

A Ghost in Time

What was I thinking? Why would I take this assignment? I'm a fighter not an investigator. This would be a job for Jay but of course he is off doing a hunt. Sykes had only recently returned from his assignment in the Deep Core. He had been there for nearly ten years searching for old relics that the Emperor had hidden and much had changed for the Brotherhood and his Clan in his absence. *"It is my job however. The Aedile asked me to take a look at the scene and when the Clan asks, I will move."* The Sith Battlemaster sighed and looked back in the cargo compartment at the boxes and crates stacked neatly. He was being flown down on a freight shuttle because his usual pilot and friend Jay "Krayt" Glover was out on a bounty hunting mission. Sykes opened up his datapad and looked over what was known. A Jedi Master and the ruler of The Republic of the Force had been killed overnight in his bed. The reason Sykes was being sent was to investigate the crime scene itself, was to ascertain if it had really been a Force Ghost or if it had been a simpler assassination. **"Two minutes to landing."** the PA system squawked. "Alright." Sykes muttered to himself as he pulled on his robes and hood. "Time to go to work."

The sky was grey and rain was just starting to sprinkle as Sykes walked down the loading ramp. It was a typical spaceport with its hustle and bustle of droids and sentients loading and unloading cargo from various types of vessels. He moved quickly to a side terminal and did as was expected of most spacers who had recently landed. He made his way into a small, dark cantina. Sykes had taken care to carefully conceal his lightsabers in his tunic so as not to attract too much attention. He made his way up to the bar and took a seat near the corner, just in earshot of several other patrons. The cantina was not terribly packed but it was still early and the rain would surely send others in soon. "Corellian whiskey and water." He ordered gruffly to the bartender. Once it appeared, Sykes took the drink and began to sip it but also opened his senses to what was around him. The general feeling of the area was fear and restlessness. That was to be expected as most citizens tended to feel that way when the leader of their government is suddenly killed in his sleep. The group nearest him felt slightly different however. They were angry but their anger was focussed. It was a professional kind of focus. Sykes sneaked a look over in their direction. It was a pair of human males and a Twi'lek huddled together and speaking in hushed tones. Focusing in on them, Sykes' hearing sharpened and he was able to pick up their conversation.

"He was fully protected. How could anyone get through the security we had in place?" The first human said.

"You've heard what some of the rumors were. Some were saying it was a ghost." The Twi'lek replied, his lekku twitching with annoyance and a bit of fear.

The second human scoffed and almost spilled the bottle in front of him. "Oh bantha dung. Don't tell me you believe in ghosts now."

"Well that's what I heard from the investigator that had been up there."

The first man shook his head. "A ghost is nonsense. It had to be someone from the Meraxian Empire or that new group that showed up in the system."

"The Master was a Jedi though. Who could kill someone like that? He was powerful." The Twi'lek remarked as he ordered another round for himself and his compatriots.

"You've heard the rumors. The new group out there are apparently Jedi too. They can do stuff like that." Answered the first as he took a sip from his drink.

The second man stood up and stretched. "Yeah well if they did they will be in for a surprise. The Jedi have put one of their own as an investigator there. He should be at the Tower now." He took a quick sip then moved off towards the 'freshers."

Sykes leaned back in his seat and continued to sip his drink. "*Jedi. Great. That's just what I wanted to hear. This cloak and dagger thing isn't my style.*" He sighed as he threw back the last of the whiskey, pulled his hood back over his head and stepped back out into the rain. He pulled up the city map on his datapad and began to make his way to the Tower.

The Tower wasn't exactly what Sykes was expecting as he looked at it. He was expecting a large spire sticking up from the ground that would reach into the sky. The building before him seemed more like an old cathedral than a government building, with its stained glass windows and sharp, angular design brought up feelings of ancient stories told in a different time. The Sith was sitting on a bench watching and taking note of the movement of local security. Guards were patrolling with the same nervous tension that men in uniform get when they feel that they had already failed. They were more aware of their surroundings than they normally would be.

He raised his eyes to scan the rooftops and noticed the amount of guards bustling about and scanning the crowd. Sykes could move through the crowd fairly unnoticed but once he stepped out of the flow blasters would be pointed at him from all angles.

I could beat them though. There aren't more than twenty of them and not all of them could get the shot all at once. I could break through the doors, my blades guiding me with their silver and red light. I would cut down each of them as they stepped out. Fear would be my ally as I made my way to the top of the tower towards this Jedi Master's room.

Sykes could imagine just what would happen as he made his way through the doors of the room. A Jedi would be there, already prepared because he would have felt the Sith's rage. Sykes' body would move first. His silver blade strikes quickly, crossing with the crack and sparks against the Jedi's own green blade. Sykes would spin, his body becoming a weapon against the Jedi, his shorter red blade catching the blade of the Jedi with artful ripostes. He would use the Jedi's fear against himself and would torture the mind until Sykes was able to strike down his enemy.

The Sith shook his head out of his day dreaming. *No. I can't do that. That course would put the Clan in jeopardy and undermine our goals.* He stood and began to move down the alleyway, turning and heading away from the crowd. He circled around the plaza and came near a building that was on the west side of the Tower. Slipping through a side door he carefully moved through what appeared to be an office building that had been cleared by security. Ducking through side doors to the maintenance area, he made his way to the staircase that would lead to the roof. He could feel the presence of security forces above him. *Only a few up here. Need to keep this quiet.* He was glad that he had installed a sound dampener into his armored robes, for it would be needed to get around here. The door to the roof access slid open and Sykes rushed forward to duck behind a cooling unit. He could see three of the guards patrolling the perimeter of the roof and one had taken up a sniping position on the corner overlooking the plaza below. Across a gap was the roof of the Tower itself. Sykes reached out to the mind of the nearest guard, only to feel boredom in the task that had been presented to her. The Sith gave the impression of a large sound coming from the opposite side of the roof. She turned suddenly, grasping the blaster in her hands tighter. The rain had made it hard to see and she flicked on her comlink. *Did anyone else hear that?* she inquired only to receive negative feedback. Feeling it to be her duty, she informed the rest of the team that she was leaving her post momentarily to investigate.

Seeing his opportunity as the guard walked away, Sykes moved with a sudden burst of speed. He ran straight to the edge of the rooftop and hurled himself in a great leap that carried him over the chasm of the wide street below. Landing on the sloped roof of the Tower in a roll, Sykes had to grasp a small ornamentation to keep from slipping on the wet roof. The rain had become a steady downpour, bringing visibility down to less than 100 meters. He scrambled up the side of the roof, trying to take as much cover as he could while he raced to the sole steeple of the Tower. More stained glass window dotted the steeple itself and gargoyles stood a silent watch at the four corners of it. Sykes pressed himself against the side of the steeple, just below one of the windows. He let his senses reach out and could feel only a few people inside this section of the building. *They must have cleared it to wait for the Jedi to show up. I can't feel his presence yet.*

Sykes looked up to scan the steeple and could see a window that must lead to the old Master's room. He flexed his hands and activated the servos of the crushgaunts that he wore and dug his fingertips into the side wall. The gaunts crushed into the wall and provided a solid self made hand hold. Slowly and with effort he began to scale the wall, leaving behind crumbling bits of stone and ferrocrete that fell below. Time was against him now and he willed himself to move

faster, careful to not lose his precarious balance. Finally reaching the window he pulled himself through to find himself in what appeared to be a library. All around him were books and ancient looking tomes. *Now this is a rare sight. I haven't seen this many true flimsiplast books since I was in the Arconan temples.* Water dripped from his soaked robes as Sykes moved through the study towards what he assumed to be the Master's chamber. He could feel energy all around him that he could recognise as power that could only be coming from the Dark side of the Force. There was a heaviness to the air as Sykes opened the door to the bedchamber to reveal an old man on his bed impaled with five large blades. Sykes knelt next to him and examined the body. *Well it doesn't take a genius to see what killed him. His throat has been cut almost to the spine. The blades in his limbs and through his chest are not in spots that would quickly kill. They were there to keep him in place to allow the final cut. Someone wanted him alive for a few moments in agony before they killed him.*

Sykes took out a small holorecorder and caught as much of the scene as he could. Someone was coming up the stairs and he could feel a strong presence in the Force. *Jedi.* He nearly sneered. The Dark energy he felt lent credibility to the Force Ghost rumors that he had heard but what he saw was the physical manifestations of a man. *The other researchers can figure that one out. Only in old Sith teachings have I heard of the ability from one come back from the other side to affect the physical realm but only when there were artifacts that the spirit could manifest from.*

A tickle in the back of Sykes mind made him snap around to face the entrance of the study. The Jedi was about to enter and Sykes had to get out quickly. He prepared himself to make a run for the window when suddenly the wooden door burst forth into splinters as if a silent explosion had gone off. The Jedi rushed into the room lightsaber drawn and stood before Sykes. "Who are you?" The man demanded. Sykes' anger flashed at having been taken by surprise by this Jedi.

"I am merely here to have a look around." The Sith replied, moving his hands away from his sides to try and present a less threatening posture to the man.

The Jedi, a relatively short man with long brown hair and deep blue eyes, took in the sight of the Sith in front of him. He could feel the darkness of the man before him. "I have a hard time believing you."

"Believe what you will Jedi but I am only here to help. You need to move and I will leave."

"I don't think so. You will be taken into custody." The Jedi raised the blue blade and appointed its tip at Sykes. "One way or another."

Sykes took a slow step back, his feet feeling the ground around him. The room wasn't big enough for a drawn out fight. He needed to make an opening and escape instead but the Jedi stood between him and the window. He focused on the Jedi, the stance he stood in was reminiscent of an Ataru proponent. He seemed to be younger and the aura the Jedi exuded was one that was not typically used to combat. *He isn't a fighter. He doubts his abilities. Good.* "I'm

not going anywhere with you, Jedi.” Sykes spat back. “I will destroy you if I must. You know it is true.” Sykes let his anger and hatred build within himself, casting out an aura that he knew the Jedi would feel. “You can let me leave or you will die. Choose. Now Jedi.” Sykes watched closely and waited as the Jedi’s reaction began to cloud his face. Fear had taken hold and Sykes could see it. The Jedi’s gaze dropped for a brief instant and the lightsaber tip dipped slightly. *Now.*

Sykes became a blur of motion, his hand grabbing his own lightsaber and igniting its silver blade. He twisted his hand and batted the blue blade of the Jedi down to force it into a lock, the blades gouging deep into the floor. Sykes’ other hand came up and crashed into the Jedi’s shoulder. The vibroblade in his gauntlet ejected and stabbed deep into the flesh of the Jedi. The Sith gave a hard shove and disengaged from his opponent to open up space between them again.

The Jedi yelped and fell back from the attack. He had not expected that level of ferocity so quickly. He had hesitated and was now paying the price for his mistake. Blood began to ooze from his shoulder and he looked on at the Sith with wide eyes. The room seemed to darken but the lightsabers were glowing with an intensity that washed the walls of the room with an almost unnatural glow. The paintings on the wall seemed to move slightly, the eyes of the statues and portraits were boring into him. “What...what is happening?” He asked but even his voice sounded distant. He tried to focus on the Force but couldn’t seem to feel it around him like he normally did. He took several steps back and ended up fumbling against a desk. “You, Jedi. You are what is happening. You had your chance.” The voice seemed to be right in his ear but he could see the silver blade of the Sith on the far side of the room. “No...no no..”

Sykes watched as his opponent began to feel the effects of the poison he always coated his blades with. It was a powerful hallucinogen that could distort vision and even the emotions of most beings. Sykes could manipulate the terror coming from the man’s mind, amplifying the effects of the poison. He shut down his lightsaber and watched the Jedi drop his own. The man pressed himself against the desk and began to sink down it. As Sykes moved forward he could see the fully dilated pupils of the man. “You will not survive Jedi. Mark my words. I will return.” With those words left behind, the Sith made his way towards the window and leaped out of it to the roof of the Tower below. *Time to report in. A powerful being killed the Master but now the Jedi know that we are involved as well now.* The rain had gotten stronger and the wind had picked up. Into it, the Sith ran into the darkness to return home.