

~~ Daxam System, Outer Rim Territories, 41 ABY ~~

Following the successful space trial of his refitted purchase, the *Dusk*, Meleu Karthdo found the weight of his legs resting on the bridge console as he reclined in the captain's seat. Surveying the vast expanse of stars, planets, and moons through the viewport, he simultaneously felt comfort in knowing that his clandestine vessel was concealed within the fabric of space.

The *Dusk*, a sleek smuggling and prison ship, served as Meleu's sanctuary and a luxurious travel option for those worthy of joining him onboard. It already felt like home. As he stared aimlessly into the unknown, the sounds of metal on metal snapped the Sith to attention. Swiftly, his legs shot off the bridge control, and he swiveled around in the captain's seat.

"*Master, there is an important call for you,*" a BD-3000 informed him, its tone oddly sultry and seductive.

Pulling himself up from his chair, Meleu silently dismissed the droid from the bridge with a hand motion. The bridge door snapped shut swiftly, ensuring privacy for the Vossian. Already interrupted, Meleu portrayed his annoyance with a roll of his eyes. Nonchalantly, he moved over to the holocommunicator array, the same one he had muted hours prior to enjoy his new pride and joy disturbance-free.

Scanning the console with his eyes, he noticed the incoming transmission held the markings of OSI origin. The Battlemaster's demeanor immediately changed—knees locked, shoulders broadened, and chest puffed out. He pressed a button on the console before snapping his hands behind his back. The holoprojector illuminated, revealing the face of the Director of Foreign Intelligence.

"We have a task for you. Travel to Perune immediately, neutralise the target and prove your loyalty to the Taldryan Republic. I have transmitted you a target information package".

Dasic Key's words resonated through the air with a quick, informative cadence, laden with unspoken meaning. The holoprojection delivering the message faded as swiftly as it had appeared. Meleu, a figure recently reintroduced into the ranks of Taldryan after years of mysterious absence, had pledged his allegiance to the Taldryan leadership. However, their response was dismissive, making it clear that Meleu needed to earn back their trust.

The Sith Battlemaster, exhaling, felt his body loosen up. He pressed another button on the holoprojector console, ushering in a blue hue that filled the darkened bridge as an information transmission materialised. A projection displayed an unfamiliar Human face, accompanied by a set of sentences detailing the termination mission:

TERMINATION MISSION

- **NAME: VAL THALCORR, SENATOR OF PERUNE**
- **LOCATION: DROSET CITY, PERUNE**
- **MISSION STATEMENT: TERMINATE THE TARGET, DO NOT ALLOW ANY INVOLVEMENT OF THE OSI TO BE KNOWN. THE LEVEL OF SECURITY OF THE TARGET IS AT ITS LOWEST. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS BEFORE WE LOSE THE OPPORTUNITY.**

The Sith Battlemaster slapped the same button on the console, causing the projection to disappear. He raised his hand towards the bridge door, and its abrupt illumination flooded the room with light.

"Activate the HK unit," Meleu's voice commanded, echoing through the space. Seating himself back in the captain's seat, he turned it to face the console. With ease, he manipulated a few controls, and the ship's engines roared to life. After inputting coordinates into the navigational system, he secured himself with a buckle and smirked.

~~ Droset City Space Port IV, Perune, Caelus System, 41 ABY ~~

The clandestine black shape of the *Dusk* found itself bathed in the glow of its own navigational lights as it slowly descended onto solid ground, floating above an opaque, blue-green mist. The front ramp of the smuggling vessel crashed down onto the space port floor, casting shadows in the blinding light forced upon the area by penetrating floodlights. In the doorway emerged two figures, still concealed from the intense brightness. One of them extended an arm, seemingly reaching for something, as a lone protocol droid mechanically waddled towards the light freighter.

"Welcome to Droset City, home of," the droid's chirpy tune abruptly stopped. Midnight black swallowed the area and erased any surrounding light. Debris from the destroyed light sources hit the ground, accompanied by the brief echo of a single blaster bolt confined within the space port. The protocol droid's body crumbled to the ground as the two figures made their way down the ramp and towards the exit, their identities to others shrouded in the now complete darkness.

Two security droids, alerted by the sounds and sudden darkness, rushed to the scene. Turning the corner, their droid-capable eyes vaguely discerned the two figures in the darkness. Blasters raised, they cautiously approached the unknowns, approximately ten meters ahead. Light flooded the darkened space again, briefly revealing a hooded figure and an HK Gladiator droid beside him. Before the security droids could react, a red beam of light descended upon them,

moving in an arcing motion that cleaved the mechanical beings in half through their center of mass. The light swiftly returned to the sender, who caught the saber without breaking stride. Continuing towards the exit, the Sith unignited the lightsaber before holstering the weapon for future use.

As the two departed the crime scene, they turned a corner and were met by a dimly lit sign above an elevator.

DROSET GAMBLING CITY

~~ Droset City, Perune, Caelus System, 41 ABY ~~

Guided by subtle whispers of the Force, the Sith Battlemaster navigated the brightly lit but labyrinthine alleyways of the corrupt city with determination. In tow, his trustworthy HK droid followed eagerly as Meleu pressed on towards the Senator's residence—a large and narrow structure towering above the sprawling city below.

In most places, the presence of a dark-robed and hooded figure flanked by an HK droid would turn heads, but not in Droset City. The hustle and bustle of the city ensured this, reminiscent of certain districts on Coruscant, with blinding neon signs flashing advertisements. Similar to the Hutt worlds of old, escorts and prostitutes lined the streets, and vendors openly publicised their illegal narcotics for sale. Despite this, Meleu endeavored to take the most discrete path possible as he continued his mission.

While Meleu remained indifferent, most would not envy the life of the denizens and patrons burdened by obvious exploitation. The tendrils of corruption had a firm grip on the gambling city, choking it of its true potential. Through the veil of neon signs, it was evident to the Sith that someone was benefiting from the lawless scene laid out in front of him. That someone was not abiding by the laws of the Taldryan Republic. Despite his indifference to the reasons behind his mission, he had to prove himself to the leadership to be welcomed once again within their ranks.

Descending upon the Senatorial Spire, the lights of the sleepless city posed a challenge for the duo to complete the mission unseen by security. In hindsight, the Senator might have regretted not lessening the extent to which he advertised the city's services. Billboards encircled the senatorial tower, flashing pictures of exotic dancers, happy hour deals, and advertisements for various gambling establishments in the area. Oh, and the face of the soon-to-be deceased Senator.

Realising an incognito way of ascending the spire, Meleu informed his HK droid to stand watch. With the bulk of the Perune Guard occupied in the search for the Senator's son on Caleria, security remained light on the ground floor of the spire. Two security droids stood posted at the entrance, barely visible through the crowd of patrons entering the casino on the ground floor of the spire.

Turning a corner to evade the view of the majority of the crowd and the droids, Meleu, guided by the Force, launched himself skywards—albeit only a short distance. The figure of Meleu caught the eye of a couple of bystanders, though, shrouded in the haze of their intoxication, carried on with their evening.

Clumsily landing on the summit of the billboard, Meleu grappled with the metallic framework, his movements strained as he pulled himself over the structure. Every sinew in his body ached, taxed by the physical demands of the maneuver, but the Sith Battlemaster knew he couldn't afford to linger. He paused only momentarily, a breath's interlude, to replenish the energy expended in the daring leap.

Balancing on the criss-crossed metallic supports that upheld the billboards, Meleu's gaze fixed upon an overhanging balcony—his destination. The air crackled with tension as he braced for the next phase of his ascent.

The Sith continued his perilous climb, meandering his way through the back supports of the towering advertisement boards. Each step was a calculated risk, every movement dictated by the urgency of his mission. The Force became his silent ally, a partner in which he had to depend on to safely navigate the maze aloft. Occasionally, he summoned its power to propel himself upwards, the invisible currents aiding his progress in the ascent.

As he ascended towards the Senator's balcony, Meleu's senses heightened. The pulsating heartbeat of the city below seemed to synchronise with his own. A glance downward revealed the abyss between himself and the ground, a dizzying reminder of the stakes involved. He pulled back his robe sleeve, revealing a commlink. Establishing contact with his droid down below, he sternly informed him to ensure quick getaway transport was available for his exit.

Yet, the Sith persisted, a shadowy silhouette against the night sky, his determination undeterred by the growing peril. Each fleeting second seemed to stretch as he neared his goal, fatigue had begun to kick in. A voice from the balcony, mere metres above Meleu now, echoed through the night sky.

"I will burn this city to the ground to find out who is responsible!" the Senator screamed.

Summoning the last reserves of his strength, Meleu launched towards the overhanging balcony in a calculated leap. His outstretched arms slammed against the edge of the balcony. The

sudden noise startled the Senator, exacerbated by the sight of the hooded silhouette awkwardly clambering over from the other side.

“Guards! GUARDS!”

Blood-curdling screams from the Senator filled the inside of his residence. From one side, hurried sounds of boots ran towards the aid of the Senator. On the other, Meleu rose to his feet, noticeably fatigued. The ragged looking Sith seemed to regain composure quickly. He craved violence and to a certain extent - strengthened at the prospect of it.

Two Perune guards called for by the Senator met the gaze of the Sith, his extended crimson-red blade illuminating the visage hidden within his hood. The deep azure blue of his eyes mismatched the demonic presence bestowed upon the guards. Without hesitation, and blasters outstretched, began to unload a hail of fire in the general direction of Meleu. Eager for his first blood victim of the day, Meleu confidently zig zagged in the direction of the guards. Lightsaber raised, he brashly batted the blaster bolts away as he charged his opponents.

In his fervor, however, a brash misstep led to a graze on his arm, a minor wound that only fueled his determination. Closing the distance, Meleu engaged the guards in a visceral dance of combat. His lightsaber sliced through the air with precision, meeting the weapon of the first Perune guard, leaving him defenseless against the Sith's subsequent strike. The crimson blade struck again, finding its mark with lethal accuracy. The fallen guard's companion, witnessing his comrade's demise, hesitated for a crucial moment. It was all Meleu needed. In a moment of acrobatic prowess, the Sith leapt off the ground, incapacitating the remaining guard with a spinning kick.

Meleu exhaled. The exhaustion was catching up with him. He continued forward towards the Senator, who had cowered behind a sofa during the commotion. He ran his hand over the light wound on his arm, angered that he had damaged his Brotherhood robes. Pulling his hood down, Meleu revealed himself to the Senator. Val Thalcorr did not know who the Sith was specifically, but knew who he represented.

“Please! Please! I’ll do anything, I’ll give you anything! I’m a well connected and wealthy man”.

The Senator's desperate cries had little impact on Meleu, an unwavering stone cold glare remained.

Saber raised, the Sith struck down the Senator, alongside a mere two words,

“For Taldryan!”

With a flick of a button, the crimson-red blade dissipated back into its hilt. Meleu holstered the weapon inside of his robes, pulled the hood back over his head, and made his way towards an elevator door within the residence.

He entered the elevator, pressed the ground floor button and the doors closed. Pulling back one of his robe sleeves, he opened up his commlink. He dialed into the device as if playing a piano and made contact with his HK droid outside.

"I'll be out in two minutes, ensure you are ready".

Meleu exhaled again. Sweat dripped off his forehead, some hitting the ground and other parts soaking into his robes. It wasn't the most eloquent nor smooth displays from the Sith, but he was rusty and it showed.

As the elevator doors parted, Meleu was greeted by the cacophony of the extravagant casino that awaited him. The clamor of excited voices, the hum of electronic games, and the melodic jingles of slot machines was in stark contrast to the scene in the penthouse. A lone Perune guard stood ceremoniously on the other side, facing away from the demon behind him.

THWACK

Before the guard could turn, a lone sucker punch sent the unknowing man straight to the ground. Meleu casually stepped over the body as several casino workers converged on the area, some to the aid of the guard, others hurling abuse at the Sith. Meleu picked up the pace, gliding and melding into the casino crowd that had not witnessed his crime. With his eye on the main door, he continued rapidly towards the exit.

As he burst outside, the sight of his droid on a speeder bike brought on an elated feeling within Meleu. He rushed over to the HK unit and without a word, hopped on the back. Shouting soon followed, and caught Meleu's attention. Glancing over his shoulder, he could see several casino employees pointing in his direction. Casino security followed, with their blasters raised, but it was too late.

"PUNCH IT!"

Meleu screamed over the sound of the speeder bike's engine. Without hesitation, the HK droid gunned the vehicle in the direction of the space port, dangerously weaving through the crowd ahead.