

You may be asking yourself, how I got roped into that sort of thing. That's okay, I'm asking that myself. I've worn a lot of hats in my life, so the fact that I got this job is not what is weird, more so that I got it at this point in my life. See, I spent a decade hunting space wizards, then found myself training as one under the spookiest edgelord dude this side of ...well yeah, anywhere. All I wanted to do was build droids, but noooooo... So when the message came in from Dark Lord Goth McDark to go report to some other helmet-headed weapon fonder, you kinda just roll with it.

So now, apparently, I can add 'repo man' to my resume. Joy.

Some clown decided to miss enough payments on his Tartan-class cruiser that the space wizards were angry, and instead of sacrificing a baby nerf and using the blood instead of crayons to write a sternly worded letter to the gods or whatever, they call up my nerdy tail. You know, it's not difficult. Most of these rubes don't even realize that their ship's serials are tracked at every docking station and refueling port ever. It was easy enough to slice into the registry matrix from my home terminal. Of course, I set up my trail of digital breadcrumbs so that they'd never know that the information had even been accessed, and on the off chance they had a hitter working for them, I hid my trail well enough that they'd be wondering why the trail went cold at Dantooine.

Not gonna lie, the idea of IntelOps dorks floating around the asteroids, staring out the window in silence as they realize they've been punked makes me snort laugh every time.

It's the little things in life.

By the time my instant noodles were done, I had three hits. Two docks and a clan checkpoint. All in a line, consistent with time stamps and what the file said about the owner. I mean, ACE was the owner, but the guy who probably thought he was the owner. Anyway, I tell the boss that I need to borrow the Theta-class because the Mando-bore-ian needed me to track this thing down. Not a big deal, I don't think he knows how to tell me no. It wasn't that hard, just needed to drop out where I could get hooked back into the holonet within sensor range.

See, something the boss taught me is that you never play an ace when a deuce will do.

And now I just applied that to why he sends me on so many missions lately and have feelings about that...anyway, that's not the point. All I needed to do was get close. Not even that close, in the same system would do just fine. See, the Tartans have very powerful computers. And while the navies of the clans and the dork council would have an 'all work and no play' policy, individual folks wouldn't. They'd have hooked up a long range holonet transceiver so they could watch Rodian game shows, Kel-Dramas, and other, more unmentionable things from darker corners of the web. And yeah, sure, they'd have some stock anti-intrusion software and segregatory firewalls between the media servers and the mainframe controls. But I'm a professional.

And today, a professional pain in this guy's ass.

See, circuits are just lines. On a fine enough scale, you can draw new lines, push lines in other directions and run signals how you want to run them. I mean, it's very difficult, but I am so very good. You have to be close enough and sneak through the packets that they are downloading. And the absolute rubbish that this guy watches, I should log it and threaten to release it to all his hooded-cloak wearing buddies to embarrass him for money, but the dude isn't even making payments on his ride, so what am I gonna get out of him beside a severe case of the icks? I mean, really... "The True Lives of Huttlovers, Season XII"? It just goes to show that you never can tell what a person is into. I'm not shaming, I'm just asking why. Okay, okay, I'm absolutely judging, too. The fact that the dude went to so much trouble to get it for free made it a walk in the park to sneak in through to his entertainment system.

From there, I just needed to be close enough that I could *touch* it. well, not touch it, but those creepifying skills I learned from the wizards about redrawing lines? Those require a lot more proximity that hanging back behind a moon could accomplish. Thankfully, he was coming into port control. Guy probably thought that no one would dare even try to take their ship back and could never stop big bad old them. Not with his robes that looked like surplus leather from a Zeltron red light district. The kinda dude that unironically uses lines from the journals he wrote as a cringy teenager. You know the type. Wait. I guess you probably don't. Never mind.

So it was just a matter of getting into port control at the same time. It was close enough, and the pilot droid could handle the maneuver while I worked my magic. You know, the kind with my deck and remote access, not the kind with crystals and daddy issues.

It's kinda cool how it feels, if I am being honest. There's resistance at first, like you're trying to push through a bit of plastic seal, where the universe kinda bends and warps before it finally snaps and your finger pierces through to the other side. It's a terribly poor analogy, but you wouldn't know anyway, so it's okay.. Anyway, the software kept the entertainment system separate...but I rerouted a signal wire across in a new way, creating a physical link between the two systems, soldering it in place with sheer force of will. Hey, I told you, I'm so very good. Then, I set up a backup on the other side of the system, just in case the dude was smarter than his choice of entertainment, and then waited for my turn in port control. Once he was away, and the government goons were running our papers, I jumped the signal over into operations.

The best part about this job is if you can, slice in and get the security feeds from the bridge when you play your final card. Watching the pilot get confused as the ship just decided to go a different direction than where he was telling it to go was hilarious. The guy, not sure if he was Chiss or the lighting on the bridge was just ugly blue, went pale and quietly panicked, slapping all manner of buttons and yanking on the controls like it would help. I was glad that I cut all the manual controls with the override, because I am pretty sure he would have launched a warhead while he was flailing around. I mean, the guy went absolutely muppet-mode. I should have recorded it. Anyway, a few moments later, he had to call his boss from wherever he was.

Oh boy, that dude was upset. Huttlovers must have had a really good scene that got interrupted by the pilot, and he looked like he was going to kill the guy. I kinda wish I had audio as I punched in the astrogation commands for the hyperdrive. At least I made it show them where they were going. Didn't want the dude to get mugged by ACE troops when they popped back, after all. He went through all the phases of grief before sliding into the captain's chair, slouching in a way that couldn't have been comfortable with all the bloody belts he was wearing. I swear, fashion on Arx is something else. How long it had to take to just hit the bathroom boggles the mind. Anyway, it was only a few seconds longer before the drive engaged, and they popped out of range.

The mando with too many of the edgy letters in his name for me to bother pronouncing laughed when I called him next, telling him how I disabled local controls and where the Tartan would arrive near his shipyards. I shot him a quick schematic, where to cut the wires I moved so that it worked properly again. It wouldn't have been any easier for him if I had put a giant bow on top of it. Easy money.

Speaking of, that's why I was able to afford this enhanced processor for you. It won't completely override the combat protocols from the primary board here, but it should give you at least a little of your old capabilities back. Maybe, just maybe, you'll feel a bit more like your old self. You're probably not going to remember this talk when I finish firing it up, but that's okay. I miss you, buddy. Here's to hoping this works.