The young woman picked her steps carefully. The worn edges of the block, where once finely hewn and square, were now pitted and scarred—the artifact of centuries of neglect under this world’s storms and skies. The block, easily fifteen meters long, had once stood over the crumbled stone pillars ahead of her to the left and right. Very little of the temple remained standing upright, maybe some four or five pillars in all she guessed, while most of it lay in piles of detritus and debris. There were no signs around her of recent activity aside from the barely recognizable rusted remains of ration tins and energy packs; The garbage all that remained of the troopers who had died here in some skirmish in the last several hundred or so years.

Nova Taruma had seen its share of warfare and battles in the years since the fall of the Brotherhood all those years ago first as Jedi factionalized against one another, then as nations bickered, then as tribes competing for dwindling resources, and lastly as raiding parties scrapping a meager existence against the odds. Civilization on this back-world slowly diminished and recessed in development the longer it went unnoticed by the wider Galaxy which surely existed out there somewhere. Kay had certainly stared at the night sky, studying its infinite emptiness, enough to wonder at her place in it.

Stories told that her ancestors had lived, long, long ago, on a different world with a different night sky. There the stars had been innumerable and though the people of that time could not have possibly counted the number of the stars in the heavens themselves they’d possessed great calculating machines which could and did as they sailed between them. Most people in Kay’s village believed the stories to be parables, stories meant to teach virtues and morals through fantastical and fictional tales. There were those who held to the Old Ways though and believed the tales to be their history, a true and accurate representation of their past. Kay didn’t know what to believe but wondered to herself why the sky above her was nearly empty, almost entirely black with the lack of stars in it, while the old pictures showed the Jedi walking beneath skies rich with sparkling, twinkling jewels of light.

She picked her way carefully through the rubble, seeing no more signs any one had been here. She wasn’t entirely sure why it was she was here if she were honest with herself. For weeks she had felt something pulling at her, calling her, beckoning her to come. It came from the south and west of her village in the hills that her Elders told her to stay away from, the hills the hunters and gatherers said were haunted by the spirits of the past. The spirits, said to be the imprints of men and women killed in The Troubles and Jedi Wars, who were unable to pass beyond into the afterlife. They told stories of twisted monsters and horrible beasts that feasted on the flesh of Humans and Zabrak, Twi’lek and Bith alike. She smiled, thinking about those campfire stories, wondering if the beasts cared if her eyes were tinged red and her skin lay somewhere between pink and blue depending on the light (inherited traits she was told were of her Mother’s Mother’s Father who had been full blooded Chiss).

Kay had encountered no such beasts on her journey. She hadn’t encountered anything. The trek had taken her the better part of ten days and not once had she seen a Karpi Bug, one of the lazy Stakchon that tasted so great cooked over an open fire, or any of the nearly ubiquitous Kite Bats that could be seen seemingly anywhere on Nova Taruma. No people, thankfully, or that might have ended badly for her. At best she would have been taken captive and made wife or slave while at worst she might have been attacked and used before having her head removed as an ornament for one of the Raiders’ Gortac Mounts. Instead all she found everywhere she’d set foot was silence and emptiness. It was unsettling but the call was too strong to ignore and the closer she got the stronger it became. At times it felt as though she were being pulled forward, unable to stop her feet from taking steps.

She stood atop the rubble of the temple looking about slowly, not really sure what for. The call was coming from all around her and where it had slowly gained intensity it was now a silent roar in her head and chest. Her heart was beating so fiercely she felt like she had to move lest it break free of her breast and run off without her. She picked a direction and began to shuffle along skittishly, quickly. She scrambled over fallen stone blocks and broken ornaments as wide as she was tall and four times as long. The volume in her head kept rising with every step until she found the hole. It was almost entirely obscured by the remains of the temple laying atop it. With a minute’s frantic searching she found an opening wide enough to accommodate her thin frame.

Inside the air was cooler and damper and moss hung to the lower edges of the walls around her, wet with the remains of the rain storm from days ago. She marveled at what little she could see, finding herself standing atop a carved stone stairwell leading down at a severe angle. She stared down, past where it became so dark she could not make out anything at all. The roar in her head was now a shout and it drove her forward. Her feet dropped each step with a mixture of hesitancy, full of terror, and hurriedness. She felt like she might fall any moment, slipping on some unseen rock or slime, and tumble down the well for all of time. Each step made the shout in her head louder. The louder the shout became the harder her heart pounded until her foot found the next step was flat and the floor evened out.

Surrounded entirely by complete darkness she could only barely make out ahead of her a pin prick of blue light. The stairs behind her might as well have not even existed: she could not see them let alone the opening to the outside she’d entered through. The shout pushed her onward towards the pinprick and became a scream. Her head was pounding in time to her heart whose pulsing could now be felt in her fingertips and in the cadence of her rapid breaths. Each step brought the pinprick of light closer but she was forced to place a hand on the black wall to support herself. The light grew to the size of her fist at arm’s length and then to the size of a potter’s wheel but found she was growing weaker. Kay collapsed to the ground on all fours but the scream, always relentless, drove her forward. It was on her hands and knees, crawling, that she at last entered the chamber at the end of the tunnel that had been emitting the bluish light.

She crumpled to the stone floor and rolled over the moment the scream ceased. Her head was quiet and all she could hear was the pulsating flow of blood in her ears. Her heart thumped meaningfully in her ribcage but slowly worked its way back down to its normal state. Kay examined the chamber there, with her back still on the floor, and marveled at the ornate metal box that levitated in the direct center of the room. The chamber was spherical, radiating twenty meters from the box’s floating location while she lay upon a hanging causeway so that the room dropped and curved away beneath her.

“You have answered my call.”

Kay’s eye’s shot open wide and she rolled over and climbed to her knees, “Who’s there!”

“I am Grand Master Vodo Biask Taldrya! Bow.”

Before Kay could react she felt an immense weight fall upon her forcing her to bend forward and catch herself on her palms in a position of submission, “What’s going on? How are you doing this?”

The weight lifted from her allowing her to get on her heals and shuffle backwards. She hit a wall behind her, where the entrance should have been, and instead found nothing but a seamless, curved section of the chamber’s spherical boundary.

The voice again boomed commandingly, “Rise, young one.”

When she didn’t respond quickly enough she felt something pick her up until her feet were beneath her, “P-please don’t hurt me!”

The unseen voice said nothing for a moment but spoke in a more even tone, “Cease trembling. Your weakness disgusts me.”

The floating box, pyramidal in nature but with six angled sides, opened at the crown. A small translucent man, made of the same blue light that somehow dimly lit the chamber, stood within. He took a step forward from his position in the box, the box small enough it could have fit in her father’s hand comfortably, and grew larger the nearer he drew to her, “I am pleased that you heeded my call. I am further pleased that you are the kin of one of my greatest Generals. What is your name, Girl?”

Though her mouth was dry the young woman responded, “Kay”.

The image of the man stopped before her. He was talk, her head only came up to the middle of his chest, and she could see now he was a Twi’lek though under his robes she could see something was different about his legs though she couldn’t really say what as they lay mostly hidden behind his holographic cloak. He was dressed regally and stood with an air of command, the way her sister’s betrothed Garth did.

The man’s face sneered at her, “You will address me as My Lord, or should you prove worthy, as Master”.

She nodded slowly, “Kay, my Lord.”

“Good. You learn quickly”, The man, an apparition more like she thought, turned and strode back towards the box and studied it at arm’s length for a moment, “Come, I have something to show you.”

She cautiously approached the Apparition and stood beside him, splitting her attention between the small artifact and the Twi’lek’s head tails. They rested on his shoulders and one wrapped loosely around his neck. Both showed signs of dark scarring and the closer she looked the more she could make out the complicated and deliberate shapes of alien symbols and words. His lekku shifted and she realized he was glaring down at her as she stared at his scarifications.

She looked to the box. Vodo Biask said nothing and turned his attention to it as well, “Before I was the Grand Master of the Brotherhood, before I forged it into the Empire that conquered much of the Unknown Regions, and before Nova Taruma had been settled and named my capital I was the Rollmaster of Clan Taldryan.”

Kay wanted to ask so many questions: What was the Brotherhood? Where were the Unknown Regions and did he mean that her people had come from another world? She kept her mouth shut however sensing it would displease the ghost of the Twi’lek.

“I served a Chiss of surpassing cunning, aggression, and obedience. As Consul he led our gutted Clan out from beneath the betrayal of Cotelin, curse that traitor”, the Apparition folded his hands into the deep folds of the sleeves of his robe as he mused on, “And because he proved pliable and capable I was able to use him to reorganize our fleet and remaining Taldrya into a force of tremendous capability.”

Vodo Biask looked down at her and she realized for the first time that his eyes were black, darker than the night sky, “My Lord?”

His thin lips curled into a small, cruel smile, “I suspect it has been many years since then and most if not all of my works have been forgotten. No matter. You are here now and your training will begin.”

“My training?” Kay almost remembered too late, “my lord?”

“I began my life a slave and freed myself through cunning and violence. I rose to power and earned the respect my peers with those same traits. I used your ancestor to bring my vengeance to the Iron Throne and with cunning and violence I visited retribution upon the Justicar”, Vodo removed one hand from his robes and motioned to the box, “I will teach you my ways: I will pass along to you all of my knowledge of the Force, the Dark Side, and its Arcana, and I will make you strong. Take my Holocron.”

She found it difficult to break his gaze but when she did her eyes fell upon the box, the Holocron, as if for the first time. It filled her with wonder, with hunger, with lust, and with longing. Kay reached forward and took it in both hands. Its metal surface showed complex geometric patterns in its inlay, the negative space between them made of some black gem-like substance. It was cold to her touch, a chill that passed through her entire body lingering only for a second or two.

The Apparition disappeared from beside her, nearly two meters tall, and reappeared in the open tip of the Holocron from where he had originally emerged, “Kneel, Girl.”

She never hesitated and dropped to both knees, still holding the box in both hands, and tilted her head between her arms, “Yes Lord”.

The Apparition of Vodo Biask looked at her bowed head for a moment, only about the size of her longest finger, “I name you Darth Saber, Lord of the Sith, Last of the Taldryan, and my Apprentice. Rise.”

Darth Saber rose to her feet, still holding the box before her. Vodo Biask stared wordlessly into her eyes, and she into his small black eyes, “What is your bidding, my Master.”