

### *Excessive Hubris*

Fenn stood in front of the mirror, as cold sweat rippled down his back and pooled around his brow. It had been many years since he was forced from the Imperial Academy, yet old wounds do not always heal. Psychological wounds, the meanest and ugliest sort, often never do. Taking a cloth, he dried his face and grabbed a nearby cloak to cover his body. He once again looked in the mirror, trying to appraise what his eyes could see and his mind could comprehend.

It had been a day like any other on Corellia. The first day of school was often a proud moment for anyone, let alone a cadet at the Imperial Academy. However, for the young man who would become Battlemaster Fenn it would become a day that haunted him always. He remembered that day, now, as he prepared to go back to the Shadow Academy to wrap up some loose ends.

That day, long ago, was indeed haunting. Fenn was marked out as an example to the young cadets. It was a time honored tradition, two cadets would be singled out, on the spot, to conduct a series of exercises to both rattle and inspire the others. If the cadets succeeded they were lauded and served as an example of overcoming one's own fears and limitations. If they failed, well, then they would die.

Yet, Fenn did not die. No, a fate far worse than that waited for him. The test was to simply pilot a speeder a short distance, make a turn, come back, and fire at a few static displays. Several upperclassmen cadet troopers were also on guard to harry the younger peers. The exercise had been conducted for hundreds of new classes, and generally ended in either triumph on the part of skilled newcomers or with the instructors pointing out the successful operations while teaching on the failure to execute.

That day was indeed different. Fenn took the controls of the turret mounted on the tiny speeder, as his classmate sat behind the console and piloted the aged relic. It was purposefully low powered and slower than Fenn liked to remember. The turret itself was hardly more powerful than a blaster, a training tool more than a vehicle mounted weapon. Yet, Fenn's greatest embarrassment occurred due to this turret.

The pilot, the girl's name Fenn never learned, was able with the controls and sent the speeder around the turn without decelerating while keeping complete mastery of the course. Coming into view of the stationary targets, Fenn aimed and took fire at each target in turn. Before the speeder had made it half way to the starting line to signal the end of the exercise, all targets had been neutralized.

Fenn was ecstatic; he was always keen to make a name for himself. In his excitement, he lost his grip on the controls and fired errant shots into the deck of the speeder, rupturing a conduit and forcing thick black smoke to billow immediately from the impact. He was able to jump off the speeder in time, the pilot was not so lucky. Fenn left the Academy before the investigation into the girl's tragic death occurred. Her demise was regretful enough, but Fenn always harbored the shame and embarrassment

of being a washout from the prestigious Imperial Academy, wearing it as a mark of ostracism for over a decade.