**Taldryan Headquarters**

**Karufr**

Andrelious wandered along a corridor. He had been in Taldryan for a while now, and was fast becoming used to its headquarters’ layout. The Warlord had quickly ascertained that Taldryan had designed their headquarters in a radically different way to Arcona, reflecting just how different the two Clans were. Andrelious was fast finding that he actually *liked* it in Taldryan, even if it had declared openly that it was accepting Jedi into their ranks.

Rounding a corner, the former Imperial was passed by a member of Taldryan’s navy. The man almost ran into Andrelious, causing the Sith to begin to turn and consider yelling out a warning to be more careful. As he turned, however, the Warlord realised that the man had given him a small, screwed up piece of paper. Unwrapping it, Mimosa-Inahj stared at the text, quickly figuring out what was going on.

*Meet us at point Forn in three hours. Bring nobody. Tell nobody.*

The ‘naval officer’ had already disappeared out of sight.

*These people work quickly.* Andrelious thought, throwing the paper to the ground. With a brief lick of Force Lightning, the Warlord enveloped the note with electricity, easily destroying it and the strange message it had carried.

**Abandoned Mine Shaft**

**Dragostae, Karufr**

The mines near the city of Dragostae had already been abandoned for decades even before Taldryan had shown up. Once Karufr had been taken, the Clan’s leaders had the mines analysed, finding that they were just as devoid of anything useful as the Hutts had believed. Many of the tunnels were instead repurposed, allowing Taldryan to quickly move troops to Dragostae without too much trouble.

In one of the lower tunnels, one that was officially sealed off due to a concentration of unbreathable gasses, Andrelious used a small shovel to dig away at some dirt. The dirt in question was a little lighter in colour than the rest of the ground, indicating that it had been fairly recently disturbed.

The Warlord felt the ground harden. He looked into the hole he’d dug, spotting a small durasteel box with a large letter ‘Forn’ engraved into it. With a smirk, Andrelious hauled the box out, quickly opening it. Inside were a small, plain looking datapad, and a holocommunicator, again marked with a letter ‘Forn’. Both appeared to be basic models, but the former Imperial knew better. These were state-of-the-art. Even his slicer daughter, Saskia, would have difficulty cracking into them.

Mimosa-Inahj set the round disk of the holocommunicator onto the floor, pushing its activation button. The device beeped a few times as it connected to its pre-set recipient. Two holograms flickered into existence. Both were Humans, one several inches taller than the other. Andrelious recognised them instantly as Darth Pravus, the Grand Master, and the Voice, Evant Taelyan.

“Greetings, Grand Inquisitor,” Pravus began, not bothering to use the Warlord’s real name.

“So. You saw fit to drag me into these frakking tunnels. Still, better than point Usk,” the Warlord responded.

“We have need for your talents, Grand Inquisitor. Humour isn’t one of them, so stow it.” Evant ordered.

Andrelious glared at the Voice’s hologram. “Out with it, then.”

“During the battle of Korriban, agents of the Jedi Clan, Odan-Urr, broke into one of the tombs and stole a Sith holocron. As per standard procedure, the Dark Council asked them to surrender it, but they have denied that the theft took place,” Pravus stated.

“I take it you want me to go to that alien infested backwater that they call home?” the Warlord hissed.

Evant shook his head. “Another Inquisitor was sent to try and retrieve it while it was still on planet. Unfortunately, the Jedi managed to get the holocron on board a ship. All our man could do was place a covert tracking device on the ship’s hull. The datapad we have given you is connected directly to that device. You are to find the ship, and do what you must to retrieve the holocron,”

“Alright, so you want me to play space pirate. Very well. What do I do with the holocron?” Andrelious questioned.

“When you have taken possession of the holocron, you will send us a message via the datapad. Only then will we send you further orders. Pravus out,” the Grand Master said, his hologram fading out almost immediately. Evant nodded, before his figure disappeared, too.

**CR-90 Corvette *Fighting Chance***

**Deep Space**

Frimlin Brantil gazed out of the bridge’s transparisteel viewport. The Coruscanti had made a life among the stars: he had been almost constantly on the move for nearly three decades. In those years, he had seen much to shape his life. Rarely did he not have a solution to whatever problems befell the crew of the *Fighting Chance*.

Right now, however, he was dealing with a new situation. A mysterious man had paid him handsomely to make sure that an even more mysterious cargo could disappear into the infinitely complex network of contacts that was the galaxy’s black market. How it got there had been left up to him, but Brantil had felt incredibly uneasy ever since the cargo, a pyramid shaped device that someone in the crew believed resembled the holocrons of the Jedi, had come aboard.

“Cap’n! Word from Besdaa’s men! They’ll be with us in an hour!” Erskip Ritteb, one of Brantil’s most trusted Lieutenants, declared.

“Send Besdaa my thanks, Erksip,” Frimlin replied. Besdaa was a Hutt with a particular interest in unusual items. Whether the large alien would have any interest in the strange device remained to be seen, but Brantil already knew that the Hutt’s answer would take hours, if not days.

**Hyperspace**

Having left Karufr within minutes of receiving his mission, Andrelious relaxed a little as his ship eased its way through hyperspace. The datapad he had been given was rapidly counting down the distance between the Warlord and his eventual target.

Andrelious was equipped with his two lightsabers, as well as one of his old E-11 Blasters. He was prepared for a difficult mission, especially as he didn’t yet know exactly what kind of opposition he was facing. He even half expected to come face to face with Turel Sorenn, or one of the other higher ranked members of Odan-Urr.

The datapad began to bleep loudly to indicate that Andrelious was nearing his target. The Sith de-hypered, and began scanning the area. He immediately saw that he was in deep space, apparently nowhere near any kind of celestial body. All his sensors picked up was the reading of another ship nearby. The readouts stated that the ship was an old CR90 Corvette, which Mimosa-Inahj confirmed visually, instantly recognising the hammer headed shape of the hull.

As he turned his ship to approach the Corvette for a closer look, Andrelious was suddenly jolted. He had been shunted from behind as a second ship exited hyperspace. Fighting hard to regain control of his TIE, the Warlord realised that the collision had damaged the engines.

**Bridge**

**CR-90 Corvette *Fighting Chance***

The crew of the *Fighting Chance* had watched events unfolding with surprise. They had been expecting Besdaa the Hutt’s contact to arrive, but hadn’t reckoned on the appearance of an old Imperial TIE Advanced. The fact that the two ships had collided complicated the situation greatly. The shuttle carrying Besdaa’s man appeared undamaged, but the TIE was on fire, spiralling out of control, and headed at high speed towards the Corvette.

“Captain! What do we do?” a crew member asked, clearly panicked by the situation.

Frimlin Brantil remained calm. He had a reputation among his men for being almost completely unflappable in any situation, even when faced with death or capture.

“Get the tractor beam on the TIE. Slow it down, guide it into our hangar bay. It’ll more than likely still crash, so get everyone out of the hangar,” he ordered, appearing not to take any time at all in considering the situation.

Erksip Ritteb operated a control panel that looked slightly newer than the rest of the ship’s interior. The *Fighting Chance* was old, and the tractor beam, not a standard feature on stock CR-90s, had been added to allow Brantil and his crew to salvage all kinds of space debris. It had not been used to capture a moving spacecraft in many years, but Ritteb didn’t let that fact bother him as he locked onto the damaged TIE.

**Hangar Bay**

The TIE Advanced smashed through the magnetic containment field. It skidded along the full length of the rather tiny hangar bay, destroying a pair of powered down maintainence droids. Straining hard against the sheer mass and speed of the captured ship, the tractor beam eventually stopped the trail of destruction, leaving the starfighter still burning intensely but now stationary.

Two of the *Fighting Chance*’s crew approached with fire fighting equipment and immediately started trying to douse the flames. A third crewman, a tall, dark skinned Human, followed, armed with a blaster.

“You can’t fight a fire with that thing, Dreck!” one of the fire fighters declared.

“I’m more concerned about whoever’s inside the fighter, idiot,” Dreck answered.

“If they’re still alive. Looking at the damage in here, I’d say they came in pretty hot,” the second fire fighter announced, gesturing at the carnage.

Dreck answered the comment with an icy glare. As the flames died down, he approached the TIE, his blaster at the ready. He spotted the hatch moving to allow whoever was inside to exit.

“Identify yourself!” Dreck ordered as a short, stumpy, Human clambered out of the crashed starfighter.

“You only need to know why I am here,” Andrelious declared, holding his hands in the air.

“Don’t play smart with me. You just trashed our hangar. You’re going to tell me exactly who you are, who you’re with, *AND* why you’re here,” Dreck snorted.

Andrelious looked unimpressed. “Well. I guessed you were a bunch of amateurs. But I was hoping my welcoming party would have been a little more…gifted.”

Dreck moved to smash the Sith in the chest with the butt of his rifle, but Andrelious, easily seeing what the man was doing, quickly armed himself with one of his lightsabers. With a single, powerful slash, the Warlord chopped through Dreck’s left arm, removing it at the shoulder.

“Now. Tell me where the holocron is. Nobody else has to get hurt,” the Taldryanite hissed.

“I don’t know what the frak you’re talking about! We’re just a merchant ship!” Dreck replied. Gone was his slightly arrogant tone, replaced by one of pure fear that the Sith was going to hurt him further. Andrelious could sense that the man wasn’t trying to lie. If the holocron was here, the ship’s Captain either hadn’t explained what it was, or perhaps didn’t even know what it was himself.

“Tell your Captain that the hangar’s secure.” Mimosa-Inahj ordered.

**Bridge**

“And you’re sure?” Captain Brantil asked.

“Yes. Whoever was piloting the TIE died in the crash,” Dreck’s voice crackled, the sounds of ongoing firefighting in the background.

“I don’t know about this, Frim. If they’d come in hot enough to kill whoever was inside, the hangar should have been almost completely destroyed. Certainly enough that we’d need more than just a fire crew,” Erksip added, stroking his bearded chin thoughtfully.

“And what of Besdaa’s men?” Brantil questioned.

“That’s where things get a little interesting. I don’t know why, but it seems there’s a Jedi with them,” Ritteb explained. “They’re docking now,”

**Hangar**

“I did what you asked of me. Now, please, leave me in peace!” Dreck begged.

Lifting his arm, Andrelious scooped Dreck with the Force, ordering it to hurl the dark skinned Human into the far wall. Smashing into the durasteel inner hull with a loud crack, Dreck crashed to the floor, stunned.

“You two. I want my ship in working order by the time I get back. If it’s not, there will be hell to pay!” Andrelious shouted, addressing the two men who were putting out the last of the flames.

“But we’re not-“ one started, before being backhanded by his colleague.

*Idiots. Saskia will be working on that thing for weeks,* the Warlord thought to himself. He moved to leave the hangar, glancing quickly to see one of the two fire fighters helping Dreck back to his feet.

Andrelious could swear that he could feel the presence of another Force user nearby.

**Airlock 1**

The shuttle’s crew quickly disembarked onto the Corvette. The most senior of the crew, a female Human dressed in a smart white top and skin tight trousers, nodded a quick greeting at Frimlin Brantil, who had made his way from the bridge to greet his guests.

“Nice to see one of these still going. CEC knew what they were doing when they built these,” the new arrival commented, her accent giving her away as Corellian.

“Welcome to the *Fighting Chance*,” Brantil responded, offering his hand to the woman.

“Frimlin Brantil, I assume?” she asked, shaking the Captain’s hand firmly.

“That’s correct. And you’re with Besdaa the Hutt?”

The female laughed. “No way would I go near one of those slug men! We have an arrangement, but it’s nothing like that!”

A man dressed in beige robes moved forward from the group. “I think we need to get moving, Wandika. I can sense someone else here,” he declared.

“What do you mean, Grat?” Wandika challenged.

“On board that TIE we crashed into. I felt it then, but the panic after the collision left me unable to tell for sure. But now, all I can feel from this person is anger and hate. I suspect that they’re a dark sider, possibly even a Sith,” the Jedi answered.

The Corellian’s face dropped. “I guess we know for sure that we’re dealing with a holocron now.”

“I’d still like to check it to be sure. Captain Brantil, I’m afraid that your men may be in grave danger. I’ll do what I can, but if there’s a Sith here, they will stop at nothing to get their hands on your cargo. *Especially* if it’s a holocron.” Grat explained.

“I’m tempted just to eject it into space, then. I’m not putting my men at risk, especially not in the name of your Order and its petty squabbles with the Sith. My crew were promised that I’d keep them clear of any sort of political trouble,” Brantil snapped.

Grat grimaced. “If you think our relationship with the Sith is a ‘petty squabble’, Captain, then you’re in for a very rude awakening,” he stated, trying to keep his composure in check.

**Corridor**

Andrelious was slashing his way through to the bridge. The crew of the *Fighting Chance* were no match for the Sith: some hadn’t even seen combat for many years.

Burying his lightsaber into another crewman, the Warlord smirked as the man slumped to the ground, and turned to the dead man’s colleague, a female Twi’lek armed with an old vibro-blade.

“Please. Just tell us what you want,” the alien begged, throwing her weapon down.

“If you want the death to stop, I want your Captain and his Jedi guest. Bring them and the Holocron to me and I will spare the rest of your ship,” Andrelious hissed.

The Twi’lek nodded fearfully and reached for a small comlink that was attached to her belt.

“Captain. You’re needed,” she said.

**Airlock 1**

“You’re going to have to go, Captain. If you don’t and my instincts are correct, you’d be putting your crew at the mercy of an angry Sith. That’s not going to end well.” Grat declared.

“Erskip. Advice please?” Brantil asked.

“It’s not worth the risk, Frim. We brought this on ourselves the moment we allowed those other Jedi to contact us. Go and meet this man. I just hope it’s not too late for the crew,” Ritteb responded.

Grat’s eyes widened. “Hang on. *WHAT* other Jedi?”

“They’re not with you? We met them near a system they were calling New Tython. Sorenn, the leader was called,” Frimlin recalled.

“I’ve never even heard of that system. I believe you’ve been fooled, Captain. Whoever this Sorenn was, he’s not a Jedi.” Grat said.

“He was most certain that he was a Jedi. He even spouted the same rhetoric about the Sith. Was adamant that the cargo got well away from their space,” Erksip added.

“Are we going to make this deal, or not? I didn’t bring you along to argue with Besdaa’s customers, Grat. In fact, I’m not quite sure *why* I brought you along,” Wandika stated.

Grat shifted his eyes around nervously. “I just explained that it was important that you followed the will of the Force,”

**Corridor**

“One more minute, then I start killing again,” Andrelious warned.

“You will do nothing of the sort!” Grat declared, arriving alongside Captain Brantil from a nearby turbolift.

“Captain. Hand over the Holocron. Now,” the Warlord ordered.

“I’m afraid that I already have a buyer. Given you’ve wrecked my hangar and killed some of my crew, there’s no way I’m willing to let you have it,” Brantil snapped.

“I think you will, Captain. My offer is far superior to whatever little band of criminals you’re selling to,” Andrelious snorted.

Grat moved in front of Brantil. He didn’t need to hear more: he knew exactly what the Sith’s ‘deal’ was.

“Captain. Clear this deck. Get the Holocron to Wandika. Fast,” the Jedi advised.

“I think not. This man has murdered people under *MY* care. I’d not be any kind of a Captain if I just left him to roam free,” Brantil declared.

“At least let the others leave! Your pride shouldn’t be allowed to endanger others,” Grat shouted.

“Seems you’re getting a little hot under the collar, Jedi. Feel that anger flow. Take strength from it and strike me down!” Andrelious taunted.

With a snarl, Grat charged at the Warlord, his blue bladed lightsaber ready. Andrelious blocked the Jedi’s attack, trying to keep his enemy between himself and Brantil’s blaster.

“I will not let you win, Sith.” Grat snarled.

Avoiding another attack, Andrelious noticed something about his opponent’s style. It was a little unpolished, as if he were still learning the more advanced moves. Becoming a little suspicious, the Warlord pushed on, counter attacking with a series of firm, well-aimed slashes. Grat defended himself, but the Sith sensed anxiety and discomfort.

“You’re not even a Jedi Knight yet, are you?” Andrelious questioned.

“Getting this Holocron is serving as part of my trials. Bringing you down will make me certain for Knighthood, Sith,” Grat spat back, ducking away from an attempt to force a saber lock.

“I should have known. I can feel your untampered ambition and your resentment. I can tell you think you’re being held back! Focus on that, my boy! Focus on how your Master is letting you down!” the Warlord taunted.

“My Master? But she told me that I must be patient,” the Padawan answered, beginning to doubt his own words.

“She is afraid of you, boy. Think of all the trials! They’re not to test you, they’re to indoctrinate you to their warped theology of the Force. Release yourself from their teachings. Join me, and I’ll show you how the Force can be so much more than just a shield to protect the useless!” Andrelious continued, feeling Grat’s resolve slipping.

Grat grit his teeth. “They warned me what your kind is like! You’ll promise me the galaxy and leave me with nothing! You’ll make me give up everything that matters to me!” he snarled.

“That is what the Jedi told you. Look at me, boy! I am married. I have children. I didn’t have to give any of that up. To be a Sith is to have the Force serve you. To be free!” the Warlord answered, ducking under Grat’s latest attack. Arcing his lightsaber around, the Sith aimed a powerful slash at his opponent’s fingers. Grat moved his weapon to block, but was caught out by the force of the blow and staggered backward.

“And if I were to join you? You’d guarantee me an end to all the contemplation? To having to protect those too weak to protect themselves?” the Jedi questioned.

“We too protect those that claim they’re too weak. But we demand the right to rule over them,” Andrelious responded.

“Careful. I can see what he’s trying to do to you, Jedi. He’s promising you the world just to get his way,” Brantil interjected, having watched the dual and ensuing conversation with great interest. He noticed that the Padawan’s deep blue eyes were now flecked with yellow, similar to those of Andrelious.

“He has a point, Captain. So many of my friends have died on so called mercy missions. The galaxy is a dangerous place. How can I properly protect those dear to me with the limited understanding of the Force that the Jedi have taught me. The Force should free me, not trap me!” Grat declared.

“Good, boy, good. Now, I want you to go back to your associates. Tell them you’re having the holocron for yourself. I will have a friendly chat with the Captain here.” Andrelious ordered, smiling as he realised how relatively easy turning the Padawan had been. He could sense that Grat’s feelings of resentment were turning into hatred. Hatred of the long, slow path to Knighthood that the Jedi had imposed on him. The young man now believed that Andrelious was the answer to those problems.

*I’ll leave Saskia to look after this one when I get him back to Karufr,* the Warlord thought to himself as his new ally disappeared into the turbolift.

**Airlock 1**

“You’re back? I trust that you’ve dealt with Brantil’s guest?” Wandika asked. “Do you have the holocron?”

“Wandika, I’m going to say this only once. Head back to Besdaa. Tell him that the holocron is nothing more than a fake. Captain Brantil was lying,” Grat answered.

The Corellian’s face dropped. She was no Force user, but could tell that there was something off about the way Grat was being.

“I’d still like to see it, Grat. Besdaa won’t appreciate his time being wasted,”

“Then I’ll deal with him myself! Just go!” the Jedi snapped, pointing his lightsaber at Wandika’s head.

Stepping back, Wandika pulled out her blaster. Her men did the same, aiming several blasters, vibro-blades and other weapons in Grat’s direction.

“Do not threaten me, Jedi. I didn’t want you on my ship in the first place. I suggest you back off and let me speak to Brantil again,” Wandika warned.

“Yeah!” her men chorused.

**Corridor**

“So. You give me the holocron, and transport me and Grat to coordinates of my choosing. You’ll also get my TIE fixed up enough to fly the rest of the way back and wait for me to arrange for further transport for Grat. In exchange for that, I’ll not only let you live, but I’ll give you however much you were being offered for the holocron, plus ten percent. All I need are some account details and you’ll have the money by the time I’m gone,” Andrelious stated.

“I’m not stupid, Sith. The fact you’re even giving me those terms is fortunate. I’ll agree to those demands,” Brantil answered, satisfied. He had lost several men, and any chance of ever trading with Besdaa the Hutt, but the fact he was still alive and would actually stand to gain a large profit was almost enough to completely offset that.

**Airlock 1**

Grat and Wandika remained staring at each other.

“Don’t underestimate me, Wandika. One false move and I’ll have the lot of you,” the former Jedi warned.

Captain Brantil and Andrelious entered the area.

“Captain. This Jedi’s just turned on us. We want to see the goods,” the female demanded.

“I suggest you get the hell off of my ship. Tell Besdaa that I received a better offer,” Brantil responded. Several of the remaining crew filed out of the turbolift, armed and ready in case Wandika decided to fight.

“You won’t be so brave when Besdaa catches up with you!” Wandika spat.

“Besdaa couldn’t catch up with anything! He’s fat even for a Hutt. Now go!” Brantil ordered.

Scowling, the Corellian female holstered her blaster. She already knew that her failure to obtain the holocron would mean trouble for her and her crew, and the fact that Grat had seemingly switched sides only added to that.

Andrelious, Grand Inquisitor, smiled. The holocron was his, he’d turned a Jedi to the ways of the Sith, and he’d further increased his reputation.

And it was all in a day’s work.