us?"

"Um... I need to get into the temple so I can destroy the Star Forge," I say.

They look at me dubiously. "And you expect us to trust you now? What kind of fools do you take us for?"

"Is there something I could do to earn your trust?" I ask.

"Perhaps," says the Elder. "A way down the coast, there is a tribe of primitive, savage Rakata led by a bloodthirsty barbarian known as the One. They have been making attacks upon us and killing some of us. This we cannot afford. Find a way to stop their attacks."

"So, you want me to kill them all?" I ask.

"If that is what is necessary," says the Elder. "But I would prefer it not to come to that. They are still our people, even if they are barbaric. If we wished to simply wipe them out, we could do so ourselves. I doubt that you will be able to come to a peaceful solution, however. But I will leave it to you on how to handle them."

I mutter in Basic, "Why do people keep asking me to find peaceful solutions?" I cast a mocking glare at Jolee. I turn back to the Elders and reply in their own language, "Fine. I'll see what I can do."

I head out of the compound again, with my team following me. I really have to doubt that I actually made any promises to either tribe. That's just not how I do things. I most likely just told them things and implied things that they took to be promises, while not actually promising anything at all.

"So," I tell my companions. "We're going to try to find a peaceful solution to this conflict between two groups of Rakata. Corpses are pretty peaceful, but I'd like to at least try talking to them first."

"Disappointed statement: Master, could we not simply kill these scaly meatbags?" HK-47 asks.

"Yeah, we could," I say, smirking. "But let's leave that for when they piss me off and prove themselves to be useless, hard-headed idiots. Content yourself with slaughtering the wildlife, for now."
We approach the One's compound. The Rakata outside are, needless to say, wary about our arrival. "We saw you enter the Elders' compound! You are enemies!"

"So, you assume I'm an enemy merely for deigning to visit your enemies?" I say. "I am Revan. If I wished to kill you, I could wipe you all out easily and there's nothing you would be able to do about it. I do not, however. I wish to speak with the One." I fix a glare at them. "You do not want to be my enemies."

I really want to kill them. But I can set aside my bloodlust for now. I can choose not to kill. I am in control.

"We'll let you in to speak with the One. But do not make any aggressive moves. If we think you threaten the life of the One, we will kill you!"

I smirk at them. Bravado in the face of certain doom. I can sense their fear. They know that they're no match for me. But I say nothing. I let them guide me in to see the One.

"So, Revan, you've returned," the One says. "I hope that you've come to tell me that you wiped out the Elders during your recent visit to their compound."

"No," I reply. "I have not killed them. But I would like to know, why is it that you hate them so much?"

"They keep their secrets," the One says. "They protect the temple. They would keep their ancient knowledge from us. They wield strange devices that I do not understand. They would keep from me the mastery of the temple. I turned away from conquering the world for the sake of gaining the knowledge from the temple, and they would keep it from me!"

I stare at him. "Maybe it's because you keep attacking them? They don't want to kill you. But they've been surprisingly lenient, given that they could wipe you out as easily as I could."

"You lie!" the One exclaims. "They are not warriors. They are weak! How could they manage such a thing?"

"With those strange devices you mentioned," I say.

"I'll accept that you could probably kill us easily," the One says. "You wield ancient magic, power beyond my comprehension. But they do not have this power that has been lost to us."

"They don't need it," I say. "Allow me to give a demonstration." I say in Basic, "Canderous, shoot a basket."

Canderous fires upon a basket with a heavy blaster, incinerating it. The other Rakata around the room heft their spears in alarm.

"That was merely a demonstration," I say loudly. I look to the One. "If I wished you dead, I would not need my magic to do it. With a word from me, this man behind me, who has no magic of his own, could wipe you all out by himself."

The One examines what's left of the basket, and says, "Perhaps you are right."

"Now, the Elders don't have anything quite so powerful as a Mandalorian heavy blaster," I say. "But imagine if they are each holding something, say, half as powerful. And you're facing off with them with pointy sticks. Who do you think would win?"
"We have powerful beasts that we have tamed, as well," the One says.

"They won't help you," I say.

The One pauses thoughtfully for a long moment before finally admitting, "Perhaps you have a point."

"The Elders wanted me to try to resolve this peacefully, without resorting to killing you all," I say. "I'm sure they would have done so themselves, if you ever allowed them to try."

"And what would you suggest?" the One says. "We will not surrender ourselves to their rule."

"I don't think they want to rule you," I say. "You could learn a lot from one another, if you could cooperate without bloodshed. If you could show them that you could live in peace with them, they might even share their vast, strange knowledge with you freely."

"Do you really think they would?" the One says skeptically.

"If you blind yourself to other choices, other possibilities, you may never realize where they might lead," I say.

"There is wisdom to your words," the One says. "Fine. Tell the Elders that I and my followers will cease hostilities against them. As a show of good faith, I will release a prisoner of their tribe that my people captured."

He nods to some guards standing off to the side, outside a door, and they unlock it and bring out an Elder Rakata who looks to be somewhat shaken. I go over to the Elder and look him over. He seems none the worse for wear for his imprisonment.

"Tell them also that I will come speak with them personally in three days time," the One says. "Then, perhaps, we can... talk."

"I will tell them," I say.

My group heads out of the compound again, with the imprisoned Rakata in tow. "Thank you for rescuing me. They captured me while I was out scouting. Did you really get them to agree to negotiate with us peacefully?"

I nod. "I believe I did."

"How did you manage that?" the scout says. "They're such primitive savages!"

"I think both of your tribes need to get over some of your prejudices," I say. "You're both terrified of the other because you don't understand the other. Fear of the unknown is a natural thing, but there comes a point where you need to make the unknown known."

We return to the Elders' compound. They're quite grateful to see their scout return, and look to me eagerly for news. "So what happened?" they ask. "Did you end up killing them all?"

"I didn't kill any of them," I say. "They've agreed to cease hostilities and open negotiations, and released their prisoner as a show of good faith. The One says he'll come speak with you personally in three days time."

The Elders stare at me incredulously. "I did not think it could be done."

"And that is why you fail," I say simply.
The Elders begin to set up the ritual to get me into the temple. "You must go in alone," they tell me. "It is our sacred tradition. Last time you were here, you convinced us to allow you to go in with your apprentice, and you betrayed us."

"How about I convince you to let me go in with this old man who is likely to try to kill me if I betray you?" I say, gesturing to Jolee.

"Would he do that?"

"Oh, he would," I say. "I have no doubt of that."

"Fine," says the Elder. "And you've earned our trust sufficiently with your handling of the One. But if you should betray us again..."

"I should hope that I don't have to come here a third time," I say, sighing.

The ritual is complete. The barrier is down. Jolee and I enter the temple.

When we come upon the three Dark Jedi that I had left here before, I raise my hand to them. "I'm Revan," I say. "Sorry about leaving you stuck here before. How would you like an all expense paid trip to scenic Manaan to make up for it?"

They blink at me. The angry one says, "But, we wanted revenge upon you for abandoning us!"

"Revenge isn't worth it," I say. "It's not worth your life."

The practical one says, "Seafood sounds pretty good about now."

The snarky one says, "At least he didn't forget about us entirely."

"Yeah, well, circumstances and all," I say. "My apologies. Go wait by the entrance for the barrier to come down. I'll get you out of here shortly."

Jolee and I continue into the temple. We reach the top shortly. There's Bastila, waiting there quietly. Waiting patiently for me to come. For me to return to her. For me to kill her. For me to pierce her heart, heartlessly. I shake my head and approach.

"Bastila," I say. "I'm glad to see you again."

"Revan," she says. "I knew you'd come, eventually. You should be glad. Malak has shown me the true power of the Dark Side."

"I'm not glad that you've spent the last several days in Malak's hands," I say. "I wish I could have prevented that."

"I am well," Bastila says. "Do not concern yourself for me. But now... Have you come to reclaim your position as Dark Lord of the Sith? I could be your apprentice, and we could rule the galaxy together!"

"I am the Dark Lord of the Sith," I say. "Malak just doesn't recognize that yet."

"And he will fall beneath your might!" Bastila says. "This time, no one will be able to stand against you!"

"I'll stand against you," Jolee says, raising his green lightsaber. "I won't stand by and allow the Sith to conquer the galaxy."
I turn toward Jolee, and Bastila says, "Then if you will not bow down before Darth Revan, the true Dark Lord of the Sith, then you will perish! You will be the first to die in the wake of Revan's rebirth!"

"Bastila," I say flatly. "Be quiet. You do not speak for me."

"If I must die, then so be it," Jolee says. "I'll fight for what I believe in anyway."

"You are a pawn of the Jedi!" Bastila says. "A tool of the light! Revan, if you would rule the galaxy, then you must strike him down. Show that you are not weak. Show that you have abandoned the light once and for all."

I pause for a moment before turning back to face Bastila, and say, "I will no more reject the Light Side than I will reject my right hand."

"Then fight me," Bastila says. "And I will prove myself to Malak by slaying you in your weakness instead!"

I pull out my lightsabers and parry her attacks. "I will not harm you, Bastila."

"More weakness?" Bastila says. "Your mercy and compassion will be your downfall!"

"No friend of mine will die by my hand this day," I say.

"A true Dark Lord has no friends!" Bastila says, swinging at me furiously.

"I'm no Dark Lord," I say, blocking her attacks easily. "Or if I am, the worst Dark Lord ever. But would Grey Lord sound any less silly or pretentious? Think about what you're doing, Bastila! Why are you really fighting me?"

Bastila's combat style is all fury and rage, and she's not very good at fighting like this. She leaves herself open quite a bit, but I don't take advantage of the openings. I'm all on defense, merely blocking her attacks without returning them.

"Fight me, damn it!" Bastila snarls. "Don't just stand there like a brick wall I can't get through!"

"No," I say. "I love you, Bastila. And I would sooner cut out my own heart than bring the least bit of harm to you."

"You insulted and dismissed me before Saul Karath!" Bastila snaps. "You abandoned me to be tortured by Malak!"

"Do you really think I meant anything I said to him?" I say. "Do you really think I would wish you to be tortured? I would gladly have taken it upon myself. But you went alone, by your own choice. You cannot blame me for that. I would have gone after you immediately if I could have. But I could not have gotten here much sooner, and could not have been prepared with the fleet I've brought if I had."

"You... you..." Bastila stammers. "Damn you, how can you have so much logic and yet so much emotion at the same time?"

"They aren't mutually exclusive things, you know," I say, smirking. "And if you truly believe that I am weak because I love you, then you are already lost to me. But I don't think you really believe that, in your heart. Malak has filled your head up with lies upon lies. But you know the truth. You know I love you. Sense it, feel it, know the truth."
Bastila's movements falter, and she stops fighting, panting softly. "You... no. It's too late for me. I've gone over to the Dark Side now."

"Bastila," I say. "It doesn't matter. Light or dark, both or neither, I will still love you. Walk whatever path you choose. I will not judge you. But it would make me happy if I could be with you, regardless."

"But... I already offered you that," Bastila protests.

"No," I say. "You demanded that I kill my friend. I will not do that. Friendship is not a weakness. Love is not a weakness."

"Love will save you, not condemn you," Jolee says quietly.

Bastila is quiet for a long moment, sighing softly. "I... still love you, Revan."

I go over to her and embrace her. I hold her trembling body close. Still shaken by her recent experiences, but at least she's not fighting anymore. I, however, am immensely relieved. I feared I had lost her.

After holding her for a few minutes, I say quietly, "Come on. Let's get out of here."

Bastila nods silently and releases her, and goes over to a nearby terminal to shut down the defenses. "What are we going to do now?" she says as we start to head for the exit.

"With the defenses down, I'm going to call in the fleet I brought," I say.

"We're going up to the Star Forge to get revenge on Malak, I assume?" Bastila says.


I let go of the hateful desire that has burned within me and driven me ever since I found out what Malak had done to me. I turn away from the path of revenge. I don't need it. I have no need to kill my former friend face to face, by my own hand. It's like a burden lifted from my heart.

I was once Darth Revan, the Lord of Revenge. Now, I'm something else. Perhaps something greater.

We return to the temple entrance to collect Canderous and HK-47. The three Dark Jedi even stuck around waiting for me.

"So, um," says one of the Dark Jedi. "Were you serious about that trip to Manaan?"

I laugh lightly. "Yeah, come on, I'll give you a lift off this rock."

We all return to the Ebon Hawk. The crew is outside, finishing up with the repairs, when we get back. Carth turns and looks over to us, although he looks askance at the three Dark Jedi I've brought with me. He ignores them for the moment and focuses on Bastila instead.

"Bastila," Carth says. "It's good to see you're alright. I was worried about you, after I heard what you did."

"I am well," Bastila says, smiling at him. "Thanks to Lexen."

"I was concerned that you might have, you know, been turned to the Dark Side and all that," Carth says.
I chuckle softly. "Haven't you said before that you thought the Dark Side is just an excuse for Jedi to avoid owning up to the consequences of their actions?"

Or was that in another lifetime? Ah, it doesn't really matter. Carth says, "I might have said something to that effect at some point."

"Well, for the record, I agree with you," I say. "It's easy to go, oh, I've fallen to the Dark Side, I can't help but commit pointless atrocities just because it's evil." I sigh softly. "It's harder to own up to the fact that you knowingly and willfully committed those atrocities from your own free choice. And that it's always possible to choose another path."

Carth stares at me, and says, "You're talking about yourself now, aren't you."

I nod slightly. "Let's put an end to this. The disruption field is down. Let's bring in the fleet. Bastila, I want you to use your Battle Meditation to aid the Republic and Mandalorian fleets against the Sith."

Bastila nods in acknowledgement. We all climb back aboard the Ebon Hawk. I head to the cockpit with Carth and Canderous. Carth gets us back into the air again. I call up the Mandalorians and order them to move in, then do the same for the Republic.

"Admiral Dodonna here," says the hologram. "What news do you have?"

"The disruption field has been disabled," I say. "It's time to bring in the fleet."

The image of Master Vandar appears next to the Republic admiral. "It's good that you have been successful in finding the Star Forge," Vandar says.

"Ah, I'm glad to see you're alive, Master Vandar," I say. "I feared for the worst when I heard what had happened to Dantooine. Did anyone else make it out? Zhar, Vrook, are they alright?"

"Master Zhar and Master Vrook both made it out alive," Vandar replies. "Where is Bastila Shan? I had heard that she was missing."

"She's fine," I reply. "She's in back getting her Battle Meditation ready to aid us."

"Ah, that's good," Vandar says. "When I heard what had happened, I feared she was in danger of falling to the Dark Side."

I smile faintly. "We've a lot to discuss, Master Vandar, but this isn't the time for it. Right now, we must destroy the Star Forge."

"Of course," Vandar says. "Do you intend to board the Star Forge to seek out Malak?"

"No," I say. "I have no desire for revenge against him."

"You could try to redeem him instead," Vandar suggests.

I sigh softly. "Perhaps you're right. He was my friend once... But I do not wish to strike down a friend with my own hand, if I should fail to get through to him. And delaying in destroying the Star Forge for my sake would be risky."

Carth interrupts, "With all due respect, Master Vandar, but Malak deserves to die many times over for all the atrocities he's committed."

I look to the floor. "He chose to walk this path of his own free will. I regret that it has come to this, but I will feel no guilt over another's actions. I won't kill a friend, but neither will I stand in the way
of justice."

"Death is never justice," Vandar says.

I sigh again. "You have a point. But you realize that you're trying to send me into the midst of an ancient artifact of evil that's powered by the Dark Side?"

"I trust that you will be able to handle this," Vandar says.

"Your confidence in me is heartwarming," I say sincerely.

"Well, I refuse," Carth says. "I'm not going to have anything to do with this foolishness. If you want to dock on the Star Forge, you can do it yourself."

I chuckle softly and grin. "Looks like I'm not going anywhere."

"I could just fly the ship instead," Canderous suggests.

"Oh, no," I say lightly. "I wouldn't want to usurp Carth's position or cause any disagreements among my crew. I respect his free choice. Canderous, would you call up Malak on the comm instead?"

Carth says nothing to argue with that. I'm vaguely aware of the fact that the allied fleet is annihilating the Sith fleet. After a few moments, the image appears of the jawless Sith Lord who was once my friend. Ah, Malak, how far you've fallen.

"Revan!" Malak says. "I suppose you've called me up to gloat about how you've outmaneuvered me?"

"Gloating is really beneath me," I say. "No, really, I called you up to suggest that it doesn't have to end this way. But you always were stubborn, and I don't think you'll listen. So I called you up to say goodbye to my friend one last time."

"After all that's happened, you would still call me a friend?" Malak says. "Even after I betrayed you and took over your position?"

"Of course," I say, smiling faintly.

Malak peers about and says, "Are you hitting on me?"

"No!" I snap.

"Look, if you're trying to redeem me or some such crap, I don't appreciate it and I'm not going to listen," Malak says.


"Just as inscrutable as you always were," Malak says. "So now you get your long-awaited revenge."

"I'm not interested in revenge anymore, old friend," I say. "I'm not Revan anymore."

"You always were weak like that," Malak says. "Even on the Dark Side, you always clung to strange ideas of mercy and compassion. You always tried to avoid unnecessary casualties. Always tried to save whoever could be saved. I never understood."

The Star Forge is under attack. Even if he were to leave now, I don't know if he could make it out in
"I regret that you don't understand," I say. "And I regret starting you on that path. But it was you who chose to continue upon it."

Malak stares off, as the station erupts into flames around him. "I... regret. I regret many things, my friend. Had I known where this path would lead, I might have chosen differently."

"Then... I shall take your regret, and give you back... hope," I say.

I call upon the Force. Regret and hope. Dark and light. Cross time and space. To find a better future. I can feel Malak. I can feel his emotions. Sorrow and remorse. He's dying, far from me. But the distance doesn't matter. Send him back. Back to a point where he can choose another path.

The Star Forge goes down in flames, but Malak is no longer on it when it goes. Salvation... I don't know where or when he went, or what choice he might make from there. But it's his choice to make.

I slump down against a bulkhead, exhausted beyond words. "Call... call up Master Vandar," I murmur weakly.

"Lexen, are you alright?" Carth asks worriedly.

"I'm fine," I say. "Better than ever." I smile at him. "Don't worry about me."

"Alright," Carth says, and goes to call up the Republic flagship again.

"Lexen, what happened?" Master Vandar's image says. "I sensed... something, through the Force. But I don't know what it was."

"I... saved Malak," I say. "We will not see him again in this life, but I saved him in the end."

"I'm glad to hear that," Master Vandar says. "But what did you do? I felt a strong use of the Force, like nothing I've ever seen before..."

"I sent his spirit back in time as he died," I say. "So that he could choose another path."

"You..." Master Vandar says, his hologram staring speechlessly. Well, now I've succeeded in making a Jedi Master speechless.

"Forgive me, Master Vandar," I say. "I would speak with you in person, but let's make it tomorrow. I must rest after doing that."

"Yes, of course," Master Vandar replies absently, still clearly stunned by what I did.

I stumble off to sleep. In my dreams, in my mind's eye, I see Malak's face again. Whole, and younger. Before the war, before everything changed. He's not there. It's only a memory. But it's enough.
Redemption

Chapter by Keolah

I wake with a groan. Ugh, how long was I asleep? I feel like I must have slept for a week. Maybe I did. I'm not even sure how I managed to stay conscious and upright long enough to say anything to Master Vandar and get to the crew quarters.

I go out of the crew quarters to get some breakfast. I run into Jolee Bindo. One person I'm certainly glad to see today. One death averted.

"Finally awake, huh?" Jolee says.

"Finally?" I say. "Okay, how long was I out this time?"

Jolee checks the clock and replies, "Twenty hours."

"Oh, is that all?" I say, chuckling. "Did I miss anything noteworthy?"

"Nah," Jolee says. "We're on the surface of Lehon at the moment. There's a big party going on, with the Republic folks, the Rakata, and even the Mandalorians. It's madness. Nobody can even understand the Rakata except a couple of the Jedi, but they seemed happy and are sharing food."

There's a party going on with food outside? What am I doing getting rations for breakfast, then? I should go out and join them and grab some better food while I can.

"Wait, the Republic folks and the Mandalorians are partying together?" I say.

"Yeah," Jolee says. "Some might be a little uneasy, but they're honoring the alliance, however temporary it might end up being." He looks at me thoughtfully for several moments, and then adds, "Your eyes are green again."

"Really," I say.

Jolee chuckles softly. "I don't know just what happened with you, but I'm glad you decided not to turn around and bite me after all."

"Yeah," I agree. "It was... a close thing, really." I look away. "I came that close to killing my friends."

"But you didn't," Jolee says. "It takes a lot of strength to pull back from as far as you'd gone."

"And yet you still came with me, knowing that I was that far gone, and you were still willing to put your foot down and try to stop me," I say quietly. "You're a braver man than anyone gives you credit for, I think."

Jolee laughs lightly. "Nah, I'm just an eccentric old man, getting a little senile with age, who does some crazy things now and then."

I smile at him. "So, if there's a party going on out there, what are you doing in here?"

"Oh, somebody had to watch the ship," Jolee says. "And make sure the droids didn't molest you in your sleep. Never can be too careful."
"Not much danger of that, I don't think," I reply with a crooked grin. "I'm going out to find some of this food you mentioned. You care to join me, or stay in here and continue to do... whatever it was you were doing?"

"Oh, I think I can stand to follow you around a bit longer," Jolee says lightly.

We head out of the ship and join the party. It appears to be mid-afternoon at the moment in this part of the planet. People are glad to see me. They recognize me and hail me as a hero. I wave to them absentely and head straight for the food. I run into Carth, who is surprisingly not holed away in the cockpit at the moment.

"Good to see you're awake," Carth says. "I was starting to worry if all these Mandalorians were going to continue to behave without you keeping them in line."

"Why wouldn't they?" I say. "I told them that the Republic are our allies in this battle, and I haven't told them to attack them."

Carth smirks. "Considering the Mandalorians consider you their leader, I'm hoping you don't intend to turn around and attack the Republic."

I shrug. "Conquering the galaxy just seems so... I don't know... overrated."

"So what was the deal with you and Malak?" Carth says. "You sent him back in time? Did I hear that right?"

I smirk, glancing around briefly at the crowd around us as I munch on a piece of fresh tropical fruit, but it doesn't appear that anyone really seems to be listening. That's not an ability that I'd like to be widely known. People might get the wrong idea, or think that it means something different than it actually does.

I nod to Carth, and reply quietly, "I sent him back in time. Or at least his mind, his spirit, his memories. At some point in the past, he will know what happened in this timeline, and can make a choice to avoid this fate."

"How does that even work?" Carth says. "Things don't seem any different to me..."

I shake my head. "Time doesn't work like that. It's not just a straight line, a street going only one way. Think more like a tree. An infinitely large tree, with infinite branches. I sent him back to the limb, and now he's on another branch from where we are."

"Where did you send him?" Carth says. "Or should I say, when?"

"I don't know where or when he went, or what he might do," I say. "Maybe, in that new timeline, Telos might never be bombed. Or Malachor V might never have happened. I just gave him the chance. It's entirely up to him what he does with it."

"I suppose it's not such a bad thing, when you put it that way," Carth admits. "I still don't think he deserved a second chance, though."

"Probably not," I say. "But I gave it to him anyway, because he was my friend, once. He was a good man, once. He was never a very good Jedi, but he was a good man. And I will mourn for the man he once was, even as I hope he's taken the second chance I gave him and moved both him and the me that is there to a better future."

I finish up with breakfast and part ways with Carth for the moment. I've spotted Master Vandar off to
one side, staying out of the middle of the crowd. I did want to speak with him, so I go over to approach him and take a seat in the grass nearby.

"Revan," Vandar says. "I'm glad to see you're well."

I raise an eyebrow at him. "Is it wise to use that name in public, Master Vandar?"

"So I would have thought," Vandar says. "But it seems all of the Mandalorians already knew who you were. And the Republic soldiers found out quickly because of that, and it seems in no time, everyone was hailing Revan as a hero again."

"I'm not Revan anymore, though," I say. "It was a name I took out of a desire for revenge. I became the Revanchist. Then Darth Revan, the Lord of Revenge. But I'm none of those things, any longer. Revenge doesn't drive me any longer."

"Be that as it may, that is the name that most of them know you by," Vandar says. "But from this day forth, many will speak of the redemption of Revan, the Prodigal Knight!"

I look at Master Vandar strangely. "Do you even know what that word means?"

"What?" Vandar says in puzzlement.

"I'm wastefully extravagant?" I say, snickering softly. "Come on, I'm not that bad."

"It's just a metaphor," Vandar says. "You know, the prodigal son and all?"

"I know that," I say, continuing to snicker. "But how is it that you even have that story?"

"What?" Vandar says, even more confused.

"You don't even have a Bible!" I exclaim.

"A what?" Vandar says.

"Exactly!" I say. I'm practically rolling on the ground laughing at this point. After several long moments, gasping, I manage to catch my breath and stop laughing quite so hard. "Okay, okay," I say. "Really, call me whatever you like. I don't honestly care all that much."

"I'm just glad to see that you've redeemed yourself and have returned to us," Vandar says.

"Nope and nope," I reply.

"What?" Vandar says.

"I'm not going back to the Jedi Order," I say. "That's what I wanted to speak with you about."

"I see," Vandar says. "Well, we cannot demand that you do anything..."

"There's a lot that the Jedi do that I still don't agree with," I say. "Maybe it works for some people, the way you do things. But it doesn't work for me. I think that more can be accomplished by harnessing one's emotions for good, rather than suppressing them. Everything I've accomplished, I've done because of that. Not for adhering to Jedi teachings, or redeeming myself, or any other such thing."

"You realize these ideas will be considered heretical?" Vandar says.
I nod. "I'm not interested in approval from the Jedi. I've started up a school of my own to spread my ideas. And no, you don't need to worry about me corrupting your precious Padawans. I'm recruiting from the Sith. I'm trying to bring up the Sith, not bring down the Jedi. Perhaps, if some of your Jedi should find that your teachings don't work for them, they'll decide to come to me rather than the Sith."

"These are dangerous ideas," Vandar says. "They will lead to the Dark Side. Your ideas always have a way of spreading like wildfire, whether you intend to corrupt or not. And what do you intend your new group, whatever you're calling them, to do?"

"I'm calling them... Elkandu," I say. "It's a term used on my homeworld for Force users." I take a deep breath. "And much as the Jedi might disapprove, they won't do anything more than look sternly and disapprovingly in my general direction. It took them only a heavy push from me to go to war against the Mandalorians, and that threatened the entire galaxy!"

"You underestimate our resolve should you threaten the galaxy again," Vandar says.

"You realize that I never wished to turn on the Republic in the first place?" I say. "I was being mind controlled by the Sith Emperor. I was forced into it against my will, and it was all I could do to shake his hold over me."

"Your memories have returned?" Vandar says.

"A lot of them, at least," I say.

"Who is this Sith Emperor?" Vandar asks.

"A threat that I hope you never have to face," I say grimly. "And probably the most powerful Dark Side user alive. Out in the Unknown Regions, biding his time, playing dejarik with the fate of the galaxy. He sent me back to conquer in his name, but my mind was too strong for him to fully control. But, in short, I was still really messed up because of it."

"That... certainly puts a new perspective on your previous actions," Vandar says.

"The citizens of the Republic can sleep at night because they don't know what's out there lurking in the shadows," I say, sighing. "I have no intention of fighting the Jedi or the Republic. If I prepare for war, that is what I'm preparing against."

"You think you have a better chance of standing against that than the Jedi?" Vandar asks.

"Yes," I reply flatly, without hesitation, looking at Vandar like it was a stupid question.

"Hmh," Vandar says. "I don't think now is the appropriate time to scold you for not heeding the wisdom of the Council. You will do as you believe in, as always. We will not openly censure you so long as you do not openly recruit from among the Jedi. I will attempt to make the others see that, if you are trying to redeem the Sith and show them a better path, then this cannot be a bad thing."

"Thank you, Master Vandar," I say, bowing my head toward him.

"I don't know that you should be thanking me," Vandar says. "I still don't agree with what you're doing. But let's not let this get us down. This is a time for celebration. Even if you do not wish to return to us, you have still turned away from the path of the Sith. You've let go of your hate and desire for revenge."

I nod, smiling at him. "I'll take that in good faith."
"Also," Vandar says. "There was something I meant to speak with you about. About Malak. I must admit, I am... concerned about what you claim to have done."

"Why?" I ask. "It's not like sending someone back would change things as they are. Only as they might have been. You know, I just had to explain how time travel works to Carth, do I need to explain it to a Jedi Master too? Is it that unfamiliar of a concept to you?" I chuckle softly.

"There have been... potential instances of time travel that have been documented," Vandar says. "Rumors of hyperdrive malfunctions, unexplained Force phenomena, effects of black holes... Never anything clear or deliberate. And you say you can do this? Intentionally, reliably?"

I chuckle softly. "Master Vandar, I'll let you in on a little secret. And Jolee Bindo as well, since he's so quietly sitting right behind me eating fruit and pretending to be a senile old man that's hard of hearing."

"What's that you say?" Jolee says.

I grin at him, snag a piece of fruit and munch on it myself. "Anyway," I say. "I don't just have 'premonitions' of the future. I am... apparently, from the future. Not only that, but I have innate time travel powers. I've only intentionally used them twice, to send someone else back. But I've subconsciously used them many, many times. You see, whenever I would otherwise die, I effectively 'jump back' to a previous point, allowing me to make another choice to avoid that death."

Vandar is staring at me. "I can see why you would keep such a thing quiet."

"So, wait," Jolee says. "When you told me you'd had a premonition before we left for the Star Forge..."

"Exactly," I say.

"You never did tell me what you saw," Jolee says. "Or did, apparently."

"I know," I say quietly, looking to the ground. "Most people don't get the opportunity to take back their mistakes. I consider myself to be... very fortunate in that regard." I sigh.

"That bad, huh?" Jolee says. "So who did you kill?"

"You and Bastila," I murmur, barely audibly.

"Bastila too?" Jolee says. "I can understand me, but why Bastila?"

"She was trying to goad me into killing Mission," I say. "Mission wouldn't bow down to me, but didn't think I'd really fallen to the Dark Side. She didn't think I'd actually hurt her. And I wouldn't hurt her. That's the funny thing. Even as far gone on the Dark Side as I was, I still wouldn't hurt a kid. Bastila didn't like that. Called me weak, thought she should rule the Sith instead of me, attacked me, I got carried away, and..."

"I understand," Jolee says. "No need to go on."

"I don't know that you really do," I say. "It was a mistake. A terrible, terrible mistake. And I have the chance to make different choices. But even though this timeline is different, there's still that other one. That other one, continuing without me, where you and Bastila died needlessly. Where Canderous followed me to his own death on the Star Forge. Where another pointless war between the Republic and the Mandalorians may have begun."
"Lexen..." Jolee says.

I shake my head. "And on top of that, the knowledge that *I did this.* I caused this. Willfully, by my own actions. And it could happen again. I must never allow myself to lose control, or things like this could happen. I am my own worst enemy. In the end, the foe I had to defeat was not Malak or the Sith, but myself."

"And that," Master Vandar says quietly, "is your true redemption."

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