

Edge of CNS space
Aboard an unknown transport ship
Marcus' quarters

The walls were grimy and worn down. Almost every piece of furniture creaked or rattled in some way, and through it all you could hear the rumbling of the hyperdrive. Mixed in with it all were the constant noises of the other passengers that could be heard through the paper thin bulkheads. If there ever was a ship that screamed a thrifty and lazy owner, it would be this ship.

A loud bang, and the accompanying shudder, foretold the exit into realspace. Not five seconds later there was another loud bang and the ship shook violently, throwing various objects through Marcus' makeshift quarters. It was this last event that woke up a man lying sprawled across a cot in the corner.

Marcus shot up, completely alert, listening to the sounds on the ship, the latest bang coming from the front of the ship was still echoing through the Force. Confused he looked around, mentally scanning his surroundings. Something was wrong. The usual rumble and humdrum of the ship seemed different somehow, though he couldn't place it exactly. His head pounding he mentally scolded himself. This whole thing was just a terrible idea, but he'd had to if he wanted to make it when they arrived.

Trying to draw on the clarity of the Force with constricted veins slowing down the sorely needed oxygen was taking far more effort than he had hoped and his headache intensified, hampering the recovery process even further. Blinking hard proved to be an even worse idea, as it felt as if his eyelids were made of sandpaper.

At the edge of his perception he could sense something, but the image refused to clear up when he tried to focus his senses. Instead he was rewarded with a sharp stabbing pain emanating from behind his eyes.

"Spast!" he yelled out. *Won't be doing that again.*

Instead he haphazardly moved to the side of the door, opening it slightly instead of trying to sense what was beyond the door. It would seem that in his current state he wasn't going to be able to rely on the Force.

An explosion echoed down the hall, and loud footsteps could be heard. Practiced, rhythmic.

Military precision, Marcus realized. *What the hell are military forces doing on this transport?*

Not taking the chance that they might be there for him he quickly closed the door, checked his equipment, then stepping out of the room into the hallway.

Each step he took was an assault on his senses as his world began to spin. Tentatively he tried to draw on the Force again to recuperate, but was again rewarded with a painful throb of his brain.

Dammit.

Instead he moved slowly and deliberately through the hallway until he rounded a corner and came face to face with a group of highly armed mercenaries. Still under the effects of whatever he'd drank last night, it took him a moment to realize what was in front of him.

The mercenary forces were under no such effects, and were merely stunned that their quarry had appeared so suddenly in front of him. Within a moment they had trained their guns on the slightly disheveled Epicanthix, their training suppressing the instinct to fire until their boss gave the order.

"Fire!"

They opened up on the haphazardly moving Jedi, but their moment of hesitation had given just enough time to realize what had happened. Forgoing his usual move where he pulled his lightsaber to his hand, he had unhooked it swiftly and with a practiced calm. By the time that the mercenaries pressed their triggers, the tangerine blade had already sprung to life.

Deflecting the first bolt of plasma energy into a bulkhead wall, Marcus noted how much extra effort his concentration was costing him. *Never again*, he thought as he spun around to dodge a trio of bolts, while deflecting another one into the floor.

Meanwhile the mercenaries weren't waiting around. From behind the firing line, three of the soldiers of fortune had traded their rifles for specialized Vibroblades that Marcus hadn't seen before. Their brothers quickly separated, leaving lanes free for the melee warriors to move up to Marcus.

With a few strides they had reached their quarry and started circling him. Meanwhile Marcus kept moving forward, dodging or reflecting the now sporadic blaster fire the approaching firing squad kept throwing in his direction at each opening of his encircling opponents. Finally managing to deal with his lapses in concentration, Marcus was able to redirect a few bolts onto their source. Now there were only three mercs firing, and the three around him waiting to strike.

Feeling slightly more confident in his abilities, he figured he could risk using the Force to throw at least one of them backwards. He was wrong. Crippling pain shot through his head, taking his breath away, and forcing him to take a knee. His lightsaber withdrew into its hilt, and fate struck.

A single well-aimed bolt of plasma sizzled through the air and buried itself in Marcus' calf. He screamed in pain, and the trio around him struck. Marcus felt a searing pain, and then everything went black.

The next minute passed and Marcus felt oddly detached from his physical body. Then light shone in, bright and blinding. He heard a familiar series of beeps. A sharp stab in his neck, the world cleared, and he saw the familiar visage of Y9E, his personal droid.

"Spast Whiney," Marcus cursed. Whiney had been his nickname for the little droid, which fit because it was always complaining. "Next time, don't overdo it on the drugs alright? I feel like my head is splitting apart."

The droid let out a string of beeps and boops, and Marcus couldn't help but smile.

"Yes, you did well programming the simulation. Just those drugs gave me a headache."

A short low beep followed.

"Yes, it was effective. I could barely focus, let alone use the Force. I just hope it's enough for when we get back to Sepros."