

# THE BOOK OF STINGRAY



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## **FİCTION**

Prelude .....	3
The Battlefield (by Westric Davalorn) .....	4
One Last Deal (by Locke Setzer) .....	10
The Call of Stingray (by Legion Ordo).....	15
Habu’s Quest (by Habu).....	21
A Foundation (by Master).....	31

## **ART**

Lightsaber Components (provided by Habu).....	30
Maston Dane locates a Kyber Crystal (illustration by Maston Dane, effects and additional coloring by OL” Davy Jones).....	48

## Prelude

In the cover of night, in the darkest chambers of Clan Drakonan, robed figures descend into a single room, nothing to light their way except the small number of flickering candles, carefully distributed to only provide the barest of lighting.

One robed figure stands out, separate from the rest. The robed figure begins to approach each member individually, handing them a datapad and whispering a direction. Slowly, the members begin to sort into one of three circles. Once complete, he pulls back his hood, revealing the face of Stingray Battleteam Leader, Juggernaut Locke Setzer.

"The next part of your journey to the Dark Side begins now! Each of you fits into one of three categories. Some of you have collected the pieces you need for your lightsaber. Some of you have not. Others already carry the blade, and may choose to extend knowledge to those who do not... or serve as a barrier to those they believe to be unworthy. Wherever you are in your quest, you will now make the next step. You have each been given a piece of knowledge, knowledge you need. What you choose to do with that is up to you. You may work together. You may work against each other. You have no chains - whatever you believe will bring you victory, you may do. I make this announcement as your leader, but I too have my own quest, and in this effort, I am your rival, the same as any other member..."

With that, Locke grows quiet. There are no more words to say. The task is now before them all. Himself included.

# The Battlefield

By Westric Davalorn

The swirling hyperspace tunnel transitioned into a starfield as Acolyte Westric Davalorn disengaged the hyperdrive and reverted the Delta-class JV-7 Escort Shuttle back into realspace. Off in the distance sat the planet Ruusan, orbited by three moons.

Westric ran a comprehensive long-range scan of the system. Finding no other craft in the vicinity, he plotted a quick in-system jump to bring the shuttle closer to the planet. Just as the stars began to stretch, they instantly reverted back to realspace, with Ruusan now filling the view outside the cockpit. Westric maneuvered the shuttle into orbit around the planet and activated the autopilot.

Even though the long-range scan had revealed that he was alone, he took the extra precaution of using the JV-7's transponder code scrambler to change the ship's identifier from Theta Nine to Sartuse Flame. He had managed to convince Theta Squadron Commander Lieutenant Colonel Vapen Van'an to let him borrow the custom JV-7 for his quest. In exchange, he promised to let the Balosar take Westric's new TIE/rh Rhodium out for a test flight when he returned to the fleet.

Turning to the copilot's seat, Westric opened the duffle bag he'd brought with him and rummaged through the contents. He removed his personal datapad and activated it, scrolling through the research he had collected on Ruusan before starting out on his journey. He selected a transcription of an ancient Jedi text about the Ruusan campaign and began skimming through the information until he found what he was looking for. The Seventh Battle of Ruusan had been the final battle of the New Sith Wars, resulting in the destruction of the Sith... or so the Jedi had thought. It was now known that Darth Bane had survived the battle and implemented the Rule of Two with his apprentice Darth Zannah and kept the Sith hidden in the shadows until the rise of Darth Sidious. Despite the battle having been fought more than a thousand years ago, Westric hoped there might still be some relics left that would help him in his quest to assemble his own lightsaber.

The text included the coordinates to the Valley of the Jedi, the site of the thought bomb that destroyed both the Sith and Jedi. Westric plugged his datapad into the navicomputer and switched off the autopilot. Taking the controls, he followed the course plotted by the computer and descended into Ruusan's atmosphere.

As he approached the coordinates, Westric glanced down at the terrain below. According to his research, Ruusan was originally a temperate, pleasant world with abundant rivers and forests. But, the after effects of the Sith thought bomb had turned much of the planet's surface into a barren desert wasteland. As Westric flew the shuttle over a steep mountain and crested the peak, there in front of him was the Valley of the Jedi. Even from this distance he could feel the Force energy emanating from the deep canyon. A monument had been constructed at the site as a memorial to the Jedi of the Army of Light who had sacrificed themselves to destroy the Sith Brotherhood of Darkness. Huge statues towered over the rim and floor of the canyon.

Westric circled the valley, looking for a good place to land the JV-7. He spotted an old derelict landing platform and began his approach. With the lower wings folded up and landing gear extended, the shuttle touched down on the landing platform with a metallic thunk. Westric stood up, buckling his holster around his waist and holstering his blaster. He extended the boarding ramp and unplugged his datapad before walking to the access hatchway. Opening the hatch he walked down the boarding ramp. The hot, dry air enveloped him and he squinted against the bright light from the twin suns.

As his eyes adjusted, he studied his surroundings. The landing platform and other structures were rusted and worn down from the planet's arid climate, but they definitely had an Imperial look to them. Westric figured they must be the remains of the Imperial Remnant base established by the Dark Jedi Jerec during his quest to siphon the Force energy from the spirits of the Jedi and Sith who were trapped by the thought bomb.

Westric walked to the other end of the landing platform where there was a hatch to access a turbolift. Reaching the lift, he thumbed the control panel but nothing happened. He wasn't completely surprised that the base's power source was down, but he still sighed in frustration. He was contemplating another way down when he heard a faint whistling behind him. He spun

around, putting his hand to the blaster on his hip. Three floating creatures hovered about 1.5 meters off the landing deck. They had greenish fur and long tentacles that extended from their backs and dangled above the ground. Westric realized these were “Bouncers”, the only sentient species native to Ruusan. Their large, black eyes studied him intently and he made no sudden moves.

“I’m not here to hurt you,” he said, moving his hand away from his blaster.

The Bouncers made no response and continued watching him.

Westric slowly brought out his datapad and searched for any information on Bouncers. He skimmed through the data, noting that they communicated with each other via whistles and warbles, but were also capable of writing. Putting away his datapad, he knelt to the dusty landing deck and wrote, “I COME IN PEACE” with his finger.

One of the bouncers slowly glided over and read the message. It extended a tentacle into the sand and wrote, “YOUR PURPOSE WHAT IS?”

Westric traced out the letters, “I SEEK JEDI RELICS.”

The Bouncer answered, “VALLEY EMPTY. EMPIRE TAKE.”

Westric frowned and wrote, “OTHER RELICS ON PLANET?”

The Bouncer considered for a moment before writing, “ONE SPOT NEVER FOUND”.

Westric’s heart began to beat faster as he quickly scrawled, “PLEASE SHOW ME.”

The Bouncer read the message and floated back to its comrades. They held a quick conversation of whistles and warbles before the leader turned back to Westric and motioned with a tentacle for him to follow them. He quickly got up and followed them to the other end of the landing platform. There the Bouncers stopped. Westric’s excitement quickly turned back into disappointment as the leader extended a tentacle down toward the valley floor, pointing towards a distant pile of boulders.

“How am I going to get down there?” he asked, mostly to himself. Suddenly, the three Bouncers were hovering above him. Two of them extended tentacles to grab each of his arms, and the third wrapped its tentacles around his waist. He thought for a moment they were going to toss him off the edge, but instead they slowly floated off the landing platform and descended to the canyon floor. Westric gazed around in wonder as they drifted past the large Jedi statues and other sculptures. Finally, they softly touched the bottom and the Bouncers released their grip. The leader motioned again for him to follow, and the four headed in the direction of the boulders. Upon reaching the rock pile, the Bouncers stopped and the leader pointed at the pile, then at Westric.

Westric shook his head in confusion. The leader extended a tentacle to the ground and wrote, “RELICS INSIDE CAVE. YOU OPEN.”

Westric frowned, looking at the large boulders. He doubted he could budge them by hand.

The Bouncer, sensing his doubt, wrote, “JEDI YOU ARE. USE FORCE.”

Westric chuckled and said, “Not the word I would use, but I’ll give it a shot.” He closed his eyes and, reaching out with both hands, focused on the Force. He could feel the spirits of long-dead Sith throughout the valley and channeled their energy into himself. At first, nothing happened. But, then he felt the slightest shift in the rock pile. He poured all of his focus into the rock pile, channeling all the pain and rage of his past. The sand around his feet began vibrating, and the Bouncers quickly backed away from the pile of boulders. One by one, the rocks began to topple, revealing the mouth of the cave.

Westric sat down on the valley floor in exhaustion, sweat beading on his face from the effort of lifting the boulders. After catching his breath, he stood back up and approached the Bouncers. The other two shifted away nervously, but the leader stood its ground and wrote in the sand, “JEDI YOU ARE NOT.”

Westric wiped the sweat from his brow and said simply, “No, I’m not.” He turned from the Bouncers and walked slowly into the now open cave, pulling a glowrod from one of his pockets and turning it on.

Inside, he found ancient weapons and armor, scattered amongst the skeletal remains of several warriors. Westric figured the cave must have been covered when the thought bomb was unleashed and the Jedi were unaware of its existence when they created the valley monuments. He slowly inspected the relics strewn about until his eye fell on a cylindrical metal object. His breathing quickened as he reached down and picked it up. It was a lightsaber! Westric inspected the hilt in the light of the glowrod. It was an ancient design that incorporated a crossguard. He contemplated trying the ignition switch to see if it would still power on, but decided the possibility of an explosive malfunction wasn't worth the risk. Clipping the hilt to his belt, he made his way back out of the cave and into the larger canyon.

The three Bouncers still hovered nearby. They communicated amongst themselves and then the leader floated over to Westric. It eyed the saber on his hip and wrote in the sand, "LIGHT SWORD DARK JEDI NOT STEAL".

Westric knelt and replied in writing, "NEED KYBER CRYSTAL INSIDE. VERY RARE."

The Bouncer did not respond but seemed to accept this.

Westric continued writing, "WILL YOU TAKE ME BACK TO SHIP?"

The leader turned to look at its comrades and they approached after a moment, albeit hesitantly. Once again, they wrapped their tentacles around Westric and slowly floated back up to the landing pad. At the top, they released him and stood off, eyeing him warily.

Westric bowed deeply at the waste and said, "Thank you."

The three Bouncers gave no response. They simply turned away and floated back into the desert, disappearing over a sand dune.

Westric quickly boarded the JV-7 and lifted off from the landing platform. He angled the ship up towards open space and, after clearing Ruusan's atmosphere and gravity well, jumped to lightspeed. With a few hours until he arrived back at the fleet, he walked back through the cockpit



hatch and entered the cargo hold. He really needed to hit the refresher and wash off the sweat and sand, but he was too excited and wanted to examine the ancient lightsaber.

Setting it on a workbench, he turned on the worklight and sat down. He turned the hilt over in his hands, examining it more closely in the better lighting conditions. He decided to risk an explosive death and gingerly touched the ignition switch. He was rewarded with a slight fizzle and... nothing. Frowning, he looked for an easy way to open up the hilt but was unable to locate any visible screws or latches. He knew that Jedi used the Force to assemble their lightsabers, but doubted he was ready to attempt that himself. Sighing deeply, he resigned himself to waiting until he arrived back at the fleet and petitioning one of the more senior members of the Dark Brotherhood to assist him with extracting the crystal. Although, he knew that the response would probably be something along the lines of, "If you are not able to extract the crystal, you are not ready to construct your own lightsaber."

Standing up, Westric finally headed for the refresher. He thought to himself, I may not be ready yet, I'm on my way.

**THE END**

# One Last Deal

By Locke Setzer

Slowly, the figures began to disperse and leave, each to their own journey, walking their own path.

Locke closed the door to the chamber and locked it. From there, he opened a small hidden hatch, revealing a series of controls. With a few button clicks, the room suddenly becomes illuminated as normal. After Locke removed the candles, it no longer looked like a secret meeting chamber of the Dark Brotherhood. Instead it looked like a normal empty room, indistinguishable from any other in the galaxy.

Locke removed his robes and other Dark Brotherhood paraphernalia. Without the regalia of the Brotherhood, he looks like any other civilian. Normal. Unassuming. Much like the room he now occupied.

Both were using a disguise, of course. Just a disguise of a different kind.

Locke opened another side compartment in the room. He swapped his robes for a long mat and a leather satchel. He carefully closed the side compartment, then rolled the mat out onto the middle of the floor. Locke sat down cross-legged, facing away from the door where the other members of the Brotherhood had entered and exited from. Then, he waited. Patience was, perhaps, not a common trait of the Dark Brotherhood. But it was a skill he had acquired long ago, in another life and another profession.

Fortunately, he did not have to wait long. After a few minutes, a hidden door opened in front of him, revealing a face he had been expecting.

“You sure have a flair for the dramatic, Setzer.” Petrus said, announcing himself. The trader sat down opposite Locke, on the other side of the mat. He was a large man to begin with, but the cargo he carried made him appear even larger. He had quite an arrangement of pouches, sacks, and satchels, all attached to his being. A picture perfect example of his profession.

Locke bowed slightly, extending both hands, revealing his palms. “The need for secrecy is paramount, I’m afraid. And these days, it’s easier to sneak someone in to see me than for me to sneak off to meet with someone. I trust my instructions were sufficient?”

Petrus snorted. "If you like having to crawl through dirt and walk through caves in the dark. Honestly not sure why I even bothered. Feels like a place you're more likely to get murdered in than do business."

Locke didn't react. "I'm sure the substantial deposit our mutual friend is holding on my behalf more than makes up for a bit of dirt."

Petrus started to wipe the dirt off his clothes, clearly committed to the act. "Starting to think I should have asked for more. Maybe I still will, before it's all said and done."

"That is your right, of course."

Petrus frowned. Locke knew Petrus by reputation only - they had mutual associates, but had never done any business with each other, other than crossing paths at an auction or two. But that wasn't a problem. If anything, it was a sign of respect - they likely had avoided working together because neither one thought they could pull a fast one over the other.

"Heard you quit, but didn't know you, well... quit. Do you know what I mean? Won't even play the game anymore, will you?"

Locke shook his head. "No. I'm done. The game doesn't bring me any joy. I don't think it ever did, to be honest. Besides, no point in us playing it. We've already made the deal. You're here because I offered enough credits in escrow to bring you here, with what I required. I reached out to you because I knew you would have what I need, and wouldn't try to sell me anything less. The merchandise will be genuine. You will walk away with enough money to make the deal well worth the trouble to get here. Why do we need to engage in any other frivolities?"

Petrus crossed his fingers, as if trying to ward off evil. "What you call 'frivolities', I call tradition. And I'm a big believer in tradition. Closest thing I have to a religion. Besides, you've left out all the ambiguity. You could offer less for what I have. You might be disappointed in my goods. I could simply get up and leave, of my own accord. Sometimes you just walk out on a deal. You can't tell me you haven't."

"I have, of course." Locke admitted. "But you won't."

Petrus leaned back, slightly. "Is that a threat?"

Locke sighed. "You know it isn't."

Petrus stared at him for a moment. Then, the large trader simply shook his head, grabbed one of his bags, and dumped the contents out on the mat in front of him.

Lightsaber components scattered in front of Locke.

“You know, without all the dirt, this would have been the dullerest job of my life. You’re a real disappointment Setzer.”

Locke’s eyes gazed at each component. “So are you, if you forgot to bring the kyber crystal.”

Petrus lifted a finger, then slowly, carefully, opened a pouch on the front of his jacket, and pulled out a crystal. He gently handed it to Locke, for inspection.

“For the money you’ve got in escrow, this is the one you want. Never been used. They say the color tells you the truth in the wielder’s heart. Don’t know that there’s much truth to all that, but there’s not many of these beauties left in the galaxy, I can assure you of that.

Locke stared at the crystal for a moment, holding it softly in his palm. Then, he extended his hand back to Petrus, offering the crystal back in return.

“I need a red one.”

Petrus’s eyes widened. The first time that Locke has managed to surprise him today.

“But, for the money you’re offering... I thought...”

“I need a red one. And I need to know the parts are good. And I need discretion.” Locke sighed, before adding. “And I’m out of the game. I can afford to overpay to ensure I get exactly what I need, without issue or concern.”

Petrus nodded his head, but appeared bewildered. He carefully placed the crystal back in his pouch, then opened another pouch on his jacket, pulling out a red crystal. Locke could see that it was not the only one that the trader had.

“You have the instructions I requested as well?” Locke asked. Petrus opened one of his satchels, then pulled out a small book, which he handed to Locke.

Locke glanced through the book. An old Jedi journal. Comprehensive notes. A nice addition. Between this and what he had learned at the Shadow Academy, Locke thought he would have no issues turning these disparate relics into a functioning lightsaber.

Locke was pleased. Petrus, however, appeared to be sweating.

“You’d have been just as happy with that information on a datapad.”

Locke nodded. “You’re right. I do enjoy a physical copy though. I may no longer play the game or engage in trade, but I haven’t lost my appreciation for antiquities, you know.”

“But that’s not why we’re doing business.”

Locke nodded. “No. No it’s not. But I believe our business is concluded, yes? I am happy with the parts, the crystal, and the journal. I have what I need. Soon you will have what you desire. I will inform my agent to deposit the entire amount being held in escrow to your account. That should more than cover us, am I correct?”

Petrus reached into a pocket, pulling out a small towel, which he promptly used to wipe the sweat off his brow. “I miscalculated.”

“It happens.”

“Not to me.” Petrus admitted. “I thought you were still one of us. I even thought this whole retirement thing might be a bit, some kind of ruse, to give you a chance to finally get one over me. But that’s not it at all. You want this stuff to use, not to sell. And you’re not paying me for something precious - you’re compensating me for the risk. The risk I took in coming here, dealing with you.” The old trader almost seemed to shudder. “More risk than I knew.”

“I did not intend to deceive.” Locke stated.

“Maybe not. But you certainly didn’t mind it if you did.”

Locke bowed his head slightly. “I just wanted what I needed.”

Petrus stood. “And that was my mistake. Still thought you were a buyer - didn’t realize you were a *consumer*. That’s going to cost you.”

Locke stayed seated. “I believe the time for negotiating payment has passed.”

Petrus shook his head. “Not in money. In reputation. Next time you deal with an old associate, they’re going to know better. Count on it.”

Locke stood, then extended his hand. “So be it.”

Petrus hesitated, for a moment, but then took Locke's hand. "Hate getting beat. Will hate it even more if it costs me my life."

"For what it's worth, I hope it won't come to that."

Petrus scoffed. "Hopes and wishes aren't worth the breath it takes to utter them. You know better than that."

"I suppose I do." Locke admitted.

There was nothing more to be said. Petrus turned around and left, exiting through the secret door he had used to enter. Locke carefully collected the lightsaber pieces and instructions he had obtained, placing them delicately into his own satchel. Then, slowly, he rolled up the mat, and returned it to its location. He retrieved his robes and other Dark Brotherhood regalia, returning his appearance back to normal. Or, at least, what passed for normal in the Dark Hall of Eos.

Locke carefully checked the room over, verifying that everything had returned back the way it had been. Only then did he leave the room. If everything had gone according to plan, he would have everything he needed to start building his lightsaber, and no one would be the wiser. If it hadn't, well...

Petrus probably shouldn't carry so many red kyber crystals with him.

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In the cover of darkness, a small shuttle launches from Eos, navigating through the moon's atmosphere in a hurry. The shuttle stealthily sneaks around a nearby asteroid to find a larger ship docked, hiding in its shadow. Once the shuttle is onboard, the mothership detaches from the asteroid, and soon launches into hyperspace. The occupants breathe a sigh of relief, confident that they've just escaped with their lives, and their profit, intact.

No one notices the tracker that's been installed on the hull of the ship. No one knows that it's reporting back a clear signal.

No one, of course, but the owner - a Dark Brotherhood member who watches with great interest an icon blinking red on a galactic map...

# The Call of Stingray

*Excerpt from Chapter 4 of Legion's Dark Journey*

By Legion Ordo

Aurora Prime, New Imperial City, 3am local time. A Kubaz who had left the Dark Brotherhood in search of freedom is seen walking at a fast pace down a busy sidewalk. It dodges away from oncoming pedestrians who are still enjoying the night life of the city. At some point it notices three Mandalorians, decked out in full red armor matching its pace and seemingly follow it after every turned corner the Kubaz makes. It checks under its cloak the lightsaber it had constructed during its time within the Brotherhood and is starting to consider using it when it notices a very flashy and loud arcade casino. The Kubaz made the conscious choice in entering the arcade without even looking at what it's called and promptly made its way towards the back of it only to find there are no exits and just a bar. It now feels one hundred percent trapped and notices the Mandalorians right behind it, unholstering their blaster.

Just before the Kubaz was going to ignite the saber, a sharp whistle from the bartender got the attention of the Mandalorians. All the bartender did was look at them, to which they reholstered their blasters and started to walk slowly away towards the exit again. The word "Di'kut" was heard from the bartender and he waved toward the Kubaz to join him at the bar. Hesitant, but thankful, the Kubaz did indeed just that and sat down.

"Well I would say welcome and all, but it seems like you're having a rough day" The bartender cracked wise to his latest patron. The Kubaz nervously laughed.

"Thank you for the help, I was running out of options." The Kubaz spoke through its translator unit it has around its neck.

"You're lucky you came here if you were running from Mandalorians...but at the same time, maybe not so much." As the bartender made a gesture for the Kubaz to look around and noticed that most of the patrons around were in fact Mandalorians. Not all, but most had their helmets still on, but it was clear the Kubaz was neck deep in the worst place ever to go if you were on the run.

“Don’t worry” the bartender assured, “The Boss here has a strict policy that no Mandalorian is to do business within the establishment. Protect and defend it for sure, but no business.”

“I...see. What is this place might I ask?”

“This is the newest hot zone of entertainment in New Imperial City, The Syndicate! We have it all! Pazaak tables, Sabacc tables, Dancers, Singing, Quality food and drinks, Races of all sorts, pod racing is a local favorite. Dejarik if you're more the strategist type and some new favored variant of it called ‘Blood Bowl’ though that one gets A LOT of fights both in game and out. We also have Hintaro for those that favor the Chance type games and...this new weird slot machine thing the Boss brought it called...‘Quasar’...I don’t know about that one, doesn’t seem to fit in here.”

The Kubaz was more than overwhelmed at the choices of games and entertainment that this place seems to offer. A literal paradise away from the pain and torture of reality. He then suddenly reminded himself, he needed to find a place to hide and somewhere where actual bounty hunters and criminals also hang out was probably not the best place to be. However, as quickly as the dread in his mind returned so too an idea started forming in his head. The Kubaz started to lean in closer to the bartender.

“So...is all business prohibited here? Of any kind?” The Kubaz asked with a hint of fear that the bartender might ask him to leave. Yet the bartender started to smile and chuckle.

“Ahh...I get it. Someone needs to hide. And from Sith folk no less...We might have something, but...well...it will cost.” As the bartender spoke, the Kubaz started to shuffle for any credits he had left.

“Oh no no, this will not cost money,” interrupted the bartender, “The service we provide needs a...specific powersource.”

“What...exactly?”



“A Kyber Crystal” The bartender stated as he pointed towards the Kubaz’s lightsaber. The hesitation of the Kubaz was obvious. There was no way he was going to give up the very weapon he needed to protect himself. The bartender continued on after the noticeable hesitation.

“Oh just don’t. I know you’re thinking ‘what about my fancy laser sword.’ Look, we need the crystal to power a new device that can transport you anywhere in the galaxy, and before you ask...yes we have tested the device thoroughly.”

The Kubaz was even more hesitant than before. A new teleportation device? Out of the blue? Surely this is a ridiculous scam. Yet at that moment he felt the presence of several strong Dark Brotherhood Sith nearby. He couldn’t tell who exactly, all he knew was that they were getting closer. The bartender moving his hand towards his ear, as if listening to an earpiece, began to grin even more.

“You better make a decision soon, though you probably already know your Sith buddies are nearby don’tcha?”

Fearing that he has no more time to consider any other plans, the Kubaz removes the crystal from his lightsaber and hands it over. The bartender grabs it and makes a motion to follow him to the back. As they walk through several blast doors and down several flights of steps, they reach a rather normal looking door. The bartender inserts a weird looking device to the control panel next to it and then turns to instruct the Kubaz.

“Ok, some tips before you enter. First, you are to stay inside the next room until instructed. Second, Do not question anything going on, just follow orders. And lastly, and I cannot stress this enough-” As the bartender opened the door just before finishing his sentence, something kicked the Kubaz inside with the door locking right behind him. Frantically getting back up, the Kubaz looks around and quickly surveys the room he is in. A basic circular room with only one door and no furnishings at all. As he walks towards the door, he notices that it wasn’t locked. He opened the door and only saw the exact same room he was in on the other side.

Panic has begun to set in. There was no possible way the room could have moved or shifted to give an illusion of no escape. Yet as he traversed between the two rooms he could find no means

of escape at all. There was only one option left, The Force. As he begins to start sensing for an escape or way out, he is suddenly overwhelmed by fatigue and weakness. Brought down to one knee and gasping for air, the Kubaz started to feel as if he had been fully severed from the Force.

It was at this point, A figure walked over to him slowly from the door. Holding some strange device, it began talking in a language that was unfamiliar to the Kubaz. He reached for his lightsaber, only to remember that it no longer holds a kyber crystal and won't activate. The figure began to speak to the Kubaz in Galactic Basic.

“So...you were the one who fled from the Brotherhood?...you dar'jetii are all the same. Thinking of yourselves immortal and indestructible...but the moment your powers and weapons are taken away...you are **nothing**.”

As the Kubaz looked up, he saw only the horrific face of a Smiling Demon looking down on him. The creature's cybernetic hand grabbed the kubaz's face, and the only thing left to follow was the sound of a crunch.

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A few moments had passed and we can find both Locke and Honsou enjoying drinks at The Syndicate, with the former not really enjoying any time with the amount of Mandalorians eyeing up the two Sith.

“You need to relax Locke, these hunters can quite literally smell fear,” Honsou states in an attempt to help Locke relax.

“It is not fear, but annoyance. They have no right to look at me like some sort of meal or future trophy.”

“They are Mandalorians, they do that with anyone and everyone! Besides, they won't attack so long as their boss commands it.”

“Speaking of, where is-” As Locke started to question where Legion was, he was interrupted by Legion dropping the now broken pieces of a lightsaber and kyber crystal on the bar in front of them.

“Well then...I see your hunt was successful”, Honsou states with a smile. “How’d you manage this one?”

“... Do you really want to know how fragile a kubaz skull is?” Asked Legion, with the two Sith on the other side of the bar for a brief moment felt a slight sort of disgust.

“This does concern me Legion,” Locke states as he looks at the broken pieces, “these were to serve you as parts for your lightsaber for future training. How exactly are you going to make this work?”

“...The parts are easy to fabricate. Not my first rodeo on crafting components for a tool of a force user. The Crystal will be tricky, however we have been getting increasingly good at replicating our own in-house synthetic crystals, so I’m sure with time that will not be a problem.”

“Excellent, but one question...what is a rodeo?” Honsou asked, with Legion looking dead pan at him, followed by his signature facepalm. Locke cleared his throat and began to hand over a cylinder code to Legion.

“This next assignment is going to be a little trickier than before. It appears a planet that was loyal to the EH remnant has begun the process of separation from the colonies and this is unacceptable. Usually this is a matter for the colonial affairs...even though they are in disarray at the moment, but we have reason to believe that those ruling the planet have obtained or have had possession of information of certain individuals within the brotherhood.”

Legion took the cylinder and inserted it within his cybernetic arm. The data being fed directly to his brain made him smile again in his usual demonic way. A familiar green planet, one that he had been planning to burn with his Mandalorian crusaders for quite some time, has just been assigned as his next target? How could he not smile?

“What limitations do I have this time?”

“You will like this part,” As Locke took a final sip of his drink. Just before he and Honsou began heading back to port, Legion heard Locke through telepathy “Any Means Necessary.”

Legion really smiled like a demon now. As he whistled for all his Mandalorian brothers and sisters to pay attention, he spoke in Mando'a.

“It is time for another Great Hunt!”

# Habu's Quest

By Habu

When I reflect on life's events, it's easy to see where the force shaped and guided me. I see know the force has influenced my life at every turn since I was a child—pushing me to learn, to seek greater awareness, and see the unseen. I'm stronger mentally, physically, and spiritually as the force flows willingly through me.

My quest for lightsaber components actually began very early in my life...

## Chapter 1 – In My Youth

I was about 12 years when I started flying with my father on our home world of Ryloth. He was flying for Two-Jacks, a company that was buying and selling transport craft all over Ryloth. He began letting me fly and soon was giving me full-fledged instruction. I was smitten with flying and knew at that early age it would be my life and career. I started hanging out with the local kids who were building and flying their own craft that were being used as "Pod Racers" in Ryloth's grand canyon with wide open spaces and challenging terrain that made for really cool races. I took a job with a junk dealer to raise money for real flying lessons. For some of my salary he allowed me to start collecting parts so I could build my own racer and compete with the other kids. I built a pretty basic craft that got me started. I not only built my racer, but I started building some hard-core flying skills. I got noticed by an Imperial pilot, CM TecGenie, after I won several races. He attended all the races and began to talk to me about a flying career in the Imperial Navy. I was so excited! He provided me a template for studies in addition to my flying lessons that would prepare me to hit the ground running in the Imperial Starfighter Pilot Training. My studies grew intense and with flying lessons and school, I had little time left for pod racing. However, I kept a box full of parts and pieces as memorabilia that I now know are the very first pieces of my lightsaber—the [blade power adjustment](#), [blade length adjustment](#) and probably the most important piece is the [handgrip / metallic cylinder](#) made of adamantine, an extremely strong and rare alloy for housing all the lightsaber components.

## Chapter 2 – Starfighter Training

I graduated from college with a computer science degree and I was officially recruited to join the Imperial Navy. That started me on the path to becoming the TIE Fighter / Bomber pilot I am today. Although difficult to describe, I started having *strange feelings* while in the Imperial Weapons and Tactics School (IWATS) TIE Fighter basic flight training. My instructor, CM Blaster told me that aside from my aggressive flying style, he saw something else in me. These strange feelings were CM Blaster; KNT Brutalist of the Dark Brotherhood (DB), exploring my force sensitive nature and seeing if I was worthy of joining the DB. He began talking to me about the force and started showing me rudimentary ways to channel my aggression into a useful energy for controlling anything around me.

I was able to immediately grasp the basics of using the force and was introduced to the dark-side of the Force as well. I used them both to propel me thru starfighter pilot training that started me on a fast-track career path in the Imperial Navy. My introduction to dark-side training included dedicated sessions on lightsaber construction. These set me on my quest to start collecting the components necessary for building my own lightsaber knowing fully that it may take years to complete.

I was befriended by a TIE Fighter crew chief, responsible for servicing and maintaining the TIEs in immaculate flying condition. Our "friendship" technically considered inappropriate fraternization between an officer and enlisted person, soon blossomed into a full-fledged affair. I tried to call it off but she was so enamored with me that I was forced to use some dark force techniques to get her pissed off at me and end the relationship. But this was not before I convinced her to get me a few intricate TIE Fighter laser system parts that fit nicely into my lightsaber design. I netted these power assembly components: [power field conductor](#), [power vortex ring](#), and an [inert power insulator](#). I told her these were for an advanced project I needed for graduating Starfighter Pilot Training. She believed me...

### Chapter 3 – Dark Brotherhood Crystals

Starfighter Pilot Training was conducted in the Phare system, based on the 5th planet Sif with most of our flying exercises done near Baldyr (a moon of the 3rd planet Ullyr) as well as on the Modified Platform Daedalus. So immediately after I graduated Starfighter Pilot Training, I went to the planet Ullyr for a bit of R&R since it's a prime vacation spot for Imperial officers. While in the Phare system, I began to hear the rumors that Clan Scholae Palatinae maintains a DB base on the planet Hela. The DB will neither confirm or deny these rumors and insists that the clan's location is classified information. This coincided with a period of time where my dark powers were rapidly growing as my master was teaching me more and more. I wasn't sure why there was such a strong impulse to find the DB Clan on Hela and little did I know that KNT Brutalist had notified the secret DB clan that I would be coming.

The conditions on Hela are significantly austere and life on the surface is not sustainable. I was told the DB Clan maintains the base there by the sheer power of the Dark Side, assisted by classified repulsor technology. I had an overwhelming compulsion to go there as my studies led me to this planet as a source of the crystals (lapis lazuli and beryl) I needed for constructing my lightsaber. I hopped on a shuttle bound for the planet Frigg. I bribed the pilot to declare an emergency due to an engine malfunction and state he was unable to return to Ullyr and was forced to land on Hela where he would make repairs to the shuttle. He orchestrated the plan perfectly. When we landed on Hela, the shuttle was immediately put into an underground shelter for its protection. The pilot and crew were confined to the ship and told the Hela ground crew would make repairs to their ship.

But I was told to follow this nefarious character into the base operations center. There we boarded an all-terrain vehicle and began weaving our way thru a labyrinth of underground tunnels for what seemed like miles. Suddenly we stopped when the tunnel reached a dead-end. I was shuffled to an auspicious rock that lurched inward as we approached. I entered the cavern alone and was met face-to-face with three dark figures in flowing robes. Obviously, members of the secret DB clan. They took me to an outcrop of flowing molten lava. I was given a long-handled

rod with a pan at the end. I knew what to do. I scooped the pan into the lava and retrieved my prize.

They kindled a VERY HOT fire with a pot hanging over it. I put the blob into the pot that they informed me was filled with liquid boric acid. The entire blob glowed an eerie blue as the deposits and impurities slowly melted away and the [dark blue crystals](#) began to appear. I was instructed to get a second scoop. We went through the same process with the second blob revealing beautiful [dark red crystals](#) as the rock residue was completely diminished. This process took several hours leaving only the crystals formed by millions of years of geological activity. The clan members chanted unintelligibly over the crystals. After the crystals were completely cooled, they placed them into pouches and handed them to me while whispering the words—welcome to the Dark Brotherhood young Sith.

## Chapter 4 – First Assignment

I graduated from Starfighter Pilot Training with honors and was given my first choice of assignment. I was assigned to Gamma Squadron on the ISD Hammer currently stationed in the Carrida system. Gamma Squadron was an experimental unit that specialized in using the TIE Bomber for dogfighting as well as for the traditional TIE Bomber missions. I was quickly assimilated into the squadron and they immediately knew I was serious about the being a top-notch bomber pilot. Shortly after whizzing through my Mission Ready qualification, we received what would be my first combat mission.

There was a fledgling society on planet Dar that was being courted to come into the Empire peacefully instead of by force. Planet Dar's prime source of income was from agriculture. A planet with crops that supplied the entire system with food and vegetables. There was an indigenous animal, the Byrx (similar to an Earth buffalo) that roamed the planet in search of grazing grounds.

The Byrx population had grown out-of-control because of its prolific reproduction. The government of Dar reached out to the Imperial liaison for help with culling the Byrx population because they were causing grave damage on the plains of Kedar—a huge farming area for their



vegetable crops. It was being decimated by the Byrx herd and threatened to put an end to that year's crop if something wasn't done immediately. The Imperial liaison negotiated a deal with the Dar government that the Empire's would cull the Byrx herd into a manageable number if they would join the Empire peacefully. They readily agreed.

Our mission was to eliminate 85% of the herd and leave the remnant that could be easily controlled to work within the whole planet's eco-system. The herd was about 5000 Byrx and our mission was simple; seek and destroy. The Flight Leader divided the plain into 6 kill zones. Our flight of 5 bombers were each given a zone with instructions to kill everything in the zone. This would leave the 6th zone untouched. As you might imagine it was like shooting ducks in a pond. As I was making pass after pass, and the darkness began to swell within me—I fed on it and my aggressiveness grew. The dark forces were teaching me to kill and to kill ruthlessly. We ruthlessly slaughtered the Byrx herd. When I finished my sector, I had to fight an overwhelming urge to kill the untouched 6th sector. My master's lessons in controlling the dark forces raging within me are all that kept me from wiping out that sector too.

The flight regrouped and the Flight Leader was asked to land at Dar's starport for debriefing. We were met by the Dar governor and his staff. The grateful governor presented each flight member with a unique plasma blaster in a case—beautiful "red metallic" blasters that were also fully functional weapons. I took my blaster and placed it in a prominent place in my 'hero cabinet' collection but only after I removed three key components for my lightsaber project: [the diatium power cell](#), [focusing crystal activator](#), and [crystal energy chamber](#). My quest for these crucial pieces was always in the back of my thoughts. As I reflected back on that day, it was plainly obvious the force was instrumental in guiding me to that destination and my actions.

## Chapter 5 – On the Fast Track

I was rapidly established in Gamma Squadron as one of the top pilots. With my ever-growing kill

statistics, I let the squadron commander know I was ready for the next step. But I was told to be patient. The ISD Hammer was visited by Gen Datar, the Battlegroup Commander just after our latest operation in bringing the planet Lantare into the fold of the Empire—yes, by force. Gamma Squadron topped the killboards for the entire Battlegroup. Needless to say, I had more than my fair share of kills. I informed KNT Brutalist I had sensed something about the same time as she came onboard the ISD Hammer. He was quick to tell me that General Datar, although not a Sith, was very force sensitive and is being monitored closely by the Dark Brotherhood.

Then to my complete surprise, I was called to the General's office where she presented me with an Iron Star with Bronze Wings for my role in the operation. It wasn't the usual award in a cardboard box we normally got, but it was in an exotic wooden box with an engraved plaque. It was backlit with an internal LED specifically designed for display. As she presented me the plaque, she informed me that this also commemorates my early promotion to LCM and assignment as Gamma's newest Flight Leader; all due to the skill I've displayed since being assigned to the ISD Hammer, the Empire Hammer's flagship. She also told me that she would be closely watching my career progression. I thanked her and I knew when leaving her office that there was a genuine connection with her through the force.

Importantly to my quest, I couldn't help but to remove the rings for hanging the box for use as my lightsaber's handgrip attachment and the emitter matrix that controlled the box's elegant display. I continued making slow and steady progress collecting lightsaber components from any and every source as the force steadfastly guided my path.

## **Chapter 6 – The Fallen Sith**

I continued strong development as an Imperial Naval Officer and as an Acolyte in the Dark Brotherhood. My lessons for using the dark force allowed me to channel that aggression into a sharp focus and desire to be the best pilot in Gamma. I tirelessly studied for improving my TIE Bomber skills and I was in the simulator every day when I wasn't flying—I couldn't get enough, I

wanted to be on top! KNT Brutalist kept me fully engaged with my lessons at the same time preparing me for my next DB promotion.

The Dark Brotherhood became aware of the tragic death of a Sith who was living on the planet Ashtar, in the system of Setii. This planet is a heavily wooded paradise where Sith Randtor was living in seclusion as part of his DB mind-control training. Governor Plad's disdain for being under Empire control led to him discovering the Sith in their midst. So, he set a series of events in motion that trapped the Sith where it took over 50 blaster wielding soldiers to subdue and kill him. The DB sent KNT Brutalist to assassinate the Governor who was responsible for the death of the Sith and I went along to observe and assist as required as part of my continuing DB training.

We went with a contingent of the Diplomatic Corp that were being sent for attempting a peaceful resolution of the issues being stirred up by this problematic governor. The first session was a social affair, intended to be an ice breaker and ease some of the tensions between the Imperial and Ashtar diplomats. KNT Brutalist and I were acting as diplomats too and were given a tour of the palace upon our request. Our real mission was intelligence gathering and reconnaissance of the palace to set up the kill.

The next morning was the first serious meeting to start resolving the issues being presented by the governor's staff. While they were fully engaged in those activities, KNT Brutalist took the liberty of taking Governor Plad aside and plainly asked him about the Sith. This took Plad by surprise, but Brutalist set him up by telling him that all Sith needed to die. Now emboldened by Brutalist's lie, Plad wanted to brag and told Brutalist that he had the Sith's personal belongings. Brutalist motioned for me to join him and he got the governor to take us to his office where he again bragged and detailed how they cornered Sith Randtor and killed him. The Governor had the Sith's robes and the remnants of his lightsaber, that was badly damaged in the fight, on display for all his cronies to see.

I watched as Brutalist eyes started glowing bright red with rage. He grabbed the Governor by the throat and dragged him into his private bathroom. I cautioned Brutalist that we needed to make this look like a suicide so as not to implicate the Empire in his death and his rage subsided. I filled the bath tub with water and Brutalist placed the unconscious governor in the tub and slit

his wrist with a razor. We waited until there was no pulse and set up the scene so no one would suspect foul play. We returned to the intense diplomatic meetings. Several hours passed and it didn't appear the governor was missed, until lunch was served and his assistants discovered his apparent suicide.

The next day after the frenzy subsided over Plad's suicide, Lt Governor Scrant, was immediately sworn into office as the new Governor of Ashtar. Scrant was a timid man and easily manipulated by the leader of the Imperial Diplomatic Corp to declare Ashtar's allegiance to the Empire. He allowed me to take the Sith's belongings as Brutalist used simple mind control techniques to get his compliance. KNT Brutalist told me to take the items back to the ISD Hammer where we would arrange the appropriate ceremony for a Dark Brother. I asked for Sith Randtor's lightsaber to study its construction techniques and Brutalist agreed. There wasn't much left of the lightsaber, but I was able to retrieve two useful parts; the [activation stud plate](#) and [safety switch](#). It was an honor to use a fallen Sith's lightsaber parts for constructing my own. For my part in the assassination, I was promoted to Marauder in the Dark Brotherhood taking an all-important step toward my immediate goal of getting to the rank of Knight and being able to build and wield a lightsaber.

## Chapter 7 – Medical Technology

It's hard to describe why the lightsaber is such a mesmerizing goal for an aspiring Sith. Ingrained in every force user, lightsabers are just as important today they were millennia ago. This ancient weapon makes for a powerful incentive when Dark Brothers see it as the ultimate weapon for destruction and the attainment of power. My training continued and I gathered more pieces—my quest was nearing its end.

After returning from the planet Ashtar, I had a severe headache. I went to the flight surgeon and was diagnosed with a head cold brought on by a virus I contracted from the planet. I received a full scan with a hand-held device the nurse called VitaScan. I was fascinated with the visible scanning array it generated. I told the nurse how intrigued I was with the technology

associated with such a small device. With my dark force mind control techniques just starting to blossom, I was able to "convince" her into loaning me one of the devices to use in my advanced studies.

When I disassembled the device, I quickly discovered "gold", [the energy gate](#). The intricate miniaturized electronics fit perfectly with the other lightsaber components and completed the power assembly. Yes, I returned the non-working VitaScan to the nurse complaining that it suddenly sparked and stopped working. She replied, they've had a lot of them to malfunction and would return it to maintenance.

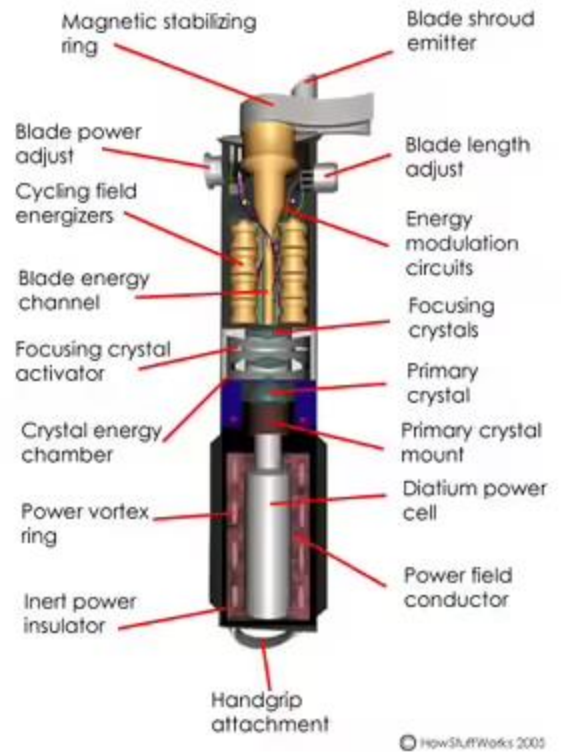
## **Chapter 8 – All too easy...**

More importantly, my quest is complete with finding [the energy gate](#) — the final part I needed for my lightsaber. In reality, this quest has taken years to obtain all the needed parts. As my instruction in the Force is progressing, my dark knowledge is also increasing by leaps and bounds. I'm still only a Marauder in the Dark Brotherhood and have a long way to go before being allowed to even start construction of my lightsaber. But my master and the dark forces put me on this path of collecting these parts so I'm ready when my time comes. To tell the story of my quest makes it seem "[all too easy](#)", but I assure you that I worked diligently for each piece. I'm the benefactor of a great Dark Brotherhood master, KNT Brutalist who instructed me to carefully store the parts while I eagerly await the day I can begin constructing my own lightsaber.

**A most important step in my dark desire to become a Sith!**

## Lightsaber components:

- Handgrip
- Activation stud plate
- Safety switch
- Emitter matrix
- Power assembly
  - Diatium power cell
  - Power field conductor
  - Power vortex ring
  - Energy gate
  - Crystal energy chamber
- Crystal energy chamber
  - Primary crystal
  - Focusing crystals
  - Focusing crystal activator



# A Foundation

By Master

The endless, steady droning of the hyperdrive engines would have lulled most people into a slumber before too long and this particular flight was no exception.

The star of our story had himself fallen victim to the soft melody a short time ago, several hours into the latest and final leg of the journey. Given his lack of restful sleep lately it wasn't terribly surprising.

Those who can feel the Force have always had an interesting relationship with dreaming, long studied by old and forgotten Jedi over the eons it was well known for bestowing visions, glimpses of potential futures and even great warnings in times of great peril.

Over the last few months, the mighty man of our story, known to many, wanted by most; General Master – Pilot of the mighty Emperor's Hammer had himself started to suffer such an affliction. Even now he had begun shifting in his sleep clearly troubled by whatever he saw.

Most of the time when he awoke, he had little memory of what he had witnessed, but he did manage to retain a few glimpses, unfortunately they only left more questions.

Images of darkness, caves stretching deep within the earth, fire, heat, fear and pain.

And throughout it all, the Force was screaming.

He was no stranger to experiencing more traditional nightmares, usually consisting of bloodshed, turmoil and death, something that he often saw in his career and during his many travels throughout the galaxy. While thankfully rare, but they were never easy to cope with. This was something rather different.

With a start and a slight moan of protest Master stretched and sat up straighter in the pilot's chair before he opened his eyes and slowly took stock of his surroundings.

While he spent most of his time flying the Missile Boat 'Intruder' alongside the infamous Typhoon Squadron the YT-2000 Vornskr was Master's beloved personal vessel. Its phrik

reinforced hull gave it a uniquely shadowy hue and made it almost impossible to see, its darkness blending in seamlessly with the endless vastness of open space.

Improved engines, shields and a few fancy armaments rounded out her improvements over the stock standard build with Master spending countless credits and hours improving the design. Given that it had saved his life countless times over the years, it was clear it was time well spent.

After checking the instruments to ensure he was still on course, Master took stock of his current situation. With the fleet recently so busy with battles with the Ishtari and tour through the Chaos Region of the Unknown Regions he hadn't had a chance before now to follow up on a hunch and maybe make sense of what he was seeing.

He had very little to go on but was relieved to have a possible lead; one of the fragments that he could remember; a place that felt creepy and dark, a large cave system with a wide chamber bathed in flame. It wasn't somewhere he'd typically go, but he tried to recall when he might have seen it before.

Racking his brain he had considered all the dark and creepy places he had been unfortunate enough to visit and in the end one place stood out. Given that he had only visited this place once in his long, exalted career and had never really had the desire to return it would not have been his first choice. Problem was when he considered it, he could feel the Force sing in response.

Eos. Moon of Aurora Prime, Home of the Dark Brotherhood.

On his previous visit as a lofty Vice Admiral, assigned Command Attache to the Tactical Officer; HA Frodo, Frodo had private business with the Dark Council which allowed Master to explore and see the sights as it were.

He had been given a tour by a rather cute Krath Apprentice who had seemingly pissed off her Juggalo superior for some reason or another and it was now her job to show him around and keep him out of trouble.



The Dark Hall had been a very impressive place. Over several hours, he had seen as much as possible inspecting everything that was on offer. The training rooms and the library archives had been highlights but the place he most remembered was the entrance to the Catacombs.

The Dark Hall sat above a vast network of tunnels and caves that remained largely unexplored. Known as the Catacombs, those stupidly brave enough to enter and survive these depths spoke of creatures of darkness, numerous deadly traps, and horrors incomprehensible to the sentient mind. A whole world lay beneath the temple, one of unspeakable terror.

At the time as he stood before the entrance, he had felt its great power. Despite his untrained status in the eyes of the Brotherhood he had never been weak in the Force, and this place was drowning in power.

He had been quite drawn to the ancient stone archway, engraved with Sith runes; still as sharp as the day they were carved and for just a moment, he felt like he could stare into its deep depths forever, filled with a great urge to explore its corridors, investigate its secrets and unlock the powers hidden deep inside...

Shaking his head, he attempted to clear his mind. He thought perhaps the answer to the question lay within Eos and given first opportunity he had attempted to head there and demand answers.

Unfortunately, it seemed fate was against such a quest, at least at the present time.

While the Vornskr would always have been Master's first choice of vehicle for this endeavour, mainly due to its comfort, speed and ability to get out of a tight spot – it was more of a curse in this case.

Prior to leaving on his gallant quest, squad mate and long-time friend, *Colonel Locke Setzer* had asked, what he called a small favour.

Locke had ordered a large delivery of electronic components for some strange simulator XW project he was working on. While normally not one to get involved in Locke's crazy XW schemes given the fact he refused to allow Master to make his own custom Death Star mission

(that would have totally been game changing... but also insane). The shipping costs had been immensely excessive and while `L had managed to get it transferred as close as he could, he needed help with the final part of the delivery.

Normally Master would have politely declined his friends request, he had his own mission to undertake - he needed answers after all, but Locke was rather instant with his request. He couldn't do it himself due to 'having his own quest' and had even used the excuse of an old favour owed – so Master had agreed to pick up the cargo.

Ultimately, it would mean Eos would have to wait. But that's how things were.

The console began to emit a warning tone advising that the return to real space was imminent and before long the craft emerged with a slight burst of coronal radiation signaling his arrival in the outskirts of the Xal system, deep within the Ablajack Sector.

His ultimate destination was *Foundation Station*.

It was a vast facility made up of multiple asteroids fused together, the largest in these remote reaches of space. The various sections and walkways connected to one another, creating an immense structure that included casinos, cantinas, trade & auction yards, massive residential archologies, starship repair facilities and much, much more. The whole station contained a population of slightly over two million sentient beings and was a great place to relax and trade alike.

Approach to the station was a difficult affair without the appropriate approval. Given its position amongst a rather volatile and chaotic asteroid field, entrance to the facility was carefully controlled and its star-charts heavily restricted. All entry was scheduled at certain times that best suited travel through the asteroid field and all craft were slaved to a control ship that as aptly named, controlled the overall journey from the extremely fortified entrance zone, a short hyperspace jump and then the short sublight journey to the main facility. It was all done professionally, with minimal fuss and very carefully controlled.

Casting an eye at the impressively large Golan III facility a few clicks directly in front of his craft, Master announced his crafts presence and intent with a few flipped switches on the console as he prepared himself for the next step of his journey.

If all went well the next scheduled convoy heading for the Station was scheduled to leave four hours and twenty minutes from now, more than enough time to get through any form of bureaucracy and inspection the security forces demanded. Given that he had nothing to hide and wasn't doing anything particularly dodgy nor illegal he wasn't expecting any trouble, but it was always good to be prepared.

Settling in, Master attempted to relax. Once he was at Foundation Station he could conduct his business, get the cargo and maybe even have a drink or five in a local cantina. While it wasn't Eos, it didn't mean he couldn't have a little fun or find something interesting to do.

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### **~36 Hours Later~**

The Vornskr jinked, dived and spun its way through the asteroid field and surrounding space as it did its utmost best to avoid the concentrated enemy fire and what seemed like countless exploding craft.

Turbolasers lit up the surrounding space, craft by the hundreds were incinerated in their wake, asteroids caught in the devastation exploded into countless fragments of rocks and dust billowing out into the surrounding space and the massive super-structure that was once Foundation Station slowly burned on its own escaping atmosphere, its reactor critical and power wildly fluctuating all over – dying a slow agonising death.

Inches separated the Vornskr from the fiery demise of instant death as it skirted the surface of another large asteroid that had been propelled in its general direction. Its shields had been under constant pressure from almost the moment the craft had escaped from the station – between the lasers that strayed too close, the various explosions and the countless micro-asteroids that now pelted the area, it was a rather volatile place to be.

Master, moderately injured from his recent endeavours (thankfully not seriously), piloted the craft with a grim but determined expression. He knew that without the asteroid movement charts and given the current state of affairs, escape was going to be more difficult than he would have appreciated.

The thrum of the twin-trio turrets that protected the craft as they fired relentlessly at a nearby enemy craft spurred him into further action. While he had managed to escape the destruction of the Station, surprisingly with all his effects intact, cargo loaded and impromptu mission completed, the force attacking the station had taken both him and everyone by surprise. During his hasty exit he could not help himself but aid a rather large group of the station's population, mostly comprising of women and children who had been sheltering from the destruction and with little protection available.

So now his ship, loaded with more people than it could technically sustain for an extended period flew with a sense of desperation while it did its best to avoid surrounding destruction and escape safely.

Delving deep into the Force, Master focused on the movement of the asteroid belt, while its overall movements were sporadic, they did follow a plan, one the owners of Foundation Station had used to their advantage, one that he could anticipate and utilise.

The turrets continued to pelt the nearby enemy ships and another explosion lit up the nearby space while Master's hands moved slowly but with purpose over the console.

The ship continued to dip and dive as required but Master clearly had purpose to escape sooner rather than later as he powered up the hyperdrive and nav computer, punching in coordinates. It was a long three minutes with several close calls before the nav confirmed what was entered wouldn't result in complete disaster although it couldn't guarantee against it given his position.

Picking his line he accelerated towards his exit vector, forcing the ship forward at an increased rate, the turrets continuing thrum as they protected against the chasing fighters.

Reaching for the hyperdrive lever, Master completely focused on the task at hand never noticed one of the survivors making his way towards him.

Given his position in the cockpit and facing open space he never saw him reach into his clothing and pull out a small hold-out blaster pistol.

As the craft entered hyperspace, the pistol discharged three times.

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### **~24 Hours Earlier~**

The Vornskr had just touched down in its assigned hangar bay within the Station. After arming himself and his two 'security' droid companions, Master descended the gangplank.

Sorting out the paperwork was fairly painless, he quickly paid for his landing fee before arranging to have Locke's junk transported to the ship. A few hours of waiting were ahead of him - enough time to explore and grab a few drinks.

He addressed the two droids standing at the edge of the open gangway. "Uno, stay here and keep watch over the ship. If anyone tries anything, take action. Dos, carry out your surveillance mission. Any questions?"

Their silent compliance was all he needed.

Without needing to say anything further, he pressed a few buttons alongside the gangplank before it rose with a hiss and snap as it locked into place.

Due to the large size of Foundation Station, it had a wide selection of cantinas, casinos and other places of entertainment where one could potentially lose themselves for days at a time. Connected by a series of large tubes that carried passengers between various points of the station it was very easy to transverse the whole station quickly and find exactly what you wanted.

That said, Master upon arriving at one of the better-known entertainment areas did wander for a while looking for something of special note. Surprisingly it was not some impressive bar or entertainment venue that drew his attention but an auction yard.

Given its rather isolated location this station only really thrived due to the travelers that passed through and the trade they brought. The auction & trade yards that had sprung up provided a significant economic boon and as far as anyone could tell everything was legitimate & legal. But there were rumours that not all goods were acquired lawfully, and despite the well-intended regulations, it seemed like some items made their way into the market without a lot of scrutiny or oversight.

As he entered the yard he had quickly headed for the ongoing auction, this normally wouldn't have been his first choice of entertainment, even if it was always a good place for a bargain, but Master had a feeling that he needed to be here or something bad would happen. So, he sat and listened as the Twilek auctioneer called up the next item. Half listening to the official, he reached out with the Force in an attempt to get more of a read on what was going on, what felt strange, elusive, wrong.

After a moment he got the answer to that question. Three rows to the front, two to the left sat a seemingly unremarkable figure. Had you been looking at the crowd your eyes would have simply slid over him, deeming him unremarkable, another face in the crowd, not worthy of further reflection, this was a mistake. He hid it very well, he was restrained almost to the point where he almost missed it, but when he looked it was there. A spark of power in the Dark Side.

This individual was trained in the Dark Side and he was trained well. Master didn't know why he was here and while he had no particular beef with this person, it didn't bode well.

All further thoughts of what to do about this were then completely derailed with the final item of the auction being unveiled.

“Ladies and Gentleoids, your final item of our schedule today. Item MU-777; Bone Specimen - unknown species. Discovered on an asteroid by a passing ship within the Unknown Regions. Origin is unknown and has undergone various testing to confirm its authenticity and design”.

Master picked up an abandoned copy of a nearby information pack, flipping to the right page he scanned what they had tested for. The tests had revealed that the bone was certainly from

an animal, yet its base structure had a composition more similar to a metal substance like beskar than to any known bone composition. In the end, they couldn't tell which species it belonged to, only that it was unique and virtually indestructible. Most notably, it resonated within the Force.

There were few times in Master's long and exciting life that he could honestly say that he had been completely and utterly terrified. He had flown countless missions death defying, dangerous missions, skirting death on sometimes a daily basis and had his fair share of all but deathly injuries, but right now he was almost terrified beyond all rational thought at what was unfolding in front of him.

“Bidding will start at 450,000 credits, who would like to start”?

The auction begun with clearly a few of the attendees interested in the item with the price increasing at a respectable rate. Finally getting his issues under control he knew he needed to act, while it was possible it would end up property to some ignorant collector who thought it was a pretty item they could show off at dinner parties and swanky events the inclusion of the Dark Jedi in the audience meant it was never going to be that simple.

Either way, it really didn't matter who won the auction. This item could not be allowed to be owned by anyone who was not aware of what it was and didn't understand the immense danger they would be in by daring to possess it.

It was his own bid, declaring his intention in the race that first drew unwanted attention and he was carefully assessed by the Dark Jedi. He felt his gaze judging and for a moment they held eye contact, two hunters sizing each other up for what was to come.

The price continued to rise and slowly bidders dropped out. The Dark Jedi had yet to enter his own bid but Master had been forced to a few times when some buyers had developed second thoughts. There were only two others still interested in the item, both collectors with more money than brains and extremely intent on being the owner, thankfully Master had enough emergency reserves and could outbid them if really required but given the already exorbitant price and what he might need to spend it wasn't exactly a great plan.

When it seemed like he may in fact win without having to sell several of his considerate assets to cover the extreme cost, things changed and not for the better. An official entered auction area, had a few quiet words with the auctioneer and within moments the item “had been withdrawn”. Given that no explanation was given for the abrupt change of face from the auctioneer and the smug impression he received from his Dark Jedi friend as he passed on his way out of the room Master was left in a quickly emptying room with an overwhelming sense of foreboding. This was not good.

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**~Eight Hours Later~**

With a deep sigh he prepared himself for what was to become. It had taken him longer than he'd wanted but he'd gotten his answers and tracked his target.

After his arrival, when he'd sent Dos out to complete his mission, he knew that while the droid could be a right vindictive bastard, he was extremely good at his job and always useful in a fight. As always, the droid's meticulous attention to detail was of great benefit and it ensured when needed he had all the plans, surveillance footage and logs he could ever want or need to plot his next move.

The original idea was to steal the item from the Auction Yard before it could be transferred to another location. While perhaps not the best plan and the size of the guard force would prove to be a concern at least it was a plan, besides he could be subtle if he needed to be.

In the end it didn't matter. As he was about to implement a daring robbery that he'd dubbed 'Operation: This will probably end badly' fate intervened. Surveillance footage showed the container carrying the item being loaded onto an extremely armoured speeder before being transported to a private landing platform, high above a large Hotel Archology.

This left Master in a bigger quandary. Stealing the item from the auction yard would have been difficult, now things were even more so. He knew three things for certain; First; the item was still atop the very tall and impressive piece of engineering that was the Iblex Hotel. This hotel housed thousands between its guests and hundreds of staff, not to mention a very respectable and welltrained security force.



Second; the item was not alone. His new Dark Jedi friend was also atop the hotel, and he was waiting.

Third; if he didn't get that damn thing off this rock soon, every-one and every-thing on it would die.

So, with time of the essence, he had gone with the more unorthodox approach of simply walking in the front door. While it didn't make the grand entrance of flying in through a window or smashing through the wall, it did save time and hopefully avoided the unpleasant yet inevitable fight that was to come.

Both men stared at each other for a moment, and it was the Dark Jedi who spoke first, "I have been waiting for you, you could feel its power, I knew you would come".

Master's only response was a grimace as he continued to speak, "You wish to take it for yourself, then take it, if you are strong enough".

"You do not know what you possess. It will be your undoing", the seriousness of his words and the grim look on his face spoke volumes but it did not shake the Dark Jedi's faith in his path. The grin in response was almost feral and Master felt the weight of his opponent's power begin to wash over the area, he was powerful in the Dark Side, that much was certain this would be an interesting test of abilities.

Without warning, one of the various chairs that dotted the room was flung towards Master at a high speed with the intent to completely annihilate him. With only a moment to react, his response was calm and swift – he simply held up his right hand and stopped the object cold. It would not be that easy, staring directly at his opponent the challenge was clear in his voice "No".

The chair crashed a few inches to the ground as if its strings had been cut with a slight bang. Both men stared at each other waiting for the next move, Master didn't have to wait long as within an instant his opponent had his lightsaber ignited and was lunging at him intending to remove his head.

While having no operational lightsaber of his own, Master was not defenceless. The incoming overhead attack was quickly blocked by the beskar bracers that he wore for this exact purpose, and he quickly took advantage of his opponent's surprise, if only for a moment. He managed one decent attack to the unprotected body before he had to move to avoid the next strike. Drawing blades from within his clothing Master dodged the incoming attacks, blocking only when required all the while taking his quick shots at his opponent when able.

After several moments of terse and exciting battle our Dark Jedi friend managed a good shot on the General's leg, while not grievous it was enough for a slight advantage and Master found himself being pushed back. Sensing the tide was turning he was left with only one option, 'cheat'.

With a subtle push of a button he sent a signal and a moment later, just after he had ducked under a vicious chop that would have done serious damage, the left wall exploded.

Master was instantly on the move, taking advantage of his opponents confusion he had bypassed him grabbed the elusive item from its security box and was already half way to the big hole in the wall, and the hovering speeder-car that sat there waiting patiently.

He felt the instant rage of the Dark Jedi and the next attack was easy to avoid given it was rather unfocused. He had almost left the room before he had been forced to dive to avoid an attack – a huge piece of rubble thrown directly at him. The momentary change of direction meant his opponent had time to cover some distance and almost catch his quarry, it was then that Dos felt the need to make his presence more felt, the sound of his modified E-web shock the entire room as it unloaded its enhanced rounds directly at its target, it was never going to stop him but it did allow enough of a distraction for Master to get on the vehicle and hit the accelerator.

He got a final glimpse of an enraged Dark Jedi standing in the remains of the hotel room before he hit the booster and made all haste for his ship.

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**~Six Hours Later~**

Master stood at the open gangway to his ship silently urging everything to move faster, he needed to escape before someone caught up with him and most importantly, he next window for

the asteroid passage was rapidly approaching. Everything had gone well since he'd gotten back, the ship had been loaded with Locke's delivery, the item was safely secure on-board and no one had attempted to engage him.

He was just about to think he gotten away with it when he noticed he was no longer alone. The Dark Jedi was back, and he looked prepared this time and more than a little angry.

Knowing that it wasn't the best idea he couldn't help but goad his opponent on a little, "oh there you are, I wondered where you went off to, had better things to do did we"? a smirk gracing his lips.

The answer, while not as direct as he thought would be coming wasn't far off, the Dark Jedi simply smiled before slowly igniting his lightsaber, took a moment to stare into the crimson blade before he spoke, "When I was commanded by the Brotherhood to gain control of the item, I knew there would be obstacles, challenges to face and enemies to destroy. I promised myself that while I would do whatever it took to complete the mission, I wouldn't let myself have too much pleasure in ending my foes. But then, you came along... the man that so many call Master".

"I'm afraid if you're expecting an autograph you're coming about it the wrong way" was his confident retort even if internally he was screaming 'this is bad, this is very bad'.

The Dark Jedi grinned wider before continuing, "Known all through the Brotherhood, few would dare challenge you given who you are - stories of your power whispered in the dark corners of the Dark Hall, Novices and Clan Leaders know to fear you. But do you know what I see... I see weakness. I see a fool that is not strong enough, that hides behind a moniker he can never obtain or is too scared to"!

Before Master could respond he was forced to immediately to go on the defensive as his opponent launched a flurry of attacks and all he could do was dodge, block and move out of the way as he avoided the attempts to injure him.

The ferocity was far more intense than their previous battle and before long the Dark Jedi stood triumphantly over Master who was seated on the ground holding his side, injured from

where he had failed to dodge fast enough, not his only wound it was perhaps the worst as he was covered in small injuries where the lightsaber had made it through his defences. Despite his best efforts and he lay battered, bleeding and seemingly beaten.

Like all bad guys the Dark Jedi couldn't help but gloat, secure in his imminent victory, "Like I thought, weak! Nothing but a cheap magician, a tale to scare children, a broken man hiding behind a false title, too scared to use his own name, well I'm not weak! I am strong and when I take the item and your head back to the Grand Master I will be the strongest! Nothing will stand in my way"!

Master thought to himself that this guy really did like the sound of his own voice, and while everything he said was wrong, there was one kernel of truth to his ramblings, Master did hide his true name, though not for the reasons everyone assumed.

Clearly tiring of his evil monologue, the Dark Jedi raised his weapon, intent clear, "And now I end you, False Acolyte! Weak and pathetic! Death to the Master! Death to the False Idol! Death to the Betrayer"!

As the words registered within him, he felt a rage he had not felt in a long time, the world blurred in the haze of uncontrollable anger, words long forgotten, words of power, how dare this creature, this arrogant child, speak that name!

As he watched the incoming lightsaber coming directly for him, he grabbed that hold of the rage and dove deep into it. The force exploded around him and at the last possible moment before his life ended, Master moved.

The Dark Jedi felt sudden pain in his side as something sharp pierced his flesh and knew something was wrong. All his strength and breath begun to leave him while he was barely able to finish out his attack, which completely missed its target. Master however, had not missed and was now behind him with a blade pressed to his throat to ensure the job was finished.

He wanted to ask how, how had he managed to win, he was beaten, how had he done it! He moved so fast! It was impossible! But he couldn't speak, even now his vision was fading, time

almost gone, life escaping. As he slumped to the ground and looked up into the face of his enemy, how had he done it, who was he, what was his name....

Master looked down on his defeated enemy, who was now barely clinging to life. As his foe took their final breath, Master smiled and whispered something that chilled him in these final moments, "Weak".

After taking the few valuables on his opponent's person, Master walked back towards the ship just in time for all the alarms to go crazy. Sensors had picked up a massive fleet arriving through an unexpected vector, smashing its way through the asteroid field and they seemed intent on destroying everything in their path.

As the ship was loaded he didn't intend to hang around, but getting out was a different story, there was an immediate rush for the exit so Master had to wait his turn, despite the destruction it still took almost two hours for him to be given the green light, but it was time spent wisely with him able to help several families onboard in an effort to escape the destruction and plan his exit vector through the asteroid field. What came next would not be fun.

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### **~18 Hours Later~**

"So, after I dropped off the survivors on the hospital ship, I parked my ship so your cargo could be unloaded, and I felt like I deserved a drink for my hard efforts so I came here" Master finished his tale with a smile and a swig of his drink. Locke and Boliv both looked at each other with skeptical eyes before Boliv spoke up, "So let me get this straight, while on what should have been a perfectly standard cargo transport mission, you not only stole an item of great value but you also killed a Dark Jedi of the Brotherhood"?

With a shrug and another sip Master answered, clear it was not a topic for further discussion.

"He tried to kill me first".

Boliv frowned but didn't push the comment. Locke however had some questions he wanted answered, "You missed some things, what happened to the guy who tried to shoot you, why didn't

the droids help you against the Dark Jedi the second time and what was this fancy item that was so important”?

Master smiled and filled in the gaps he had admittedly skipped over, “Well the Droids didn’t help me because they were the backup plan if I failed, so they were locked down tight in the ship just in case”. After a nod from both men, he continued with a slight grimace, “it did not end well for the person who tried to shoot me in the back, Uno took great offense at his attempted murder and crushed his skull”.

“The item that was so sought after I have at the moment hidden it in a place where it cannot be tracked and is completely protected. Even having it in my position without precautions is incredibly dangerous. It was not a coincidence that Foundation Station was destroyed so soon after it was brought onboard”, he took another sip and a moment to gather his thoughts before he spoke again.

“There are many dangerous and deadly creatures in this universe, some more than others and this bone is from one of them. Normally found on only one planet in the galaxy, it is incredibly rare to come across them and even rarer to live to tell the tale. My own experiences with this creature are one I will never forget and will haunt me until my last day. While once I held out hope I would never again see one, after today I am no longer so sure. They are completely without mercy, remorse and will not stop until they have achieved their set goal, no matter the cost”.

His face showed a moment of fear before it was hidden back behind his bravado, swigging the rest of his drink answered their final question as if it pained him, the voice soft so it wouldn’t carry, so it wouldn’t be widely heard, “*The Space Emu*”.

After his disbelief passed Locke asked his final question, “What are you going to do with it”?

Now Master grinned, smile wide and slightly crazed, both men were slightly taken aback and surprised by his answer, “I’m going to use it, it will be the foundation of the hilt that I’m using to my build a new lightsaber”.

“Bone as a lightsaber hilt”? was Boliv’s only voiced question.

“It won’t be just the bone, too powerful on its own, overwhelming, dangerous, it will need tempering, Brylark wood perhaps” he muttered in response thinking the idea over.

Master looked up as their Wing Commander, LC Denrys Elara entered the cantina and with a wide smile and a retort about “time to annoy his favourite WC”, he wandered off to buy her a drink and cause some mischief.

Boliv and Locke looked at each other again before they spoke, “Space Emus”? “Bone as a Lightsaber hilt”? Nah, surely not.

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**~A short time later~**

On a forgotten planet in the middle of nowhere, a creature of horrific beauty took one last look at the sky before boarding the nearby ship. It was one among many of countless others. The creatures within were excited and eager to begin, a call had been given and the flock would respond.

**FIN**



*Illustration 2 Maston Dane locates a Kyber Crystal*

*Illustration by Maston Dane*

*Effects and Additional Coloring by Ol' Davy Jones*