

Nar Shaddaa

41 ABY

A hundred trillion visitors.

Eiko spun numbers around in his head. The planet was nearly fifteen thousand years into its urbanization. Had the *Lucky Lisk* been founded early, that would still be over six and a half billion visitors a year consistently spread out. A thirteenth of the entire planet's population. The *Lisk* was big, perhaps even bigger than average. It was a towering block of Nar Shaddaa's gray crust that enclosed hundreds of floors, amenities, internal offices, its own security team and block, and countless machines and tables for converting credits into debts as painlessly as possible.

Like most things on this planet, it was a sham. So, when he was asked to sign up for the loyalty program and link a line of credit, Eiko felt no shame in cutting corners. With a mask and a flourish, the hundred trillionth guest of the *Lucky Lisk* would be none other than "Premis Alsloss," moderately successful businessman and frequent traveler through Hutt Space.

Mr. Alsloss was the centerpiece of the parade of polished protocol droids, well-dressed sycophants, and the hovering dais of the *Lisk's* proprietor, Latuuga, as they surveyed the establishment. For all the Hutt excesses that tucked into every choice of the *Lisk*, it was Latuuga's comparatively thin frame and energetic demeanor that held Eiko's interest. One more ostentatious Hutt was nothing interesting, but Eiko gently prodded Latuuga in their native Hutttese to explain the workings of a casino spire.

"The basics are simple -- no casino sets its own games to lose, but that's where many stop," Latuuga drawled conspiratorially. "Not all losses are equal. And not all wins are either. My family has known how to balance temporary 'draw downs' over the short term to compete on the long term."

"Client retention," Eiko nodded. "A credit every day for a year is better than a hundred once."

"It is the best game played here," Latuuga smirked.

"When we're done with the tour, I'd like to play some. I have some business contacts that I still need to meet with while I'm here, and I think they would have plenty to learn about... retention, risk analysis, infrastructure -- all things that you have set up and maintained quite well here."

"This isn't about your business." Latuuga glanced at Eiko from the side. "It's strictly about mine."

"I prefer to not maintain debts."

"You're not a debt, Mr. Alsloss. You're an asset," Latuuga leaned forward to speak without being overheard. "From now until the end of your stay, the rules are inverted. You're going to beat the house, and beat the house publicly. You eat what you want, go where you want, but most importantly, you'll be seen. Mr. Alsloss will be the winningest player in Nar Shaddaa, and you'll have a portion of the winnings back in your pocket. More than you make in years. But you play this game now. After that, *then* we can discuss further risks. You've already paid the ante."

Mr. Alsloss timidly nodded, but behind the mask, Eiko smiled at the good fortune.