*Memento*

The tapping on the door abruptly startled Commander Fenn, his eyes slowly panning towards the unexpected sound. Briskly walking across his stateroom, he eyed the young enlisted Fleet Naval soldier standing beyond the barrier.

“Sir, mail call today. Package for you, sir.” The young soldier stood at attention and handed over a small rectangular parcel.

Fenn frowned. He expected no mail. He had no family and no business correspondence of note. “Thank you petty officer, dismissed.”

Taking the parcel and walking back to his desk, the frown never left Fenn’s face. “What the hell could this be?” Fenn studied the rectangular, wooden box and ran his fingers around the felt trim on the underside.

Placing the box down he puzzled to the contents. He wondered if it could be a trick played on him by the officer’s mess or something more sinister. He sighed heavily. It had been a long and trying day. Bridge duty on the Warspite had been traumatic. To give more junior aviators more flight time, he had remained behind and monitored the patrol closely. Pirate activity was reported on the outskirts of the Cocytus System. Criminal enterprises were popping up regularly and spilling over from Hutt Space.

Fenn grit his teeth and clenched his fists as he stood. He pressed his commlink. “Beta Flight to the Ready Room at 2200.”

Perhaps he should have asked them to proceed to his stateroom instead. His nerves were still shaken from the earlier patrol. After years as a pilot and an officer he tried not to dwell on the freak occurances that cost the lives of his men. Still, it had indeed been a trying day.

Sitting back down, Fenn placed on hand on the base of the box and the other hand found a hinge near the back. Slowly applying force, the wooden lid began to give way and Fenn could see red felt lining the box’s interior, and the flash of polished metal. The commander was taken aback when he fully appraised the contents.

Inside the box was a relic of a blaster, a hodgepodge looking scattergun with a wooden butt-stock and a large bolt on the upper receiver. There was also a note, affixed with the letterhead of Fenn’s squadron. It was signed by the boot Ensign. The officer’s resolve nearly broke reading the kind words from his men.

The note told of the lineage of the scattergun. On the last liberty call his men had scrounged parts individually to put together this one of a kind keepsake. The note continued to explain that it was meant as a end of tour gift for commanding the squadron. However, as the pilots who had died this day had been the masterminds behind the idea, the remaining flight members felt only fitting giving the gift today. Fenn felt the wind being sucked from his lungs and was forced backwards to his bunk. It was not often his emotions overtook him. He could barely regain his balance and get to his feet.

“Beta Flight, stratch that. All Vanguard Squadron report to the Ready Room immediately. Suit up…tonight we hunt.”