

[RoS: Escalation Phase I] Fiction



# Target Sighted



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DJB Fiction  
Publication

The multi-colored displays of dozens of gambling machines and beverage signs blurred together in the hazy den. The noises of the evening's festivities were waning as the night drew ever closer to morning. Dag Duh Dug stood upon his stool wiping down the freshly cleaned glasses and stacking them behind the bar. His usual grumpy expression was firmly etched on his face as the hangers-on lingered in his bar as closing time approached. Slyth, his ever faithful Trandoshan companion, was busy picking up the passed out drunks and tossing them out onto the street. With a nod of his head Dag sent Slyth after the Rodian in the corner giving hickies to a rather endowed Gungan.

Slyth turned, following Dag's gesture. Spotting the lovers he hissed, his tongue flickering out of his mouth as his shoulders slumped. Shaking his head, he lumbered over to them. "Alright, loverssss. Time to go," he said, grabbing the Rodian off the Gungan. He squealed in surprise as the Trandoshan effortlessly lifted him into the air. The Gungan huffed her indignation as she hurriedly covered herself up and grabbed her stuff. As she rushed for the door, the Rodian struggled to go after her. Slyth unceremoniously dropped him on the ground and he scrambled to his feet to chase after her.

Slyth wiped the glitter gel substance that was splattered all over the Rodian from his clawed hands. "What isss thiss sssubstance?" Slyth grew frustrated as he tried to wipe the glitter off on his clothes to find the glitter just spread. A duo of laughter broke out from the door to the backroom. Slyth whirled on the noise, a murderous look in his eyes. A bluish Mon Calamari and a tiny Jawa were clutching their bellies as they guffawed at the sight of the glittering Trandoshan. "Ah, ssshove it you two," Slyth moaned as he gave up on the glitter.

"*Hibbity, Tiny, get back to work,*" Dag yelled from the bar in Huttese. "*Turn the lights on and let's close up.*"

"Fine," Hibbity Jibbity replied. Reaching out with his flippered hand, he flicked the light switch. Dull beams of light shone down from the ceiling through the hazy room. The tiny Jawa muttered a reply in her weird language and ducked under the backroom swinging door, knocking it open with the large broom handle she carried. The door swung back on its hinges smacking into Hibbity. "Ouch! Watch it, Tiny!" he yelled after the Jawa who was already sweeping up a small dust cloud around her brown robes. Rubbing his sore shoulder, Hibbity exited the backroom and began picking up the chairs in the room.

"*Hey, don't sit down with that junk on you,*" Dag grunted at Slyth who had tried to take a seat at the bar.

"But, Dag, I'm tired," Slyth replied.

"*You can be tired and still keep the barstools clean.*" Dag said, putting the final glass back into the slider tray under the bar. "*Here, have a drink.*"

Slyth took a bottle of ale from Dag and, using his claw, popped the top off into the air. Tiny let out a screech and scrambled to catch the bottle top before it hit the ground.

"You better not be collecting those again," Hibbity said. Tiny gave a series of squeaks as she pocketed the bottle top into her robes. Hibbity sighed and continued stacking up chairs. Dag hopped down from the stool and grabbed it with his feet. Lifting it up, he walked it over to the register and climbed back up. Punching in his code, the till sprang out and it printed out the day's summary.

"*Not a bad day,*" he said as he ran through the printout. "*Hibbity, why did you comp a Alderaanian wine today?*"

“Probably because it’s not really Alderaanian wine,” a voice came from the entryway.

Dag looked up from the print out and glared. “*We’re closed*,” he growled. Slyth put down his bottle and began approaching the stranger while Tiny scurried behind Hibbity. There was a presence about this hooded figure that sent shivers down her spine. The figure was clad all in black, though some elements of his clothing under his cloak appeared a charcoal grey. The oversized hood covered his face and Slyth approached him.

“Time to go, ssstranger,” Slyth hissed through his sharpened teeth.

“Stranger? Oh, that hurts Slyth,” the figure replied, pulling off his hood revealing the face of a middle-aged man with short spiky hair. The barest hint of grey was creeping into the temples of the otherwise boyish face.

“*Kamjin*,” Dag spat on the ground as he said the name. “*What do you want?*”

“Is that anyway to greet an old friend?” Kamjin looked hurt as he went to hug Slyth and, spying the glitter, thought better of it. “You know...you, have something...there,” Kamjin said, gesturing all over the Trandoshan. Slyth sighed and nodded. “How are you doing Hibbity Jibbity? Long time no see and is that Tiny back there?” Hibbity waved and Tiny peeked out before sheltering behind Hibbity again. “What’s wrong, you all act like you’ve seen a ghost.”

“*We haven’t seen you in ten years*,” Dag said.

“Dag, you know I don’t speak Huttese. Come on, speak Basic,” Kamjin replied.

“Ugh, still the same Kamjin,” Dag said. “Where have you been for the last decade?”

“Oh, here and there, but why the cold reception? We’ve always been friends,” Kamjin replied.

“You left us for dead on Florrum,” Hibbity said.

“And you failed to pay us fully for the job on Dantooine,” Slyth added.

“Hey, that’s not fair. You got that ship out of the deal and that clearly was worth more than the missing share,” Kamjin countered.

“You were supposed to clear our names within the Minos Cluster and that never happened. We’re still branded as thieves there for collecting that artifact for you,” Dag piled on.

“Hkeek nkulla!” Tiny shouted from behind Hibbity’s legs.

“Tiny, that hurt!” Kamjin put his hands on his chest, feigning being shot.

Dag hopped over the bar onto the floor and approached Kamjin. Standing next to Slyth, he looked up at the elder human. “Why are you here, Kam?”

“Can I get a drink first?” Kamjin asked.

In unison, the group replied, “No.”

“Okay, fine. I know there’s some hurt feelings here and I hoped they would lessen with time. I’ve got a job I need your help with.”

“Absolutely not,” Dag said and turned, walking back to the bar.

“Wait, it’s an undercover job and no one can know I’m involved. I’m working with,” Kamjin paused to check that the bar was empty, “I’m working with the Severian Principate and I need your help.”

Dag stopped in his tracks. Reaching his foot up, he rubbed his chin. “The Principate, eh?”

“Ya, keep it down,” Kamjin said. “They’ve got some issues with the Tenexir Revenants and I’ve got a plan to help them out. I just need you guys to help me out.”

“You know, Kamjin, maybe it is a good thing we’ve run into each other again,” Dag said.

“Hey Dag, don’t the Expansionists have a standing bounty for high profile prisoners?” Hibbity asked.

“Yes, Hibbity, yes they do.” Dag said.

“Guys...what’s that look for?” Kamjin’s eyes darted between each of them in turn.

“Jar k’osa toineepa,” Tiny said, stepping out from behind Hibbity.

“Why don’t you sit down, Kamjin, and let’s talk,” Dag said, smiling for the first time today.

Slyth put a glittery clawed hand on Kamjin’s shoulder and grinned as he led him to a chair.

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The Ghtroc 720 light freighter snapped back to real-space above the planet Dandoran. Firing its engines, it flipped over and began to approach the planet.

“I expected more ssshships,” Slyth said as he maneuvered the ship into a shallow descent towards the surface.

“*There’s your reason why there aren’t more,*” Dag said, gesturing with his foot towards the horizon. Hanging just at the cusp of the horizon of the planet was a Quasar Fire-class cruiser carrier. What few ships were trafficking the system were hanging close to the Kalevalan Star Yacht situated in orbit above Tipool City.

“That can’t be a good sign,” Hibbity said as he leaned forward from his rear seat. “Why is that kind of fire power hanging around this system?”

“*Not our concern,*” Dag replied. Reaching forward, he toggled on the communication device and dialed in a unique frequency between the normal comm bands. Static filled the cabin as he continued to finely adjust it.

Within moments, the static cleared and a robotic voice repeated the message, “Transmit confirmation codex at fifteen megahertz.” Hibbity punched in the coded response message on the console near him and transmitted it. “Stand by,” the robotic voice entoned.

“Sstand by?” Slyth furrowed his brow. “What are we waiting for?”

“*Who knows? Fly casually. I pulled in one too many favors to get those codex for us to get shot down now,*” Dag said.

“Shootogawa?!” Tiny said in a panicked voice.

“No, no. We’re fine. Dag was just making a joke,” Hibbity said, patting the head of the Jawa in the other rear passenger seat. Hibbity glared at the back of Dag’s seat. Tiny cooed quietly to herself, still looking out the cockpit for any signs of danger.

Static hissed over the comm line, “Unidentified freighter, identify yourself or be shot down.” The voice was surprisingly sweet and friendly, in stark contrast to the dire warning being issued. Slyth looked at Dag, confused by the contradiction in tone to warning. Dag smacked his forehead with his foot, shaking his head.

“*This is the Stomme Naam. We’ve got a package to deliver,*” Dag replied.

“Does the package come well wrapped?” the voice inquired. Slyth again looked blankly at Dag.

“Blast it, what’s the response phrase?” Hibbity moaned from the back rustling through his pockets for the slip of paper he’d written the response on.

"Come on Hibbity, get with the Jibbity before we get shot down here," Dag said, turning around in his chair to stare down the Mon Calamari. Hibbity's search grew frantic as a tone sounded on the console.

"Ssshships launching from the Quasar. A-wing class by the looks of them," Slyth said. Tiny hopped out of her chair and trotted over to Hibbity, patting at his leg cargo pocket. Hibbity reached in and pulled out a crumpled piece of paper.

"Bless you, Tiny," Hibbity said. Reaching for the comm switch he spoke, "No, we were rushed. It only has a bow." The beeping of the sensor quieted.

"A-wing's are returning to the Quasar," Slyth said. His voice noticeably relaxed from a moment ago.

The sweet mewling voice from the comm replied, "It's alright, a gift is a gift. We are transmitting landing coordinates for you now. See you soon." The comm line switched back to the repeating robotic voice and Dag turned it off.

"Alright, it's adventure time!"

\* \* \*

Lyn stood near the landing platform awaiting the approaching freighter. Ever since the conflict with the Severian Principate had turned openly hostile, deliveries like this were becoming a frequent part of her job. She shivered in the cool night air blowing through the forest. Her pale purple skin prickled as she crossed her arms and rubbed some heat back into them. Her lekku twitched in anticipation. Hopefully this wouldn't be another group of wannabe mercenaries trying to collect a few credits for some hapless flunky of the Principate.

One of the guards that were with her put a tracking device in front of her. The freighter was just a few clicks out now. *Good*, she thought. *Then I can get back inside and warm up.* There wasn't much to the landing platform, a repurposed Imperial-style elevated platform that reached near the treetops. It had been utilized decades ago by the logging industry the Imperials had operated on the planet during the height of the Galactic Civil War. Most of the support structure had been melted and warped during the exodus of the Imperials. The Revenants had patched together a functioning landing platform on top of it, but Lyn never wanted to actually land on it herself.

Through the treetops, the landing light of the freighter began to shine through. Lyn gestured for the guards to spread out and prepare for the ship. She would never be caught unaware again, reaching up and brushing against the stump of what remained of her left lekku. As the ship came into view, the guards already had their weapons raised and trained on it, tracking it as the freighter hovered over the final treetop and lowered itself gently to the platform.

It was a masterful landing betrayed by the creaking and stretching of the hodgepodge of metals making up the structure. The guards, to their credit, anticipated the warping metal and maintained their balance. Lyn shuddered slightly and had to throw out her arms to steady herself. As the thrusters released their exhaust, a gentle fog settled onto the platform. The landing lights cut beams of visibility out through the forest canopy.

The boarding ramp hissed and whined as it was lowered to the ground. Lyn peered into the fog and saw two shapes descend. As the fog began to clear with the evening's breeze, Lyn's

eyes went wide seeing a Dug and a Jawa walking down the ramp. The guards were equally perplexed, their weapons dropping slightly as they looked at each other in bemusement.

"What is the meaning of this?" Lyn asked as she stormed towards the occupants of the ship. "I swear if this is some joke, I do not find it funny. Who put you up to this? Ryell? Bemox?" Anger poisoned the sweet honey tones of her voice.

*"It's no joke, just a minute. The present is a bit...challenging,"* Dag said, throwing up his feet to try and calm the Twi'lek.

"M'um m'aloo. Ikee Tiny," Tiny said.

*"You're right, Tiny. Where are my manners? I'm Dag Duh Dug, Dag to my friends. My companions will be along shortly...ah, here they are now."* Dag said as Hibbity and Slyth marched down the ramp. Their blaster rifles were slung onto their backs and they each held a buzzing electro-collar leash.

"What in the..." Lyn started as she saw the person being dragged behind the Trandoshan and Mon Calamari. She hissed in disgust. The human's face was a mess. Congealed blood had caked and cracked over a side of his face where a claw had ripped a line next to his eye. The other side was bruised and swollen. The deep purplish-blue bruise looked like it would rupture at the slightest pressure. The black robe he wore had rips in it, exposing parts of his chest of arms. Clearly the Trandoshan had tried to score some points with the great Scorekeeper with this one.

"You said he just had a bow but, Sithspit, you really dressed him up," Lyn said. "So why should I care about this human?"

*"Simple, this human is a high-ranking member of the Dark Jedi Brotherhood,"* Dag said.

"And?" Lyn asked. She wasn't inclined to spark the ire of the Brotherhood. It was bad enough being hunted down, but it was another thing to invoke the wrath of Sith.

Dag looked confused at the rebuttal. *"And..."* he stammered. *"And, he's working with the Severian Principate. When we captured him he was going on about some masterful plan to cripple the Revenants' activity in this sector."*

*Well,* Lyn thought, *that's a fathier of a different color.* If he had operational details of the Principate and what they knew about the strengths and weaknesses of the Revenants, this was suddenly a very worthwhile prisoner. "Alright, we'll take him," she said. Slyth and Hibbity looked at each other and then down at Dag. "Is there...something else?" she inquired with a mocking look of curiosity.

*"Actually, we had heard of your plight. The treatment by the Principate, the slavery, all of it. We've never taken kindly to people seeking to enforce their will on others. We were wondering if you needed some additional help,"* Dag said.

"If the pay is decent," Hibbity interjected as Dag was finishing. Slyth smacked the Mon Calamari in his head. "Hey," Hibbity blurted out.

Dag sighed, *"Yes, if there is some form of modest compensation for our services."*

Lyn smiled and giggled at the sight of the companions. "Alright, we could use some more help." She gestured to the guards who advanced and took the reins of the electro-leash from Slyth and Hibbity. Kamjin stumbled as they pulled him off to the side of the platform.

*"Excellent. Well, lead the way,"* Dag said and started to move along with Kamjin. Lyn raised her hand, stopping him.

"You're not going with him. We're going to move him immediately. We can't be too careful when dealing with a Sith," Lyn said as she walked towards the ship. "Come on, you can take me to our base and I can get you settled in."

*"I thought this was your base?"* Dag asked.

"Oh no, we just conduct business here," Lyn replied.

*"What about him? I don't want him escaping and you guys not paying us. I want to ensure we get paid."*

"You'll get paid. I promise," Lyn assured him. Slyth hissed and she looked up at him, flashing a dazzling smile. "It's alright suga. I keep my promises."

"Very well," Slyth said, leading the way back up the ramp to the ship.

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The treetops rustled as the freighter lifted off the platform and sped off into the night. Lyn had instructed them to stay close to the canopy, not because they anticipated any attack by the Principate here, but because it was a matter of being good neighbors with the Hutts to not flaunt their presence.

*"You're certain we'll get paid once we reach your base?"* Dag asked as Lyn leaned over next to Slyth, feeding him coordinates to follow. Dag couldn't help but notice the shapely form she had as she arched her back to fit between the two pilot seats. Lyn seemed to have noticed him staring as she turned to look over her lone lekku and winked.

"Of course, you can't expect us to risk letting a Sith into our base. Even one as badly hurt as that one," Lyn said with a smile. "There it is, Slyth, was it? Nestled into that mountain gorge is where you're headed."

"I sssee it," Slyth said as he adjusted the controls. The ship skimmed the trees and broke loose onto the open plain approaching the gorge. Slyth lowered the ship closer to the surface. The grassy plain sped by as the mountain range rose steadily steeper in the viewport.

"I don't see anything," Hibbity said from the rear of the cockpit.

"Of course not, there's no lights on or else everyone could see it. Slyth here just has an advantage with those wonderful Trandoshan eyes," Lyn said, running a finger along Slyth's cranial ridges. Slyth shuddered slightly at the touch but turned and mewed at the Twi'lek.

"Oh, get a room," Hibbity muttered under his breath. Only Tiny seemed to have caught it as she patted him on the leg.

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Kamjin felt the engine exhaust wash over him as the freighter took off. As the glow of the landing lights and engines faded over the edge of trees, the platform was left in near-darkness. Several of the guards had clicked on their gun lamps to give some illumination. With the departure of the ship, the forest came back to life. The avians and insects resumed their evening melody, echoing through the trees.

"Where," Kamjin coughed up some bloody phlegm. "Where am I?" The guards holding the electro-leash yanked Kamjin to the ground. His knees hit hard against the warped metal. If not for the electric leash holding him to the reins in the guards' hands, he'd have fallen face first

onto the ground. Kamjin hissed in pain through gritted teeth. He could hear a guard somewhere in the distance on a comlink, calling in a transport. "Are we going somewhere?"

"Shut up, Sith," the other guard retorted, pulling back on the leash. Kamjin grunted in pain and decided these guards weren't going to be the talkative type. He heard the click of the comlink going off. Kamjin tried to open his eyes to take in his surroundings. His right was closed with dried blood and his left barely opened due to the swelling. Through a concerted effort he was able to take in the rickety platform they were standing upon, but couldn't focus on anything more than a meter ahead of him.

Time passed slowly for Kamjin. He wasn't certain if it had been minutes or an hour before the deep thrum of a ship's engines could be heard. The guards reached under Kamjin's armpits and pulled him roughly to his feet. Nudging him forward, they regained their distance with the electro-leash.

"Walk," the lead guard commanded. Kamjin struggled again to open his eye and noticed the type of transport.

"Are we leaving the planet?" he asked. The guards didn't answer him as they marched forward. "Hey, aren't you going to take me to your leader?" Kamjin now struggled against the leash. "Don't you know who I am? Your leaders will clearly want to interrogate me."

As they marched up the ramp into the ship one of the guards finally took the bait. "Oh, they will," he said. "But first, we're getting you off planet, somewhere your friends can't find you." The ramp began to close as they shoved Kamjin to the floor of the transport. He couldn't help but feel dread at the prospect of heading off into the unknown.

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The hangar had been carved straight into the base of where the two mountain ranges combined together. A tactically strong position where any sort of attack had to come directly at the hangar with its massive anti-ship batteries as any attack from above or to the rear would just be bombarding the mountains. To Dag the hangar seemed like any of a hundred different hangars he'd seen in his lifetime. Cargo crates were stacked in a somewhat orderly manner. A variety of ship types littered the available landing spots. The only consistency seemed to be in a small squadron of Z-95 Headhunters which were landing and taking off with the cargo transports. He figured that those were the only actual Revenant ships here and the rest were outsourced cargo pilots who probably had no idea what they were hauling or for whom.

"Come on, I'll get you squared away with the deck officer and then I'll give you the tour of the place," Lyn said. She had quickly taken a liking to Slyth as she hung on his arm as they exited the *Stomme Naam*. Dag just shook his head. How could that dumb lunk have won over the affection so quickly of that angelic Twi'lek.

"Hi Lyn. New recruits?" a female Quarren asked as she walked over to the ship.

"Ya Emelda, they brought in a great prisoner that'll really help us out and now they're looking for some work," Lyn beamed back. "Can you get them checked into the system for me so I can show them around? You can start with this hunk of a reptile."

"Sure, name please?" Emelda asked.

"Slyth, here's my Guild chaincode," Slyth said, offering a code cylinder. Emelda inserted it into the pad and the information downloaded to her screen.



"Ooo, impressive score. I'm sure the Scorekeeper is quite pleased with you," Emelda said, handing back the cylinder.

"You didn't tell me you were a hunter. I'm not surprised with muscles like these," Lyn said, rubbing Slyth's arm. Dag could have sworn he saw the Trandoshan blush or whatever it was that Trandoshan's do when they're embarrassed. Dag pushed past the two and looked up to the deck officer.

"*Dag Duh Dug*," he said proudly.

"Let me get you logged in here, and what do you do Dag?"

"*Currently I tend a bar, but I'm an explorer and adventurer.*"

"Well, there's definitely a lot to explore here. And how about your friend?" Emelda asked, looking at Hibbity.

"Smuggler, ma'am. Though I prefer to think of myself as an unorthodox delivery service." Hibbity said, carefully avoiding saying his name.

"Oh, Hibbity, don't be coy now," Lyn teased.

"That's actually not my..." Hibbity cut himself off mid sentence. "Hey, where is Tiny?" Everyone started looking around for the little Jawa, except for Emelda who looked puzzled as to who Tiny was.

"*Where could that little Jawa have gotten herself to?*" Dag stated with exasperation.

"Ssshee was with us on the ssship," Slyth added as he lifted up a cargo container to look behind it.

"Where could she have gotten off to?" Lyn asked Hibbity.

"I don't know. She's a curious little Jawa. She probably saw something shiny and wandered off. I'll go look for her and make sure she's safe," Hibbity ran off before Lyn or Emelda could utter a response.

"Oookay," Lyn shook her head to recenter herself. "I'm sure they'll be fine. After all, the base isn't that big and you've got him in the system now, right Em?"

"Ya, you're all good to go. If you'll excuse me, I need to check in the next transport," Emelda said as she waved goodbye to Lyn.

"I guess I'll give you two the grand tour then, Slythy." Lyn grabbed Slyth's clawed hand and began dragging him towards the hangar exit. Dag huffed to himself and followed along behind. Disgruntled to have been forgotten so quickly.

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Kamjin hit the deck hard as he was tossed into the cell. He rubbed his sore wrists now that the electro-binders had been removed. "We didn't go to lightspeed. Are we on another ship in orbit?" he groaned from the floor.

The guards looked at each other. "You do not shut up. Is it impossible for a Sith to actually be quiet?"

"Oh, don't mind me. I talk when I'm nervous."

The guards laughed at that as they left the room and the cell door wooshed down sealing Kamjin in.

*Alright*, he thought. *Now what?* The room was typical of Imperial era ships. The lighting was weirdly situated from the floor and had a reddish hue to it. The back wall of the cell had a

flat metal bench that doubled as a bed. Kamjin crawled his way over and tried to pull himself up onto the bench before collapsing back to the floor.

In the room, the camera whirled and focused on the Sith's attempts to move. Rolling over onto his back, Kamjin breathed deeply trying to center himself through the pain.

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"Get up!" a voice yelled from the darkness. Kamjin wasn't certain where it was coming from and rolled, muttering in his sleep. "Get up!" the voice repeated. This time the world came into sharp focus as a boot connected with his ribs.

Kamjin groaned and curled up into a ball at the strike. "Ugh, alright. I'm up," Kamjin said, holding his hands up in submission. As his vision blurrily tried to focus from his one good eye, he saw the gruff face of a Nosaurian. His beakish snout curled in a scowl. Behind him, two armored humanoids stood at attention by the door with their blasters trained on Kamjin. He scooted himself to sit up, resting his back against the bench.

"Which faction are you aligned with?" the Nosaurian asked.

"I'm sorry, what do you mean?"

"Are you a Restorer or a Harmonist with the Severian Principate?" The Nosaurian was already annoyed with Kamjin.

"I really don't like labels. Where are we?" Kamjin retorted.

"I'm asking the questions here. What are the plans of the Principate?"

"I'm sure they have them, but I don't know if I want to share them with you."

The Nosaurian kicked Kamjin in the gut. As the air left Kamjin he doubled over. "Do you completely fail to grasp the situation you're in?"

"Kinda. Why am I here?" Kamjin answered, spitting out blood. The Nosaurian screamed in frustration.

"You are our prisoner..."

"But prisoner where exactly?"

"On the *Screeching Osprey*, if that really matters, which it doesn't. Where are the Principate forces amassing?"

"What's your name?"

The Nosaurian drew his blaster and pointed it at Kamjin's head. "I am Fefar and if you don't start cooperating, you won't have a head anymore."

"Okay, Fefar, calm down. Look at my face, does it look like it wouldn't be improved by a blaster bolt?" Kamjin gestured towards the still blood-caked half of his head.

Fefar shrugged, keeping the blaster leveled at Kamjin's face. One of the guards behind Fefar stifled a chuckle. Fefar snapped his head around and glared at him and the guard quickly fell back into line.

"Fefar, tell me, are you the captain of the *Screeching Osprey*?"

"No, I'm in charge of you."

"Oh," Kamjin said, nodding. "So, Dwipp Bruskars must be the captain."

"Bruskars? That brute couldn't be trusted at the controls of a ship like this." Fefar actually chuckled at the absurdity of seeing that Rodian brute helming the ship.

"But he'd be nearby? You wouldn't let such a reckless cannon loose just anywhere."

"He's on the planet. Let them deal with him."

Kamjin smiled, "Thank you. Now release me and shoot this fool."

Fefar laughed, "You foolish Sith. I'm not some simple minded fool you can just manipulate." Fefar turned suddenly to his side, his eyes bulged out as he came face to face with a blaster barrel. "Oh kark," were the last words he said before his face was disintegrated by the blaster bolt.

"I wasn't talking to you," Kamjin said, springing to his feet. The other guard, confused by the sudden change of events, fumbled with his blaster. Kamjin gestured towards the befuddled guard and a blaster bolt flew into his chest. Kamjin took the blaster from the turned guard. "Very good," Kamjin said. The bruise on his face subsided noticeably and the caked blood flaked away to reveal a far smaller scraped cut on his face.

"But, you were nearly catatonic," the confused guard stammered.

"All good illusions require a hint of realism. Now you'll tell me what I want to know, right?" Kamjin said, taking the helmet off the guard.

"Yes."

"Where is this ship currently?"

"We're stationed upon the horizon of Dandoran."

"What are you doing here?"

"Offloading cargo and personnel to outfit a base to begin raiding the Principate."

Kamjin gestured to the dead Nosaurian, "Did he tell the truth about Bruskers?"

"Yes."

"Good, give me your access cylinder."

The guard reached into a pocket on his belt and withdrew his command cylinder and handed it to Kamjin. "Thank you, you've been most helpful," Kamjin said, pulling the trigger and sending the guard flying against the wall. *Alright, now to get to the planet*, he thought as he keyed open the door and slipped into the hallway.

\* \* \*

"So, what do you think so far?" Lyn asked. Her lone lekku twitched seductively as she hung on Slyth. They'd gone through the majority of the base like this and Dag was disgusted.

"*We think you've got quite a setup here*," Dag interjected. "*What we need to do is find where Hibbity is and if he's found Tiny yet.*"

"I'm sure they're doing fine," Lyn said. Then, thinking better of it, "You're right, we should head back to the hangar. If Hibbity got lost he'd probably head back to the ship."

"What's behind that door?" Slyth asked, pointing towards a large multi-paneled blast door.

"Oh, since we're here I should show you the command center," Lyn said. She let go of Slyth's arm and he rotated it to get the blood flowing through it again. She inserted her command cylinder and the door slid open. Inside an assortment of various humanoids were busy at work. The command center was designed around a center raised dais where a Rodian with bright violet eyes stood, observing the various monitors.

Dag tugged on Slyth's pant leg and gestured towards the Rodian. Slyth nodded and reached for his blaster rifle. As he raised it to his shoulder and took aim, Lyn turned around. Her bubbly expression fell immediately. "What are you doing?" she stammered.

"It's just business," Slyth said as a tear welled in his eye. Lyn's lekku went ramrod straight as a blaster bolt flew from Slyth's rifle. Lyn screamed, a world shattering screech born from an unexpected betrayal. She tried to close the blast door but it was too late. The bolt scorched past her, heading towards the target. At the last possible moment, the Rodian rolled to the side.

"*Dank farrik, you missed him!*" Dag screamed at Slyth as he pulled his own blaster and dove for cover behind a wall support. Slyth slammed his shoulder into the other wall, trying to get his larger frame behind the opposing support column as a barrage of blaster fire erupted from the command center.

"Sssorry. How was I supposed to know he'd dodge it?" Slyth countered, as he returned fire.

"*I don't know, how about taking more than one potshot while crying to your girlfriend?*"

"Ssshe's not my girlfriend," Slyth growled back at Dag.

"*Not now she's not,*" Dag snarled back as he snapped off several successive shots. Slyth saw Lyn crawl under the blaster fire into the cover of the command center. Within moments of getting situated, she added her own blaster fire to the fray. Her aim was off with the tears in her eyes.

"*Sithspit, we're gonna have to scrub this and get back to the ship,*" Dag shouted over the din of battle. Slyth nodded, reaching behind him, he unclipped a flash grenade. He activated it as he tossed it towards the command center. Dag and Slyth threw their heads into the wall, shielding their eyes as the blinding flash exploded then began to run.

\* \* \*

Kamjin peered down the corridor and confirmed it was empty. Holding the blaster loosely, he sprinted towards the computer terminal. Inserting the command cylinder, he brought up the squadron inventory. Apparently the Z-95s were taking off for another supply escort, but the A-wings were prepped and on standby alert. *Damn, that'll mean the pilots are either in the cockpits or nearby,* he thought.

"Hey, who are you?" a voice drew Kamjin's attention away from the terminal. He looked up casually and saw a crewmember staring at him. "Hey, are you okay? You look hurt. Do you need me to call for a medic?"

*Simple, trusting people,* Kamjin thought. "Come here, friend," He said, putting his best devilish grin on his face. "I'm having some trouble with this terminal." The crewmember warily advanced, as if he was drawn forward against his better judgement.

"What's going on?" the crewman asked.

"First, friend, tell me who you are," Kamjin said, putting a reassuring hand on his shoulder. A gentle, but perceivable squeeze emphasized the request to know who he was.

"I'm Darv..." the crewman started before Kamjin interrupted.

"I'm sorry, not your name. Who are you here? What's your job?"

“Oh,” Darv, something or another said disappointedly. “I’m currently on the maintenance detail response for quality checks.”

“Perfect,” Kamjin said. “Give me your code cylinder.”

“I’m sorry, what?” Darv said, taken aback by the request.

Kamjin stared at Darv, his eyes twinkling with malicious intent. A wicked smile spread across his face as he squeezed his hand deeper into Darv’s shoulder. “Your code cylinder. Now.” Darv’s eyes glazed over. He reached into his sleeve pocket and withdrew his code cylinder, offering it to Kamjin. “Thank you, Darv.”

Kamjin replaced the guard’s cylinder with the maintenance one. Flipping through a few screens, he started entering a series of commands. “What are you doing?” Darv asked.

“Nothing important. See, all done,” Kamjin replied, swapping the code cylinders again. Looking through the guard’s security access, he pulled up the location for the base on the planet below. Kamjin took special note of the coordinates before switching to an external communication line and sent a short burst transmission. He ripped the cylinder out and shoved both into a pocket of his robe.

“Alright, Darv,” Kamjin said, shoving the blaster into unexpecting hands. “Time for you to play security guard. Now take me to the hangar.”

\* \* \*

Hibbity was lost. He was certain he’d walked past that control console for the fifteenth time. *Why did she have to wander off*, he thought to himself before a string of Mon Calamari curses ran through his head. *Maybe she’s back at the ship? Maybe Dag and Slyth are back at the ship and they can help me look*. So far the base had seemed like any other resistance-type base he’s seen. Some members were old, some young. Some with an idealistic look in their eyes, fighting for a righteous cause. Others were clearly there to punish someone for the pain they’ve been forced to endure. Their clothing was mismatched, their weapons a mix of cutting-edge, newly smuggled ordnance while others held rusty weapons from the Clone Wars or earlier.

*You know, I could make a hefty sum running weapons for these people*, he thought as he rounded the corner. “Hey, have any of you seen a Jawa? About this tall,” Hibbity said gesturing to the approximate height of the Jawa. A mechanic, eating noodles from a disposable cup, looked up and shook his head. “Thanks anyways.” Shuffling past the mechanic, Hibbity looked down the exposed access tunnel and thought he heard a familiar voice echoing.

“Where does this tunnel lead?” Hibbity asked the mechanic.

“Pretty much anywhere in the base. I’m working on the power regulators. We’ve been getting some energy drops lately to various systems. Probably some native rodent chewing on the cables. I’d really like to know why so many planets have energy-eating species.” Hibbity shrugged, turning his head so his ear was pointed towards the shaft. The mechanic stared at him, “What are you...” Hibbity put a flippered hand up to silence him. The mechanic slurped some noodles as he watched the odd Mon Calamari.

“Did you hear that?” Hibbity said.

“Hear what?”

Hibbity entered the access tunnel, squeezing through the entryway into the larger area behind. "Hey, you can't go in there!" the mechanic shouted.

*Blow it out your blowhole*, Hibbity thought. He knew what he heard. If the outside of the base had been a maze, the inside of it was impassable. Everything looked the same and Hibbity couldn't make sense of the multiple language indicators on the different pipes and conduit. "TINY!" he yelled, his voice echoing through the tunnel. "Are you in here?" He stopped, craning his ears for the faintest sound. Somewhere off in the distance he heard the clanking sound of metal on metal. *That little Jawa...daughter of a bantha, she's in here, alright.*

He pushed on, squeezing past outcropped pipes, ducking others, and contorting himself in a variety of poses to continue on. *That little Jawa probably danced her way through here.* Reaching an access shaft, he puzzled whether the Jawa would have gone up or down. As he rubbed his head trying to figure out which way to go, he saw a faint light, as if some electrical component had been ripped from its port, sending out the briefest shower of sparks. *Of course she went up*, he thought, exasperated as he began to climb the narrow shaft.

After several levels of climbing, Hibbity's head breached the latest floor only to connect with a falling pipe. "Owww!" he screamed as he slipped down several rungs of the shaft ladder.

"Ny shootogawa!"

"Tiny? Tiny is that you? I'm not going to shoot you, calm down," Hibbity said climbing back up the shaft and sitting on the tunnel's ledge. "How did you get so lost that you ended up in a place like this?" he asked. As his head cleared he looked around Tiny and saw that numerous conduits had been exposed and a plethora of wires had been pulled out. Most had some sort of splice in them while others had been cut clear in two. "Tiny..." Hibbity drew out the name. "What are you doing? Did they give you a job working on repairs already?"

The Jawa tilted her head. Hibbity searched his mind for the word, "Umm, Kurruzza?" The Jawa laughed at him and shook her head and went back to pulling out more conduit. "Tiny, I don't know if you should be doing this. Let's get back with Dag and Slyth and figure out what we're going to be doing here." A commlink started to chirp. "Tiny, what is that?"

The Jawa dropped the conduit and started rummaging through her various pouches and bags until she held aloft a commlink victoriously. She keyed it on and a short burst phrase came through, "Ha'mfoo bopom kova."

"Hamafu, bopum...Tiny what did that say?" Hibbity asked, shaking his head trying to understand the Jawaese.

Looking at the Jawa Hibbity swore he saw a smile under the hood and the glowing amber eyes as she replied gleefully, "Ha'mfoo bopom kova."

At the same time an alarm klaxon began to wail, "Alert, intruders attacking the Command Center. All personnel, to arms."

"What is that!?" Hibbity screamed over the blaring alarm

"Bopom koba ashuna ha'mfoo," Tiny said again as she held two conduits up.

"Tiny...Tiny, what are you going to do?" Hibbity asked, worriedly.

"Bopom kova ashuna ha'mfoo..." Tiny said again under her breath as she brought the two conduits together. A shower of sparks erupted and the Jawa flew back into the wall of the tunnel. All along the tunnel sparks erupted at any connection point. Flames started to ignite and spread. Hibbity grabbed Tiny, scooping her up into his arms.

"I don't know what's going on here, but we've gotta go." Situating the Jawa with one arm, he slid down the shaft.

\* \* \*

The mechanical smell of the hangar filled Kamjin's nostrils. *Ahh, I never get tired of that smell*, he thought. As soon as he saw the open hangar doors he knew he was on a Quasar Fire-class ship. *All the better, no hangar door to have to blast through*. Walking casually he kept his hands above his head as the maintenance crew member kept the blaster jabbed into his back.

The hangar crew were busy prepping another transport shuttle. Judging from the containers, it looked to be mostly foodstuffs and other provisions. The Z-95s weren't in the hangar and Kamjin figured they were either still at the base or making their way back to the ship. He turned and headed towards the port side hangar where the A-wings were situated for ready action. He quickly tallied the ship's compliment in his head. Usually two to four ships per transport, assume one on the ground and one being prepped. Two A-wings sat ready on the deck. Probably at least six flying patrols meant nearly thirty-eight in the hangar decks waiting to be brought into action. He'd have to move fast if this was going to work.

"Keep up, Darv," he whispered, accelerating his pace. Thankfully, the hangar crews were too busy with their tasks or otherwise confident that their ship was secure that no one had given them a second glance. For a moment Kamjin felt hopeful that they'd pull this off without incident. Then a hangar crew member approached them.

"Hey, Darvian, what are you doing with this prisoner?" a female Rodian asked.

"I am escorting the prisoner," Darvian replied in a monotone manner.

"Really? Why? Did you get promoted to the security detail?" she asked, looking puzzled.

"I am escorting the prisoner," Darvian replied in the same manner.

"Are you okay? You don't sound like yourself," she asked.

"He's fine, just having a rough day," Kamjin offered with a grin.

The Rodian's lips curled in distrust, "Why are you talking, prisoner?" Kamjin rolled his eyes. *Does she only speak in questions?*

"Just trying to help poor Darv...ian, out here. It's his first day as a guard," Kamjin offered by way of explanation.

"Sheeva, what's going on down there?" the ready action A-wing pilot asked as he poked his head out of the cockpit.

"Darvian's got a prisoner here and is acting funny. Better call it in, Clef," she replied, reaching for her blaster pistol. Kamjin reacted faster, bringing his hands down, he sent the Rodian forcefully flying back into the A-wing. The crunching sound of her skull fracturing brought the pilot scrambling up in the cockpit so he could pull his blaster. Kamjin flipped his hands over and the cockpit canopy came crashing down on the pilot, knocking him out and sending him tumbling out of the ship. Kamjin whirled around on Darvian and took the blaster from him. Without even a thank you for playing the part of a patsy, Kamjin shot him. As he crumpled, an alarm started to blare.

"Prisoner escape on the hangar deck," rang out from the intercom. The various crew members in the hangar looked up from their duties and started searching for the prisoner.

Kamjin squeezed off several shots towards the racks of armaments. The restraint broke loose and the missiles began to roll freely onto the deck. Kamjin spread out his fire until he connected squarely with a warhead, setting it off.

The explosion sent several crew members and supplies flying into the air. "Fire! Fire in the hangar deck," came blaring over the intercom. Kamjin used the distraction to sprint towards the A-wing. Chucking the blaster away, he scrambled up the deck ladder and dropped into the cockpit.

"Fire suppression system isn't activating," came a cry as several crew members tried to get the fire under control with only handheld extinguishers. Kamjin quickly brought the A-wing to life, lifting it up onto its repulsorlifters. As the cockpit canopy came down and sealed itself, he spun the ship towards the transport. Squeezing the trigger, he sent dual laser cannon blasts screeching across the hangar. The transport was rocked onto its side, erupting in flames. The fuel line was ripped from its mounting, spraying fuel across the hangar. As the fuel connected with the flaming wreckage of the transport it became a flame spout, spreading flames wildly across the hangar.

"Get to the shut-off valve! Get to the shut-off valve!" the duty officer screamed.

"It's not working! The shut-off valve is locked in maintenance mode to purge the fuel," came the response.

"How is that possible?" were the final words of the duty officer as the fuel pods beneath the deck started to explode. Kamjin continued his spin, opening the throttle and bursting forth into space.

\* \* \*

"What is happening down there?" the captain screamed at his crew.

"Unknown, sir. The fire suppression system has been taken offline," the response came. The ship lurched violently forward and new alarms sounded across the bridge.

"Report!" the captain yelled over the alarms.

"Fuel pods are rupturing beneath the hanger."

"Shut down the fuel lines between the pods," the captain ordered. The crew member entered a flurry of commands.

"I can't! It's locked in maintenance mode for purging fuel."

"How is that possible! Quick dump all the ordnance into space and get the ships into space." Again, a flurry of commands were punched into the crewman's consoles. An A-wing zoomed across the command deck.

"Who's in that A-wing?" the captain asked. The crew went through the duty log as the A-wing swung around off the bow of the ship. The captain stared it down as he saw two orange streaks of concussion missiles fly towards them.

"Abandon ship!" he said as the bridge was blasted open to space.

\* \* \*

Kamjin switched the weapons back over to lasers as he watched the command crew get pulled into the vacuum of space. The explosions in the hangar accelerated and the engines



sputtered and went out. Since the ship was hanging so close to the horizon the gravity well instantly grabbed it and began pulling it towards the planet.

*That worked better than I thought,* he mused as the ship continued to pitch forward and accelerate its descent. His radar chirped as the patrolling A-wings came into radar range. Kamjin quickly flew his craft into the growing debris field as the carrier began to break apart and the flames of it entering the atmosphere created a blurred streak of fire across the sky. Kamjin threw all the power into the shields and let the Force take control as the patrol streaked by taking in the destruction.

*This better work!* Kamjin thought as his craft was buffeted in the turbulent reentry.

\* \* \*

*“We’re almost to the hangar,”* Dag screamed over the blaster fire. After the initial flash had worn off, the command center had emptied after them. Somehow they were lucky that it seemed the internal communication system was down as only those who saw the running firefight joined in.

*“This seems to easy,”* Slyth said as he blasted a control panel, bringing a door crashing shut. Dag looked up at Slyth in disbelief.

*“You consider this easy?”* Dag said. As soon as the words left his mouth the lights went out. Within moments the base shook. The lights exploded and control panels were overloaded and sprang off the walls.

*“Kark, Tiny...not now”* Dag screamed, throwing his feet over his head to protect it from the shower of sparks. Slyth scooped Dag up and sprinted through the remainder of the hallway as the Revenants came spilling out of the various rooms to escape the destruction.

Hibbity came pushing out of an access tunnel as Slyth and Dag came running by. *“Guys, why are you running?”* Hibbity asked.

*“Move it, fish, or fry,”* Dag yelled from down the corridor as a blaster bolt impacted near Hibbity.

*“Oh, kark!”* Hibbity yelled as he ducked his head and tucked Tiny in closer and raced after his companions. Slyth and Dag had already made it into the hangar and were halfway to the ship when Hibbity started to catch up. The hangar’s ceiling was engulfed in flames. Rafters were breaking loose and crashing down as their supports melted. Crewmembers raced to try and get their ships into the air. A Z-95 lifted off and started to flee when an explosion sent the roof crashing down upon it.

*“This is worse than that job on Anoat,”* Hibbity screamed at Dag and Slyth as they raced up the ramp of their ship. A blaster shot went searing past his head. Risking a look behind him, he saw a greenish-yellow Rodian glaring at them and firing a particularly nasty-looking DG-29. Hibbity hit the ramp and slapped the close button. He gingerly placed Tiny down on the floor and raced into the cockpit.

*“What’s with the Rodian?”* Hibbity asked.

*“Slyth bungled the shot.”* Dag responded.

*“Bungled the shot? Why did he shoot him?”* Hibbity asked as Slyth and Dag rushed to power up the ship.

*"Because that was the plan."* Dag shot back. *"Now go strap Tiny in. We're going to be blasting out of here."*

"Plan? The plan was to deliver Kamjin and collect a sweet payday and then hang around and see what else we could learn."

"No, that was your plan," Slyth added as he began to lift the freighter off the ground.

*"Hibbity, we didn't tell you the whole plan because he thought you'd sell us out for extra credits."*

"I would never..."

*"Uh-huh, what about that time on Bespin?"* Dag interjected.

"Well, that was..."

*"And that time on Tatooine."*

"That was more of a triple-cross."

"You have a problem with credits, Hibbity," Slyth added, spinning the ship around.

"We're all in this for the money," Hibbity defended himself.

"Toineepas," Tiny added questioningly.

"Tiny! You're awake!" Hibbity said joyfully, scooping the tiny Jawa up in his arms and giving her a massive hug. "What in the world were you doing in there?" Tiny launched into a rapid explanation that Hibbity couldn't keep up with.

"Slow down, slow down. I can't keep up."

*"She's saying she took care of her part of the plan."* Dag said. Slyth and Dag both pushed the throttle forward as they shot out of the hangar. Slyth banked hard as an A-wing appeared from above the hangar ceiling.

"What was that?" Hibbity screamed as they were rocked to the side by the sudden maneuver.

*"If we're lucky, that's the end of the plan."* Dag said.

\* \* \*

Kamjin lowered the A-wing gracefully down from above the mountain edge. Thankfully Slyth had reacted in time and missed connecting with him. Kamjin stared into the fiery mountain hangar. Reaching out he saw the Rodian standing, screaming in anger upon the hangar as he tried to mobilize the fighters to give chase.

"Goodbye, Brusksars," Kamjin said as he thumbed the fire selector over to concussion missiles and let several volleys fly into the hangar. The explosions rocked the mountain range, causing an avalanche to crash down the mountain, sealing in the hangar. Kamjin keyed the comm on. "Dag, great job in there. I'll meet you at the rendezvous."

*"You owe us double, Kamjin,"* Dag responded.

In the background, Kamjin could hear Hibbity screaming, "You mean to tell me you didn't even collect the bounty on Kamjin before you started shooting? What were you thinking in there? Slyth, you need to think with your brain and not be distracted by a pretty girl!"

"Dag, you know I don't speak Huttese. I'll see you soon," he laughingly said and deactivated the comm. Pulling up on the yoke, he opened the throttle and formed off on the starboard side of the freighter as they escaped the planet.

## Epilogue

“And that was the plan,” Kamjin said, sipping on an ale back in Dag’s bar. Hibbity stared at him in disbelief. Tiny sat next to Hibbity, comically wrapped in bandages on the outside of her brown robes. Dag laughed from the bar as Slyth walked over with another round of drinks.

“He knew you wouldn’t believe it,” Slyth said, passing out the drinks.

“I still don’t believe you didn’t trust me enough to share the plan with me,” Hibbity said, taking the offered drink from Slyth.

“Well, don’t blame them, Hibbity. It was my idea. I know you’ve got a bit of a credit problem,” Kamjin said, as he thanked Slyth and took the next drink.

“So the whole point of this was to take out a single Revenant leader?”

“Yes, though they gave us a surprising gift by taking me to their ship instead of just taking me directly to him for questioning. That was a surprisingly insightful tactical move on their part and it would have really put us in a bind if not for Tiny here,” Kamjin toasted the little Jawa who lifted her own bottle back, which looked massive in comparison to her size.

“Tiny, you never cease to amaze me,” Hibbity said, patting her on the head. “So, Kamjin, when do we get paid?” Kamjin downed his drink and stood up.

“Would you look at the time? I should be getting back,” Kamjin said, tossing a few credits on the table.

*“Kamjin, when are we going to get paid?”* Dag said from the bar.

Kamjin was already heading out the door as he said over his shoulder, “Dag, you know I don’t speak Huttese.”

*“Sithspit, get him, Slyth!”* Dag screamed. Kamjin laughed as the table was pushed over as Slyth, Hibbity, and Tiny came chasing after him.