

## High Value Target

Edema and her cousin had been contracted to eliminate some of these crystal monsters and recover the crystals used in their creation. Both of them knew this would be a tough task. Holo's of previous attempts showed the brute force offensive and defensive abilities they possessed, from Force barriers to focused Force lightning. Jor'ana had suggested a brute force approach, plenty of firepower followed by a withering multi point assault. The creatures, while powerful, seemed to lack much in the way of intelligence, so attacking from various angles could give them the edge they needed. The pair departed and headed for where their target would be.

Shambling around like something out of a horror holo vid, the two crystal ascendants shuffled through the grounds of the former Imperial Depot. The Shattered remains of the depot looked like the skeleton of some mighty metal creature, the bombed out remains of the once proud Dandoran Facility now an overgrown shadow of its former self. Various grunts and screeches could be heard from the crystal creatures, their former voices now devolved by the crystal mutations.

The two Sephi, along with their faithful droids, dived through the atmosphere in their ship. The plan was, in theory, simple. KayCee would drop them off in their assault skimmer and allow them to find a suitable position from where they could see their target. Once in place, and when he was given the order, KayCee would begin his attack runs on the targets. The heavy laser cannons and the newly fitted missile launcher would, in theory, at least slow down or maybe, if they were lucky, kill one or more of their targets.

Landing some distance away from the depot, the shuttle deposited the pair of Dark Jedi and climbed away, ready to begin its attack run. Sat in the functional yet comfortable confines of the cabin of their ULAV, the pair prepared for the coming fight while trying to find the perfect overlook point. It didn't take much for Edema to sense the Ascendant beasts in the distance; the Force practically flowed from them. The Equite really needed to get her hands on some of these crystals. After a quick recon of the area, a wooded hill was chosen that gave a suitable overlook of the depot and the two horrifying creatures that shuffled around the outside of the ruins. Jor'ana got out and collected her equipment and weapons, making her way to the far side of the hill where the view was the best for her rifle, Edema moved the skimmer to the opposite side, the terrain there was more open but was also flatter, giving her a far better line of site for the Laser Cannon on the rear of her vehicle, once she stopped, she spun the ULAV three sixty so that the bug gun was facing the target and got it charged and ready.

Down in the depot, the mutated shambler's seemed unaware of what was happening on the hill, their minds or rather what was left of them focused entirely on their task, whatever that turned out to be. The dust billowed with each of their clumsy steps, blown by the light breeze that flowed through the area. They paid little notice when a ship began to descend near them. One turned to look, its vacant eyes seemingly trying to work out if it was a threat or not. It never got the chance. A dozen heavy laser bolts followed by a pair of concussion missiles slammed into it, followed by a repeat of the same. KayCee was taking no chances with this target. The ground was enveloped in fire and smoke from the multiple impacts and explosions, shockwaves from the concussion charges rippling through the ground and air, throwing building debris around as if it was just small pebbles. The second creature was far enough away to be out of the blast radius, it reacted quicker than its brethren, erecting a force dome to protect itself from attack and following it with arcing blasts of

force lightning. The lightning flared against the ships shields, threatening to overload them but KayCee pulled up and out of range before that could occur.

The pair of Arconan's watched the attack running from their vantage points. The noise and shockwave from the detonation of the missiles and blasts from the cannons was loud, even at their distant point. Edema watched through her weapon sight as the dust and smoke began to dissipate, flames still littering the area. But what of the creature? Surely even these beasts couldn't survive such an onslaught?

The crystal beast was still alive, but only just, its body shattered and wrecked. It crawled using its remaining arm, the crystals desperately trying to grow and repair the devastated body of their host. It need not have bothered. A dull triple crack echoed around the area as three rounds ploughed through the creature's head and upper torso. Its brain and what organs it had left were finished and the creature slumped to the ground, dead.

Edema swung her scope over to the other creature, wondering how on earth they were going to kill this one. This beast was clearly somewhat more intelligent than its former comrade. It had reacted to the shuttle attack far faster and with more aggression than they had expected. This was not going to be easy.

The plan had been for the shuttle attack to cripple one or both of them, allowing their smaller weapons to finish the job. Now it seemed the task at hand was much more difficult. Edema spoke to her cousin over their com and outlined her new plan. Jor'ana thought it was reckless and suicidal but admitted that she couldn't think of another plan that would actually work. Edema instructed her droid to keep its hand on the trigger of the main cannon and to not stop firing until the weapon overheated. It was carefully aimed at the creature's rough location, but she knew it would take more than that to stop it.

The plan was simple, if suicidal; Jor would start to send rounds at the target, guiding them with the force to allow them to impact at different angles and sides. Pr3D31t3R would keep the main cannon firing in the general direction of the target, forcing it to react to multiple angles of attack. With its force lightning abilities, they didn't want to risk the shuttle again, so that support option was out. The final phase of the plan was for Edema to close on the prey, using her abilities, weapons and training, unleash a withering attack at close quarters, forcing the beast to have more things to react to than it should be able to cope with.

The Mandalorian skidded down the hill just as the onslaught began. The crack of Jor's rifle could be heard; sending its lethal rounds hurtling towards their prey. With her skill at guiding rounds in, there was little chance of the creature avoiding them. Immediately, the Ascendant reacted, a wall of force energy erecting between it and the incoming sniper rounds, Jor made its life difficult by altering the trajectory of each round, forcing it to move its barrier frequently to block the incoming rounds. Then the second phase started, 'Pred squeezed the trigger on the aft cannon of the ULAV sending streams of high powered plasma energy surging towards the beast.

The creature had to make a snap decision, keep deflecting the incoming rounds from the sniper or move to deflect the plasma energy that was now incoming. It chose the plasma energy as they had hoped. The laser bolts slammed harmlessly against the force barrier, but each volley was visibly

weakening the strength of it. As this was happening, Jor's rounds were guided with perfection into the creatures waiting flesh, punching through skin, crystal and bone alike. The crystals quickly healed the damaged area, but more rounds were coming, forcing the crystals to react more and more with repairs.

Edema stalked towards her prey, making sure her weapons were primed and ready, especially her latest toy, a gift from the armouries of the Shadow Academy, an ancient but lethal Lanvarok. Its blades had been laced with debilitating poisons, not immediately lethal but with enough that a person would find breathing and moving increasingly difficult and eventually impossible. The monster was weathering the barrage of weapons well, but she could clearly see the sheer level of effort was weakening its enhanced abilities. It was then she chose to strike. The Dark Jedi leapt from her hiding place and unleashed a volley of weapons fire that would cause even other Mandalorians to run for cover, laser energy surged from her wrist lasers, throwing blades arced towards their prey and the Lanvarok spat disks of spinning death at the target.

On the hill, Jor'ana watched the creature as her round punched home, each one picking an area that had previously been repaired, focusing on debilitating her target. She pulled the trigger and felt the recoil thud into her shoulder as the round was kicked out the barrel. Waiting until it neared the target, she then grabbed it with the Force, slewing it around, slamming it into the head of the prey, staggering it once again. From the corner of her sights she could make out her cousin beginning her attack, Edema would have to time this to perfection to prevent being vaporised by the laser cannon fire from her own vehicle, Pred was good but he was also a sadistic little sod who would probably find shooting his owner rather amusing, though he would never want to kill his owner.

The crystal monster shuddered as the laser bolts, knives and poisoned disks thudded and sliced into its crystal encrusted flesh, some glanced off but enough dug in to make the creature notice. The poison from the blades flooding through its system, the creature staggered, momentarily shocked, its reactions dulled enough that it dropped its barrier, not for long, but it was long enough. Laser cannon bolts slammed into it followed by rounds from Jor, the creature staggered backwards as its body attempted to react and repair.

Edema sensed her moment and threw her sabers in a gliding arc, their purple blades glowing as they sliced through crystal and flesh alike. The beast attempted to use its own blade against them, but Edema dissuaded it with a volley from her lanvarok. The lightsabers slashed again as their graceful arcs returned them to Edema's hands. She com'd to her droid to stop firing, to which he gave a reluctant series of beeps, but did as he was told and once the lasers had stopped, she closed in for the kill.

Now up close, she could see the creature for what it was. It was a tortured humanoid form, with red crystals growing from its flesh, reaching out momentarily with the Force. She could almost feel a cry for help from the being that had existed before, but it was quickly silenced. The Savant was taking no chances, even though the creature was on the floor, and trying to get up and recover from the hail of fire it had taken. She didn't want it to be given any chances.

Flicking the activators on her flamethrowers, she raised her arms and unleashed plumes of superheated death. She bathed the creature in flame and fire, washing the hot cloud over the area.

The creature screamed and screeched, its pain was obvious, as the flames engulfed it until its attacker ran out of fuel.

The Hunter looked upon the charred area and the blackened creature within it, even now; she could see the crystals trying to repair the devastated flesh, its blackened hand attempting to rise up. The creature sent forth a lance of force lightning, but Edema caught it effortlessly on one of her blades, it was clear from this attack that the creature was significantly debilitated so it was time to close for the kill.

The creature looked up at her and uttered some unintelligible garble from its ruined mouth, she didn't care. She put her blades at its neck and scissored its head from its shoulders, forever ending its threat. The smell of its burned flesh faintly intruding on her helmet, any more of the smell and she would have retched in her helmet, it was vile.

The Sephi stood and looked at the charred creature that lay before her, it had taken an incredible amount of firepower to take it down, thank the force there had only been two of them here because she knew others had been sighted elsewhere. It wasn't long before her cousin and Pred joined her with the skimmer. Pred beeped something rude and derogatory as he always did after a battle, but Edema ignored him and began to harvest the crystals from the two bodies, The clan leaders as well as the various departments of the Brotherhood were eager for as many of them as they could acquire, and Edema herself wanted a few... for her latest weapons experiments for Arcona.

The battle had gone better than they had hoped, neither of them actually expected to succeed in the mission, let alone actually survive but as always, the force had guided them to victory. Once back on the shuttle they packed away their bounty and Edema set a few crystals to one side, in a shielded casing, she wanted to take no chances with these crystals. On returning to their home they exited hyperspace only to be greeted by the foreboding images of *The Will of our Lady* and *The Invicta III*, clearly Arcona was taking no chances with these crystals, and upon docking they were escorted under heavy guard to a secure location. Both Sephi looked up towards the command room and saw the boss lady, Lucine, gesturing for them to head up, it was debriefing time and then hopefully they would both get a chance to have a rest, they looked at each other and laughed, as if that ever happens.