

“What is that thing?” A terrified Harmonist sergeant asked in a hushed tone as Turel Sorenn closed the door behind them.

The Jedi had no answers for his makeshift comrades, a mixture of Tenixir and Principate. This cantina storeroom for what had been part of the Garganta Galleria Casino Hotel would not hold for long. Six soldiers remained of a squad of twelve. Whatever that crystal monstrosity was it moved with unnatural speed.

“I wish I knew,” Turel replied as he readied his lightsaber. Whatever that thing was it was strong in the Force and the Jedi’s illusions or attempts to affect its mind were minimally effective at best. It was like trying to dupe a beast. Single minded aggression focused into a razor-sharp edge. It was like nothing else he had sensed in the currents of the Force. Even the dark siders in the various factions would be given pause by such a creature.

Erratic thrashing sounds and shattering glass echoed from the main cantina floor outside. Turel could feel the creature clumsily reaching through the Force, searching. He took a deep breath and knew what he had to do.

“Where are you going,” the Twi’lek sergeant asked nervously.

“I’m going to try to lead that thing away from here, if you get a chance you get clear.”

The Principate trooper nodded, then glanced down at his beleaguered squad. Moving the wounded would be a challenge but the veteran understood staying put wasn’t an option. Their best chance was to get out of the hotel and find an EVAC point. Probably the roof.

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Turel cracked the door open and slid behind the bar as fast as he could. The creature saw him. He tried in vain to conjure an illusory doppelganger to distract his opponent but the Ascended ignored it.

The Ascended which had trapped the Jedi and the squad in the storeroom had been a Shistavanen. Frightening under normal circumstances for those not used to the wolf-like sentients but enhanced with the strange crimson crystals the beast that had once been a person moved with unnatural speed and wielded the Force in a haphazard, but powerful way.

“Here boy, want a treat?” Turel jested as he stood up. He was terrified but wasn’t going to let a good pun go to waste. Normally he wouldn’t dare make such a speciesist remark but this was a high stress situation and his human-centric prejudices flowed to the surface.

The creature responded with a slash that sent a volley of cerulean Force lightning in the Jedi’s direction. Turel caught the blast with his saber, grounding it out, and readied his saber again with a flourish. He quickly scanned his surroundings looking for the exits, thankfully there were

two. The Sentinel backed toward the exit furthest from the storeroom, keeping the creature directly in front of him.

Turel reached out through the Force to try to seize the Shista's body in a tight stasis. At first, it seemed to work. He could feel the entity struggling against his grip. But then the crystals protruding from the Ascended's shoulder began to glow that much brighter and a wave of dark side energy almost knocked Turel down. The beast was free.