

STAR WARS

DARKNESS RISING

5-05: WAR & INFLUENCE

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Throughout the galaxy there exists an underworld of competing criminal gangs. Now Teron Sharr begins to target some of these, aiming to increase his strength by taking control of them directly whether their current leaders agree or not....

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1.

The pirate vessel lurked among the dozens of moons of the gas giant, waiting for a suitable target to present itself. The subsystem of moons was home to numerous outposts and colonies and the large number of transport ships that moved passengers and cargo between them provided rich pickings to the pirates but better than the contents of the small vessels that travelled between the moons and space stations were the larger hyperspace capable vessels that carried cargoes to and from the system and it was one such vessel that the pirates now observed as it lumbered towards the gas giant at the centre of the subsystem.

"Look at the size of that. If she's full then the cargo will be worth a fortune." the pirate navigator said as he "She's moving slow. She must be full." the pirate captain told the other four pirates on their vessel's flight deck, "Helm give me an intercept course that will give them as little warning as possible."

"Already plotted captain. They'll pass by the fourth moon in about six minutes at their present speed. I can have us there in two and we can get a hard seal without even having to fire a shot." the helmsman replied and the captain nodded.

"Good. Go for it. In an hour I want to be taking my pick of what cargo we fill our hold with." he said.

The pirate vessel moved nimbly around the gas giant's moons, keeping out of the way of the transport before suddenly swinging back towards it while the two vessels were hidden from one another by the gas giant's fourth moon and the pirate ship came to a halt.

"All hands this is the captain, stand by for a boarding action." the captain said into the intercom and elsewhere in the ship just over twenty pirates rushed towards one of the air locks, arming themselves and putting on vacuum suits just in case their intended target either tried flushing their atmosphere to suffocate the boarding party or lacked a type I atmosphere to begin with.

When the transport vessel came over the lunar horizon the pirate ship's helmsman engaged the ion drive at maximum thrust, speeding towards the target while the comscan operator began to broadcast a jamming signal that would prevent the target from sending a distress signal. Before the transport's crew had the chance to take evasive action the pirate ship locked a tractor beam onto it that drew the two vessels together before finally making contact, thanks to the skill of the pirate helmsman their airlocks were aligned and the boarding party as given the signal to go.

Opening their own airlock, the pirates easily overrode the controls to their target's own air lock and then rushed aboard. However, it was at that moment that they discovered that their target was not all that they had assumed it was as a figure wearing heavily ornamental armour stepped out of the shadows and swung an ancient looking sword at the lead pirate that sliced through the base of his helmet and decapitated the man.

Another pirate responded by firing his blaster at the armoured figure but despite the antiquated appearance of the armour it proved quite capable of stopping even a blaster bolt fired from point blank range. The armoured figure was not alone either and a second individual appeared. This was a young man wearing dark clothing and with a stern expression on his face. There was a 'snap-hiss' as this man strode towards the pirates and a glowing red blade extended from the rod shaped object he held in one hand.

"Jedi!" one of the pirates exclaimed when he saw this, failing to appreciate that a jedi's lightsaber blade would generally be either blue or green but never red.

Nevertheless the pirates fell back towards their own ship as more of the transport's crew appeared carrying blasters of their own and they opened fire on the pirates. However, the crew of the transport were obviously trying to avoid inflicting large numbers of deaths among the pirates as they drove them back to their own ship. The sword and lightsaber wielding warriors did not stop their advance when they reached the air lock, pushing onwards into the pirate ship.

Once aboard the pirate ship the warriors armed with the sword and lightsaber made their way towards the bridge while their crew spread out to hunt down the rest of the crew and the captain ordered the bridge sealed. This was not much of a barrier to the pair though and the lightsaber wielding man plunged his weapon into the armoured door and began to cut through. When the door collapsed the pirate captain fired his blaster at the intruders but each shot he fired was deflected harmlessly away into a bulkhead where it did no damage. Then the lightsaber wielding figure proved he had more than just the weapon of a jedi as he reached out his hand and used the Force to pull the blaster from the captain's grip, after which he advanced on the startled man and held out his weapon so that the tip of the blade was just short of the captain's throat. "My name is Teron Sharr." the young man with the lightsaber said, "Your ship and its contents are now mine. Order your crew to surrender and they may yet live if they agree to serve me."

Returning to his own vessel Teron made his way to a private communication suite where he knelt before a holographic communication panel.

"Master." he said as the image of a hooded humanoid being appeared in front of him.

"Was your assignment successful my young apprentice?" the hologram asked.

"It was my master." Teron answered, "The pirate crew was easily overcome and then encouraged to follow us. Our army grows larger and stronger."

"But not large or strong enough. Enticing small bands of renegades into your service is not enough. An army needs an officer corps. In the days leading up to the end of the last great war between the Sith and the Republic there were enough Sith to lead our army but we do not have that luxury now. No matter how many of these small bands of criminals you recruit you will always have the same thing, a rabble."

"I have Krovak." Teron said.

"Krovak is thug. A weapon to be wielded like any other but he is not a leader. Even those that command the bands of outlaws you have been able to tempt into your service so far lack the ability and experience necessary to command anything more than a small number of troops and none know how to organise and maintain an army. Neither do you for that matter Teron." the hooded hologram said.

"Then what do you command my master?" Teron responded.

"Your foot soldiers do not need to know who they fight for or why. All that matters is that they fight. Turn the leader of an army and you will command it. No go, return only when you have a real army to present to me." the hooded figure ordered and then it abruptly faded away to nothing.

Teron got back to his feet and exited the communication room, heading for a nearby lounge where he found Krovak, the man who had worn the ornate armour during the fight with the pirates, sat eating while being watched by woman who appeared human apart from the solid black orbs in her eye sockets. She too had a plate of food in front of her but she just picked at it rather than gobbling it down quickly like Krovak now that he needed to replace the calories burned while wearing the Sith armour.

"So what did he have to say?" Krovak asked.

"He demands greater progress." Teron said as he sat down and grabbed hold of some of the food laid out on the table and Krovak snorted.

"He always demands greater progress. Not that I've seen him make any progress in anything." he said.

"You have only ever seen a hologram." the woman with the black eyeballs said calmly and Krovak glared at her.

"Is that supposed to be a joke Mara? I didn't think that worm thing inside you had a sense of humour." he said.

"A statement of fact, that is all." Mara replied.

"My master wants an army." Teron said.

"Isn't that what we're building?" Krovak asked.

"We are recruiting fighters, yes. But an army is more than that. An army is an organisation and that is something we lack." Teron said, repeating what his master had told him.

"So what are we supposed to do to get organised?" Krovak said.

"You are building your army from criminals." a wheezing voice said from the doorway behind Krovak as another figure entered the room. Although this being appeared humanoid he was a gen'dai, a largely formless mass of muscle that maintained a humanoid shape only because of the rigid suit he wore to cover his body, "For an organised army you must recruit from organised crime."

"Is that how the ancient Sith did it?" Krovak asked.

"The Sith manipulated the underworld to do their bidding and in doing so it helped undermine the Republic and distracted the Jedi." the gen'dai answered and Krovak smirked.

"And what good did it do them?" he said.

"Turlan is right." Teron said, "If we can subvert the leadership of one or more large scale criminal organisations then we can gain control of all of their resources in one fell swoop."

"Great. So where do we find a criminal empire or two that we can just take over?" Krovak responded.

"This is Fulter's Reach." Turlan said as he showed Teron, Krovak and Mara an image of a planet on a wall mounted screen. Despite being a colour image the planet still appeared grey thanks to the almost total urbanisation of the world. Even the oceans that had once existed had been built over by cities now filled with billions of beings of more than a thousand different species, "During the last war it escaped serious damage thanks to its government being undermined by a criminal organisation that was backed by the Sith."

"How come the Jedi didn't wipe them out?" Krovak asked.

"They never knew. The planet had possessed a powerful underworld ever since it was first settled by pirates more than eleven thousand years ago. A Republic invasion destroyed the original pirate factions but the subsequent settlers were unable to stamp out the criminal influence. In time their government simply gave up trying, a result of both frustration and bribery." Turlan said.

"So all crime here is controlled by a single organisation then?" Krovak commented,

"No, by three of them. Three rival criminal gangs control more than ninety-percent of the crime on this planet. Ironically they also form its most efficient law enforcement bodies. The official police departments are largely

ineffectual but the criminal gangs do not tolerate any criminal activity in their territories that does not bring them any benefit and they deal with interlopers quite severely. That is largely why they have been able to remain active for so long without the Republic being drawn in." Turlan explained.

"Because the natives see them as their protectors." Teron commented and Turlan nodded slowly.

"Precisely." he replied before continuing with his description of the planet, "Each of the three rival organisations controls a different area of the planet and there is a great deal of suspicion among them that their rivals may attempt to expand their area of control into the territory of another."

"Then that's how we bring them down." Teron said, "Divide them, make them believe that they are being attacked by their rivals so that they divert resources to areas in dispute."

"Then we strike at the heart of their operations, eight?" Krovak said and a smile spread across Teron's face.

"We don't just strike at it, we rip it out." he said. Then he looked at Turlan and added, "Do you have any recommendations?"

"Yes my lord." Turlan responded, tapping the screen of his datapad so that the wall mounted monitor changed to show a close up of part of the planet's surface, "This is the sector known as Grid trill herf xesh one-one-three eight. All three of the criminal factions, the Red Hand, the Lyanar Consortium and the Turgen Front, have a major presence within this sector without any of them having a significant advantage over the others. The potential for greater profit makes this sector a prime target for any faction wanting to expand its operations at the expense of the others. If we attack one of them here then it will attract the attention of all three and make them think that a major attack on them could be imminent."

"How do we make all three think they'll be attacked if we only attack one?" Krovak asked.

"Obviously whichever faction we attack will expect further attacks but each of the others will know that they are not responsible for them. This will make them suspect one another of plotting to move against them as well." Turlan answered.

"So all three will bring in reinforcements." Teron commented.

"And with more trigger happy gunmen around the more likely it is that they'll turn on one another whether they're ordered to or not. What if we do provoke a full scale gang war?" Krovak said.

"That should be avoided. Large scale violence will draw in the Republic." Turlan told him.

"If that happens we'll look somewhere else instead. This world offers us a sanctuary as well as an army. I don't want to be surrounded by judicial agents within a week of taking up residency." Teron added.

"So what exactly is the plan then?" Krovak said, glaring at Turlan.

"That is beyond my area of expertise." the gen'dai admitted.

"Then what good are you?" Krovak hissed.

"I have more experience than you by a factor of a hundred or more human. I served the Sith loyally for more than a thousand years and I will serve them thousands more. Can you say the same?" Turlan snapped back at him.

"Enough of this bickering." Teron said, "I'll decide where and when we strike. Turlan I want all the information you can get on the rival gangs' operations in this sector in particular and also in relation to their headquarters."

"Of course my lord." Turlan replied, bowing to Teron.

2.

"Are you sure we shouldn't have brought some men?" Krovak asked as Teron piloted the small shuttle to the surface of Fulter's Reach, following the beacon that led to Grid THX-1138.

"Certain. Too large a group would arouse suspicion." Teron replied, "There are three factions and three of us." he added, glancing for a moment at Mara, "When the time comes each of us will destroy the leaders of one of the factions before I take their place."

Teron flew the shuttle down to a landing platform that hovered above the city streets on a repulsorlift field and from the cockpit the three occupants saw a uniformed woman standing on the platform waiting for them.

"Do you want me to take care of this?" Mara asked, smiling as the shuttle came in to land.

"No. I'll do it." Teron told her and as soon as the shuttle's engines were shut down he got up out of the pilot's seat and headed for the exit from the shuttle. As she walked down the access ramp the woman on the platform smiled at him.

"Good day to you visitor. I am a representative of the planetary shipping commission. It is my responsibility to collect docking fees." she said.

Deceit.

Teron smiled back at the woman, knowing that she had no authority to collect any money from him at all. Most likely someone such as her could be found at every docking bay and landing platform to collect 'fees' from visitors unaware of the planet's regulations. Had he sent Krovak or Mara to deal with the woman then both of them would simply have killed her out of hand but Teron had an alternative in mind.

"There is no need for me to pay anything." he said, waving his hand as he used the Force to push the idea into her mind.

"There is no need for you to pay anything." she repeated.

"You are here to help me." Teron said.

"I'm here to help you."

"You will answer any question I have."

"I will answer any question you have."

"Good, now start by telling me exactly who you work for." Teron ordered.

Teron was smiling as he walked back aboard the shuttle, finding both Krovak and Mara waiting just inside for him.

"So did you pay her off?" Krovak asked.

"Of course not. I'm not here to line the pockets of petty fools. I simply asked her to provide me with the information we need. I now know the location of several buildings that the Turgen Front operate out of. Those will be our targets." Teron answered.

"And what about the woman? What happens when she turns up without the pay off she was supposed to collect?" Krovak said moments before there was a high pitched scream from outside the shuttle that grew quieter as the woman plummeted from the landing pad to her death far below.

"Unfortunately it seems that she took a wrong step." Teron said, still smiling.

Teron then turned around again and led Krovak and Mara out of the shuttle. As they exited the vessel they could see a pair of speeders docked at the side of the hovering landing platform. One of these was a simple repulsor disk that had belonged to the woman attempting to scam money from them and Krovak checked this quickly to see if there was any money or credit sticks on it only to find that there were not. Then he joined Teron and Mara in getting into the other speeder, an open topped four seat model that was marked up with the same serial number as was painted on the landing platform itself, identifying where it should be returned to.

"I have directions to the first address. Let's go." Teron said as he started the engine and the speeder accelerated away.

The building that Teron drove the speeder to was a tower that stood more than a thousand metres tall and was occupied by many different groups of beings. The Turgen Front itself used several floors for moving contraband goods to and from the sector and this meant that there were several large doors for repulsorlift vehicles set into the side of the tower about two thirds of the way up.

"That is our first target." Teron said.

"So how do you want to do this? Do we bring down the entire tower?" Krovak said.

"No. This needs to be targeted against the Turgen Front specifically and it has to be done in a way that looks like it was one of the other factions that was responsible. We'll wait for a transport to emerge and follow it. Then we'll board it and take control. After that we'll crash it back into the Turgen Front's hangar on auto pilot. If we disengage our speeder from it close enough then their security monitors will see us and they'll know

that it wasn't an accident." Teron explained.

"Neat. I like it." Krovak commented.

"A transport is leaving now." Mara added as one of the doors opened to allow a bulky repulsorlift vehicle to exit the hangar inside the tower while a pair of single seat swoops followed it.

"It's got escorts." Krovak pointed out.

"Good. Then it's more likely that the Turgen Front will know that they're under attack." Teron said before he turned the speeder to follow the transport and its two escorts from the tower while beside him Krovak and Mara drew their blasters.

Although the two swoops were faster and more manoeuvrable than the speeder Teron, Krovak and Mara rode in this advantage was lost by the requirement of needing to keep close to the much slower and heavier transport. Closing in from behind the swoops, Krovak and Mara leant out of the speeder and fired their blasters at the closest swoop. Taken by surprise the rider of the swoop looked around to see where the firing was coming from. Had Krovak and Mara had weapons on stabilised mounts then he would have been killed almost instantly but he had chance to try take evasion action before one of Krovak's shots hit his swoop's engine and the burning vehicle spun down towards the ground several hundred metres below while its rider clung on and tried desperately to regain control.

Meanwhile the second swoop rider turned his vehicle towards the speeder and with one hand on the controls he returned fire. As with Krovak and Mara though, the rider's aim suffered from a lack of stabilisation and his shots passed by the speeder without hitting it. Krovak and Mara returned fire on the swoop and once again one of Krovak's shots found its mark, hitting the rider in the chest. This knocked him from the swoop and both rider and vehicle fell towards the ground.

The driver of the transport pushed his vehicle as hard as he could, trying to reach the safety of its destination. He and the second crew member of the transport, a guard armed with a carbine, considered the possibility of Teron and his crew attempting to steal the contents of the transport to be minimal but even the pistols they were using could conceivably cause enough damage to their vehicle to send it crashing to the ground as well. Therefore, it came as a surprise when Teron brought the speeder in closer, positioning it directly above the transport.

"Mara, go!" he ordered and Mara promptly leapt from the speeder, landing gracefully on top of the transport and dropping to all fours. Teron pulled the speeder back, dropping in behind the transport where it was hardest for the crew to see it. At the same time Mara crawled along the top of the transport, making her way towards the crew cabin at the front. When she reached it she drew her blaster again and used the weapon to shoot off the lock on one of the hatches. Both of the crew turned around in surprise as the hatch flew open and Mara swung through it, staring at them with her black eyeballs. The guard began to raise his carbine but even this weapon was too bulky for him to be able to bring into action before Mara shot him with her pistol. "I surrender!" the driver exclaimed, taking his hands off the controls and raising them but Mara simply shot him as well. Grabbing hold of the driver's body Mara rifled through its pockets and removed a comlink before she dragged it to the still open doorway and pushed it out before taking hold of the controls herself.

The controls of the transport were not particularly complicated and Mara was able to rapidly bring it under control. She then turned the transport around, reversing its course back towards the Turgen Front's hangar. "I'm on course." she said into her comlink.

"Copy that Mara. We're right on your tail." Teron responded as he turned the speeder to keep following the transport.

Retracing the course of the transport Mara engaged the autopilot as soon as the hangar came into view and she lined the vehicle up on the hangar door. Moving back to the hatch she had used to enter the transport, Mara opened this again and leant out and waved to Teron. He then brought the speeder forwards so that it was beside the transport's control cabin but below it slightly and Mara leapt between the two vehicles again to land in the back of the speeder.

Teron slammed on the brakes and the speeder came to a rapid halt. Teron, Krovak and Mara then sat back and watched as the transport continued towards the hangar it had been launched from. Although they had been warned that the transport had come under attack the Turgen Front had no idea that it had subsequently turned into an improvised missile that was now speeding towards them and no effort was made to shoot it down before it crashed into one of the hangar doors. The combination of mass and speed of the transport meant that it smashed right through the hangar door and panicking gang members did their best to get clear as the transport slid across the floor, sending sparks flying in all directions. Anything in the transport's path was hurled aside by the force of the out of control vehicle and there was a sudden explosion as the speeder crashed into a stockpile of coolant and the flasks spilled out their volatile contents and were ignited by some of the many sparks now lying around the hangar as metal crashed into metal. The resulting fireball filled the hangar, enveloping everything else in flames and causing yet more blasts as flammable materials caught fire.

Outside the hangar, several hundred metres away from the burning tower Teron, Krovak and Mara watched from the speeder.

“That looks like a lot of damage for something that is supposed to be carefully targeted.” Krovak commented. “That tower will have a fire suppression system.” Teron replied, “That should stop the fire spreading to other areas but I think we can guarantee that we’ll have made the Turgen Front sit up and take notice. Then he turned the speeder around and flew away from the burning tower.

3.

"Gone? All of it?" Sinsa Turgen hissed when she was told of the destruction of the warehouse by one of her subordinates in the criminal organisation that generations of her foremothers had controlled.

"Yes Lady Turgen." the cowering man responded, his head bowed and looking at the floor at Sinsa's feet.

"Tell me what happened. Exactly what happened." Sinsa ordered.

"Yes Lady Turgen." the cowering man said again before he began his explanation, "We had just despatched a transport to deliver spice to Grid SEN five-two-four-one when it came under attack. The crew reported that their escorts had been destroyed before being cut off. We saw the transport returning and thought that it was coming back to reach safety but instead it crashed into the hangar and caused an explosion that destroyed everything."

"How much spice did we have inside the hangar?" Sinsa asked.

"Seventeen million credits worth." the man answered.

"Seventeen million? Seventeen million!" Sinsa yelled angrily, "You have failed me for the last time." she said.

"No my lady I-" the cowering man began, looking up from the floor but he was too late to prevent Sinsa from making a gesture to one of the female bodyguards in the room that caused the woman to step forwards and strike him with the tip of a force pike set to a lethal level and he screamed in agony for a moment as the energy coursed through his body before killing him.

Sinsa then turned to another of her guards.

"Spread the word, either the Red Hand or the Lyanar Consortium have attacked us. I want to know who it was and will pay handsomely for proof. In the mean time I want everyone in Grid THX one-one-three-eight to prepare for another attack. Send extra enforcers to ensure that we are prepared to retaliate when we find out who attacked us." she ordered.

The massive herglic crime lord Lusog watched the footage of the destruction of the spice storehouse as recorded by public surveillance cameras in the area.

"I authorised no attack." he said.

"It wasn't us." the man who had brought him news of the attack replied, "It must have been the Red Hand."

"Did any of our spies tell us that they were planning an attack?" Lusog asked.

"No Mister Lusog. We found out only after the attack from our spies in the Turgen Front. They provided this footage." his subordinate told him, "Lady Turgen has ordered more troops to Grid THX one-one-three-eight."

"Have we seen any movement from the Red Hand?"

"Not yet Mister Lusog. But since our spies failed to anticipate the attack we can't be certain that they aren't making more preparations that have escaped our notice." the subordinate said.

"Call Re'Tarn. Tell him to take his men to Grid THX one-one-three-eight as soon as possible and secure our holdings there. If the Red Hand is going to take control of the area then they will have to force us out as well." Lusog ordered and his subordinate nodded.

"Yes Mister Lusog. I'll see to it immediately." he said.

"What is so important that you summoned me here?" the latest being to hold the title of 'The Hand' said as he hurried into a room at the rear of his home where he had been in the midst of entertaining guests.

"Hand you need to see this." one of the trio of beings waiting for him in his office and he activated a holographic projector to show The Hand a recording of the burning tower while the others simply stood with a hand over their chests, "This was the Turgen Front's main spice warehouse in Grid THX one-one-three-eight."

"What happened?" The Hand asked.

"A spice transport was hijacked and crashed into the tower. The crash started this fire." another of his subordinates told him.

"So it was a deliberate attack. I didn't authorise any such act. Did one of our field overseers overstep his authority?" The Hand said.

"No Hand. We have confirmed that none of our cells were responsible. It must have been the Lyanar Consortium. We've also just heard from our informants that Lusog has ordered two hundred men to the area." another subordinate explained.

"So that fat herglic is trying to take control of the sector is he? How many people can we get there?" The Hand said and one of his subordinates checked her datapad.

"We've got fifty ready to go now Hand. They can be there in two hours. We can have another hundred there by midnight." she said.

"Do it. Tell all our people to watch out for any other suspicious activity from the Lyanar Consortium just in

case this is a distraction to focus our attention on Grid THX one-one-three-eight while they hit us somewhere else." The Hand ordered before he turned and left the room, heading back to his guests.

With several locations of places that the Turgen Front operated from Teron, Krovak and Mara were able to observe the reaction of the criminal organisation and they saw transports filled with people and supplies being moved into the area. Even with the amount of influence they wielded on the planet, the three criminal gangs would not dare move large convoys of troops around so these reinforcements came in small groups and this made them vulnerable to attack.

The comlink Mara had taken from the driver of the transport allowed Teron's group to identify transports belonging to the Turgen Front by their transmissions and the first target Teron selected was a cargo carrier that they heard being given orders to report to an address they had not previously had knowledge of. However, the order was accompanied by an instruction to hand the cargo over to a unit of Turgen Front enforcers, suggesting that it was an arms shipment.

"I think we can put those weapons to better use." Teron said when he heard this and he brought the speeder down to the level of surface traffic, following close behind the transport.

"So how do you want to do this?" Krovak asked.

"If we open fire we risk destroying the cargo. I'll have to handle the crew myself. Take over." Teron replied and he and Krovak quickly swapped places in the speeder while it was still moving.

"I should go with you." Mara said but Teron grinned.

"You did the last one. I want some fun as well." he said.

"Okay I'm ready." Krovak said when his hands were on the controls.

"Get me closer. Right behind them." Teron told him, standing up and steadying himself on the speeder's windscreen. Then when the transport was just a few metres in front he leapt into the air, using the Force to boost his jump and landing on top of the cargo containers strapped to the back of the transport. Climbing over the top of the containers he made his way towards the crew cabin at the front. There was a narrow viewport set into the back of this and through it Teron could see that it held a total of four beings, a driver and three other individuals all of whom wore prominent body armour for protection. However, this protection was limited to the physical only, it was of no use against the Force.

Lying flat on top of the cargo containers to minimise the chance of being seen by any of the transport's crew Teron extended his hand forwards and focused his mind on them. Almost immediately all four armoured enforcers began to choke, their hands reaching for their throats to try and remove whatever it was they thought was strangling them. With the driver's hands off the controls, the transport began to slow down as all four of the crew fought to breathe. With the transport coming to a halt though Teron stepped up his attack, crushing the throats of the crew so that none of them could get off a call for help.

Behind the transport Krovak slowed the speeder down to match its deceleration while other surface traffic steered around it, angry drivers yelling from their vehicles when the transport came to a complete halt. No-one attempted to intervene though as Teron used the Force again to rip a sealed hatch from the transport's crew cabin and climbed inside, sitting down at the controls after he had pushed the dead driver aside.

"I'm in. Follow me while we get this thing somewhere private and see what we've got. Let me know if you see any signs of pursuit. Just because this thing didn't have an escort doesn't mean that it's not being tracked." he said into his comlink.

"Understood. We'll keep our eyes open." Krovak responded from the speeder and as the transport began to move off again he followed it.

Teron drove the transport off the main transit route as soon as he could, driving it into an empty space that existed beneath a large platform on which an entire city district had been constructed. The empty space had long been abandoned and over the years large amounts of debris had accumulated there and a number of scavengers picked through this in the hope of finding something valuable. None of these beings approached the transport or following speeder but Teron could sense that they were watching, hoping that they were here to deposit more waste that they could search through.

"Give me a hand." Teron told Krovak and Mara as he began to undo the straps holding down the cargo containers on the back of the transport, "I want to see what we've got."

Releasing the straps allowed Teron to open one of the unmarked containers and as soon as he did a smile spread across Krovak's face.

"Now this is something I can work with." he said, looking at the shoulder fired concussion missiles and launcher that the container held.

"Another attack?" Sinsa Turgen exclaimed when the news was broken to her of the loss of the arms shipment.

"I'm afraid so my lady and it wasn't just small arms either. A transport filled with heavy weapons was taken." the woman who had brought her the news replied.

"Taken? Not destroyed?" Sinsa asked.

“No my lady. The transport was captured intact. Our people in the grid found some scavengers who saw three humans inspecting the cargo shortly after.” the other woman answered.

“Do we at least know who is responsible this time?” Sinsa said, scowling.

“I’m afraid not my lady. Both the Lyanar Consortium and the Red Hand are reinforcing their holdings in Grid THX one-one-three-eight. A worst case scenario would have both of them uniting against us.” the woman said.

“Not in the same gird I think.” Sinsa replied, “If they were to unify against us then they would strike in different regions to keep our forces divided. Now go and find out who is responsible for these attacks. I want them here in front of me by midnight tomorrow.”

4.

With the missiles stowed in the shuttle, the interior of the craft was cramped as Teron explained the final stage of the plan to Krovak and Mara.

"Thanks to Turlan we know where each of the crime syndicates has its headquarters. As I said previously each of us will assault one of these, with all three attacks taking place simultaneously. Krovak you will attack the Red Hand at the mansion inhabited by the man known as The Hand. Mara you will kill the herglic Lusog of the Lyanar Consortium in his fortress. It is built above what was once one of this planet's oceans and if the information provided by Turlan is correct then what remains of the ocean beneath the structure may offer a way into the fortress." he told them.

"I guess that leaves the Turgen Front for you then." Krovak commented and Teron smiled.

"Yes. I intend to infiltrate Sinsa Turgen's sky hook using one of the uniforms of the guards killed on the transport. Sinsa Turgen is reputed to surround herself with an inner guard that is exclusively female so even a stolen uniform won't get me within striking distance but it will get me aboard." he said.

"What are our exact objectives?" Mara asked.

"Kill everyone in our way." Krovak commented.

"Largely, yes but I want the leaders themselves taken alive." Teron said, "Their deaths may provoke chaos if elements of their organisations refuse to follow my leadership. Alive though they can order their troops to do as I command. They will be the first of the new generals in my master's army."

"Oh so it's his army is it? Will he be coming to take command of it personally then? Somehow I doubt it."

Krovak said, "This army will be yours Teron."

"I follow the commands of my master." Teron responded and then he smiled as he added, "At least for now."

Before he began his solo assault on the mansion that was home to The Hand, Krovak donned his Sith armour again. This ancient suit of armour bonded itself painfully to his flesh each time he put it on and removing it left him feeling physically drained. However, while he wore the armour it boosted his strength and endurance with the power of the Dark Side as well as offering greater protection than any other mundane body armour he had ever come across. Krovak carried two weapons with him as he climbed into the crew cabin of the hijacked transport, the first was a blaster pistol that hung from a holster at his side while a scabbard also hung from his belt that held a sword that was as ancient as his armour and had also been created by a Sith sorcerer. The bizarre hybrid of science and Sith alchemy had kept the blade sharp over the centuries and the material it was made of was unnaturally resilient, able to withstand even a lightsaber blade. Between these two weapons and his almost impenetrable armour Krovak was confident that he would be successful in storming The Hand's personal residence.

Before he could storm the heavily guarded mansion though Krovak needed to get past the fortified perimeter and that was where the transport came in. Krovak drove the heavy vehicle towards the location of the Hand's mansion, circling around it at a distance of a kilometre until the time came to attack. Krovak did not waste this time though. The transport's autopilot was able to maintain the holding pattern with minimal input from Krovak and so he took out a pair of macrobinoculars to study his target.

The mansion was built on top of a city block that formed an artificial mesa of connected apartments with numerous tunnels passing through it to permit speeders to reach internal parking garages. The mansion itself had its own parking structures surrounding the main building though so none of the tunnels in the structure below would provide any access to it. The grounds of the mansion stood out against the grey and silver of the rest of the cityscape, being covered in green lawns that looked as if they might even be real grass and this helped Krovak determine what the mansion's defences were like by studying where the grass gave way to concrete and steel.

The mansion was surrounded by a shield fence to keep out surface intruders while a number of small structures at regular intervals around this perimeter were obviously mountings for concealed weapons. Krovak knew that emplaced weapons were likely to be able to end his attack in moments if he was not careful but fortunately for him he was not planning on launching a conventional stand-off attack against the fortified mansion and when the chronometer inside the cabin indicated that the time had come to begin he put on his helmet before switching off the autopilot and began to descend towards the artificial mesa. Krovak steered the transport towards one of the large tunnels that ran through the structure, picking one that was close to a point where the mansion's perimeter came very close to the edge. He could see one of the structures that looked like it was concealing a heavy weapon battery but this did not worry him. He knew that even if it was manned the crew of the weapon would not have enough time to react to what Krovak was planning. Continuing towards the tunnel entrance, Krovak accelerated while keeping below the level of the top of the artificial mesa. Then at the last moment he lifted the transport's nose so that instead of racing into

the tunnel the heavy vehicle flew up over the top of the structure before passing over the shielded perimeter and then crashing down onto the lawn before any of the mansion's defensive batteries could open fire.

The moment the transport came over the shield the mansion's guards realised that something was wrong and not caring whether the vehicle had crashed as a result of an accident or been flown deliberately into the grounds they came rushing out of their guard houses with blasters and opened fire on the wrecked transport, sending streams of energy blasts into it. These energy blasts easily punched through the structure of the transport, filling the cabin with smoking holes and after just under a minute of this barrage of blaster fire the most senior of the guards called out.

"Cease fire!" he shouted, confident that anyone who had been inside the vehicle was now dead. Thus it came as a surprise to him and his guards when all of a sudden Krovak threw open the door and stepped out carrying a long armoured box in one hand that he set down on the ground as he drew his blaster.

"Let's this over with quickly shall we?" he said before he opened fire.

Krovak's first two shots killed two of the guards in rapid succession before the others returned fire on him with their blasters. However, whereas they expected him to collapse under the weight of their combined fire Krovak did nothing more than stagger while he continued shooting, picking the guards off one by one.

"Fall back. Fall back to the mansion." the guards' leader ordered and the survivors ran back towards the mansion, rushing in through the nearest entrance before the armoured doors were slammed shut behind them.

Krovak had come prepared for this though and as he put his blaster back in its holster he opened the armoured box at his feet to reveal the pre-loaded missile launcher inside. Lifting this onto his shoulder he took aim at the door that the guards had retreated through and launched the concussion missile.

The missile shot out of the launcher and struck the door centrally before detonating on impact. Although the door was armoured the warhead of the missile was designed to defeat even heavier armour than this and it blew a large hole through it, sending shrapnel into the interior of the mansion where the guards who had retreated inside had been in the process of arming themselves with more powerful weapons. None of them fully escaped the effects of the blast and even those who survived were injured as Krovak strode up to the mansion and in through the hole in the door with his sword in his hand. Swinging the weapon at the nearest guard, Krovak decapitated the man in an instant before hacking at a second man who was crawling towards a weapon. A blaster shot then struck Krovak between his shoulder blades and he turned to see the leader of the guards had managed to get to his feet and retrieve his blaster. In response to this attack Krovak let out a roar and hurled his sword across the room where it impaled the man against the wall behind him.

There was only one more guard left alive in the hallway just inside the ruined door and he fired his weapon at Krovak repeatedly in desperation but one shot after another was absorbed by the Sith armour he wore.

Krovak leapt towards the man and kicked his blaster from his hand before he reached down and grabbed the terrified man by his collar and began to punch him repeatedly in the face. Each blow was accompanied by a 'crunch' of breaking bone and drew more blood until Krovak realised that the man was already dead and he released his hold on the corpse.

With no more guards left in the hallway Krovak walked over to the wall where their leader hung from the Sith sword and he pressed a hand to the dead man's chest as he pulled his weapon free. Then he turned around and headed deeper into the mansion, hunting for The Hand himself.

"What's happening? I thought I heard an explosion." The Hand said as one of his lieutenants burst into his office with a trio of armed guards.

"Hand, we're under attack." his lieutenant told him.

"Who would dare?" The Hand responded.

"We don't know who he is." the lieutenant said.

"He? You mean it is just one man?" The Hand exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes Hand but he has managed to get past the outer defences and is inside the building. We need to get you to safety immediately." the lieutenant said.

The Hand was escorted from the officer by his lieutenant and the guards, the armed men forming a ring close around The Hand to shield him from all angles as they took him towards the safe room intended to provide him with an impenetrable shelter.

As they hurried along the hallway that led to the safe room there were sounds of screams and blaster shots as Krovak hacked his way through more of the mansion's staff and just as The Hand and his escort reached the door to the safe room Krovak stepped into view at the far end of the hallway.

The Hand's bodyguards immediately opened fire and Krovak retreated back around the corner allowing the guards to waste ammunition firing down the hallway. Then when they ceased fire a few seconds later he leapt back out into the hallway and charged towards them, roaring as he ran.

"Inside quick!" The Hand's lieutenant told him, shoving The Hand through the open door of the safe room before joining the other guards in shooting at Krovak while The Hand slammed his hand down on the control that dropped the armoured door into place and sealed the safe room.

Armed only with blaster pistols the Red Hand troops could only watch as their shots bounced harmlessly off the Sith armour that Krovak wore until he got within arms reach and swung his sword, slicing through two of them in one go despite the armoured vests they wore. Then he thrust his sword ahead of him and plunged its blade into the third guard's chest. The lieutenant jumped towards Krovak and pressed the muzzle of his blaster to the side of Krovak's helmet before pulling the trigger. However, even from point blank range the weapon failed to penetrate the strange material of the armour created by Sith sorcery and Krovak responded by punching the lieutenant in the face. The blow was strong enough to send the lieutenant tumbling backwards against the now sealed door to the safe room. The combined impacts were enough to render the lieutenant unconscious and he slumped to the floor.

From inside the luxuriously decorated safe room The Hand watched the events in the hallway outside on a monitor screen, caring nothing about the deaths of the men who had protected him long enough to get him inside. Regardless of the armour that Krovak wore, The Hand knew that it would not be totally invulnerable and it was only a matter of time before more of his men arrived with heavier weapons to deal with this lone assassin and he was grateful that whichever of his predecessors had had this shelter constructed had had the foresight to have it so comfortably decorated and stocked with enough high quality food and drink to last The Hand several days at least. However, he gasped and turned towards the armoured door when Krovak swung his sword at it and instead of the blade snapping it left an indentation on the outside. Then Krovak swung his weapon again and struck the same spot, deepening the indentation and The Hand realised that somehow the sword was strong enough to cut through even the armoured door.

Hurriedly he activated the communication panel.

"This is The Hand, I am trapped in my safe room with the assassin right outside. Where is everybody?" he exclaimed.

"On our way to you now Hand." a voice responded, "We'll be there in five minutes."

The Hand looked back towards the door and saw that the damage being inflicted by Krovak's sword was now visible from the inside, a split starting to form down the middle of the door. Fortunately for The Hand the same predecessor who had stocked the safe room with fine food and drink had also thought to include an arms locker and The Hand now rushed towards this and opened it, taking out one of the heavy blaster pistols it contained as well as a power cell that he inserted into the weapon. He had just finished loading the blaster when he heard a 'crash' from behind him as Krovak's blade penetrated the armoured door. The Hand then watched in horror as Krovak used his sword as a handle to pull the door upwards enough to get his hand around it. Then he pulled his sword from the door and roared as he forced it open, the power of the Dark Side giving him enough of a boost to his strength to send it back into its open position. This still took a toll on Krovak though and he staggered through the doorway before looking at The Hand.

In response The Hand raised his blaster, gripping it in both hands and aimed it at Krovak. Although The Hand had spent many years controlling his organisation from behind a desk he had used a blaster many times and he was quite willing to kill, especially when he considered his own life to be in danger. However, before he could pull the trigger Krovak lunged forwards at him and brought his sword up to sever both of The Hand's arms mid way between his wrists and elbows.

The Hand screamed as he looked at the stumps at the end of his arms and dropped to his knees, expecting the final blow to fall at any moment but instead Krovak just looked down at him and held out his sword so that it rested against The Hand's throat.

"So what will people call you now?" Krovak commented before he took a step backwards, "I figure you've got a minute or two at most before you bleed out or alternatively we can make a deal." he added.

"What do you want?" The Hand asked and Krovak laughed.

"Everything." he replied.

5.

While Krovak's entry into the mansion of the Red Hand was a direct assault Mara used stealth in her approach to the fortress of the Lyanar Consortium. Having been built over what was once a shallow sea there remained massive chambers filled with water beneath the fortress and Mara swam through these until the map on her datapad told her that she was beneath her target and she began to look for a suitable entry point. Upon finding a sealed hatchway in the wall of a chamber the Sith creature that possessed Mara's body hunted through her memories and abilities, searching for the skills she had put to use as professional thief to now override the lock on the hatch and open it without triggering the alarm that was connected to it. As she had hoped there was a narrow crawlway on the other side of the hatch that led upwards at an angle shallow enough to crawl up as soon as her chronometer told her that the time had come to begin her infiltration of the fortress.

The crawlway was part of the fortress' drainage system, designed to allow rainwater that now had no way of reaching what remained of the ocean directly to pass down through the structure as well as carrying the waste water from the fortress itself. This meant that the inside of the crawlway was slippery in places with no specific handholds and Mara decided that exiting it at the earliest point was the best course of action. The first exit point that Mara came to was a simple hatch in the upper surface of the crawlway and she applied pressure to lift it up far enough for her to be able to see what was above her. It was quickly obvious that this part of the crawlway ran beneath a garage and Mara could see several speeders as well as being able to hear the sound of voices from mechanics maintaining the vehicles stored here. Seeing that none of the garage staff could see the hatch, Mara quickly crawled out of the crawlway and looked around. She lacked specific knowledge about the interior layout of the fortress and the mechanics offered her a means to rectify that. All she needed to do was catch one of them alone.

Keeping low, Mara moved between the various speeders and other vehicles in the garage until she saw a group of mechanics and she paused to watch them, waiting until one was sent for something by the team leader. Whatever this errand was, Mara knew that this was the opportunity that she had been waiting for and she darted after the man. Drawing her knife from her belt she ran up behind the mechanic just as he was leaving the garage and delivered a kick to the back of one of his knees that caused him to immediately collapse and she clamped her free hand over his mouth to prevent him from crying out while she held her knife to his throat.

"If you make a sound other than to answer my questions I'll kill you before anyone can help you. Do you understand?" she said softly, leaning over so that her mouth was next to one of the man's ears and he nodded, "Good, now tell me where I can find Lusog." she added, smiling before she removed her hand from over the man's mouth.

"The main tower." the man told her, "Fifth level."

"Thank you. That wasn't so hard now was it?" Mara said before she pressed her hand over the man's mouth again and plunged her knife into his back.

Keeping her hand over the man's mouth, Mara waited for him to stop struggling. She then checked his pulse to make sure that he was dead before she dragged him back into the garage and rolled his body beneath a speeder where she hoped that it would not be noticed for some time while she exited the garage again and headed for the centre of the fortress, beneath the main tower.

Mara moved quietly and cautiously, looking to avoid contact with any of the members of the Lyanar Consortium inside the fortress until she reached her target. However, as she neared the turbolift cluster at the centre of the fortress she found it watched over by a droid. The machine was unarmed but Mara could not take the chance that it would be able to alert the building's security to her presence. Unable to approach the turbolifts Mara was left with no choice but to retreat and look for another way up the tower. Fortunately she had passed by one such alternative route on her way here and although it would be much slower than the turbolift she opted for this instead.

Retracing her steps towards the garage Mara stopped when she came to a set of glass doors that looked out into a courtyard within the fortress. The sun had set outside but the courtyard was still illuminated and thanks to this Mara could see that the courtyard wall beneath the main tower at the heart of the fortress had handholds set into it at regular intervals that would allow someone to climb the outside of the tower. This climb would be significant, there were several levels of the main structure of the fortress before those of the tower itself but without access to the turbolift Mara was left with no other choice and she exited the fortress into the courtyard, walking across it and starting to scale the ladder.

In daylight climbing up the outside of the tower would have been suicidal, anyone looking out of any of the fortress' windows would have seen Mara immediately but in darkness the shadow of the tower kept her hidden from any angle that someone may be watching while there was no-one present on any of the

balconies that protruded from the tower.

These balconies enabled Mara to count off the levels as she climbed the tower until she reached the fifth one and she climbed over the barrier onto the balcony itself. Light shining from inside the room enabled Mara to see inside, revealing it to be a lounge of some kind. The room was unoccupied and this gave Mara the opportunity to study it more carefully, noting not only the luxurious nature of the decoration but also the scale. The seating was obviously designed for a humanoid form but a humanoid much larger than any of the species falling with the normal human range. Herglics were one such species that were larger than most humanoids and this suggested to Mara that she had located the personal chambers of Lusog.

Crouching down the creature within Mara called on her skills as a burglar to override the locking mechanism on the door without tripping any alarms. As soon as the door opened Mara slipped inside before closing them behind her, making sure that she left no evidence of her entry. This allowed her to find somewhere in the lounge where she could hide, selecting an alcove that was located beside the interior doorway that had a large sculpture standing in it. This sculpture was bulky enough that Mara could conceal herself behind it, enabling her to remain hidden even if someone looked directly towards it.

Mara waited behind the sculpture until she heard the sound of the lounge door opening and then she peered out to see who had just entered the room. Initially it looked as if only a single being had entered the room, a bulky herglic that she recognised immediately as Lusog even as he walked away from her and sat down on a sofa with his back still turned. However, before she emerged she noticed a second figure reflected in the glass of the external door to the balcony and she realised that Lusog was accompanied by a bodyguard. From his reflection Mara could tell that the guard was a gotal. The twin horns on a gotal's head were sensitive to electronics and Mara suspected that the guard would rely on this sense to detect the presence of modern weapons and other devices that an assassin may carry. Carefully Mara unhooked her belt, stripping herself of all the electronic devices she carried in the process and she set this down on the floor behind the sculpture before drawing the knife from its scabbard and standing up again. Peering out from behind the sculpture once more Mara took note of the exact positions of both Lusog and his bodyguard before she emerged from behind it and moved to the side of the alcove closest to the guard.

This was less than a metre from where the gotal stood and Mara suddenly leant around the edge of the alcove and thrust her knife towards the bodyguard, pushing the blade all the way through his throat and twisting it to open the wound further. The gotal bodyguard collapsed instantly, his blood pumping from both sides of his neck as he bled to death in seconds. Lusog of course heard the sound of his bodyguard hitting the floor and he jumped to his feet and turned around in time to see Mara snatch the blaster from the guard's holster and use it to shoot the controls to the door beside her, making sure that no-one else would be able to enter the room soon.

"Think you can kill me with that little pistol girl?" Lusog said, his voice booming out across the lounge, "I've had better than you try that."

"I doubt it." Mara responded before Lusog grabbed the side of the sofa in front of him and roared as he tossed it aside to clear the path between him and Mara before he charged at her.

Mara fired the blaster she had taken from the bodyguard at Lusog but this did not even slow him down as the energy was absorbed by the concealed armoured vest that he wore and the herglic kept on coming. Rather than attempt a second shot aimed for somewhere that was probably not as heavily armoured Mara just held her position and held up her knife. However, rather than use the blade when Lusog came within reach she hurled herself out of his path, taking Lusog by surprise and meaning that he crashed into the wall behind where she had been stood instead of crushing her against it as he had intended.

It was then that Mara struck with the knife, plunging it into the side of Lusog's knee and the herglic let out a roar of pain as he lashed out in response and sent Mara flying away from him. Mara was unhurt by this though, the creature controlling her protected from the force of the blow and the impact against the floor when she landed and she was able to get back to her feet immediately while Lusog struggled to rise with his leg injured and no longer able to support him.

Mara calmly walked to where her knife had landed and picked it up before looking at Lusog and smiling.

"Had enough yet?" she asked and he snarled back at her.

"It's just a scratch." he said, "Come here and let me show you what a herglic can do. I'll rip you in half."

"Somehow I doubt that." Mara before she broke into a run and charged across the room towards the crime boss.

Lusog swung a fist at Mara but she ducked under it before it could smash into her face and she struck with the dagger again, slicing into the herglic's other leg and causing him to roar in pain once more as he collapsed again, no longer able to stand even on one leg. He landed face down on the floor and Mara took advantage of this strike a third time, jumping on his back and plunging the knife into his spine about half way between his ribs and pelvis. The blade was too small to penetrate deep enough to reach any of Lusog's vital organs but it did cut through his spinal column, destroying what control he still had over his legs and making sure that he would not be able to roll over and crush Mara beneath his bulk as she then held her knife to his throat.

“Lusog of the Lyanar Consortium I offer you a deal on behalf of my master.” she said, “Your life in exchange for your loyalty. What do you say?”

6.

Teron's infiltration of the Turgen Front's stronghold began before either Krovak or Mara began their attacks. The only way to reach the skyhook that Sinsa Turgen lived on was via the turbolift shaft that connected it to the surface. Despite the impressive acceleration and speed of this turbolift the journey from the ground station to the sky hook thousands of kilometres above in a geostationary orbit still took almost two hours. Two hours during which Teron mingled among other troops from the Turgen Front, using his powers with the Force to dissuade any of them from engaging him in conversation that could have revealed him to be an imposter wearing the uniform and armour taken from one of their dead.

Upon reaching the skyhook Teron did not bother trying to locate the personal chambers of Sinsa Turgen, instead he simply identified one of the Turgen Front's officers. This was a woman, as all the Turgen Front's senior staff were and Teron followed her until she was alone. However, she noticed that she was being followed by a soldier in armour for no apparent reason and she spun around to face him in the otherwise empty corridor.

"What are you doing?" she snapped, "Don't you have duties to attend to instead of following me around?"

"I want to know where Sinsa Turgen is. Tell me." Teron replied sternly.

Anger.

"Who do you think you are to speak to me like that? What's your operating number?" the woman responded and Teron could sense her rage at being addressed in such a manner by a mere male soldier.

The woman did not see Teron smile inside his helmet but she saw him suddenly reach out his hand towards her and at the same time she felt her throat suddenly tighten. Choking, the woman dropped to her hands and knees, desperately trying to draw in breath.

"Tell me where she is and I'll end this." Teron said, slowly advancing on the woman.

"Never!" she gasped.

"I can draw this out for hours if I have to you know." Teron commented as the woman collapsed completely to lie on the floor while clawing at her own throat in desperation.

"The core!" she exclaimed at last, "Core section, twelfth level. But you'll never make it there."

"Thank you. That's all I needed to know." Teron said and then with a clenching of his fist he crushed the woman's throat from the inside.

It was not difficult for Teron to find the skyhook's core section but entering it was another matter. Given that the core section was where the entire Turgen Front was directed from it was protected by their most trusted troops, meaning that they were all female. For any male, especially a mere soldier to enter would draw attention that Teron did not want to have to deal with. However, there was one way that he could see himself getting to the private chambers of Sinsa Turgen without being challenged along the way.

Surrender.

Waiting until the only individuals he could see nearby were the two female guards at the access point to the core section Teron removed his helmet and tossed it aside before he walked right up to them and grinned at them.

"Who are you?" one of the women demanded, "What are you doing here?"

"I am your prisoner. You will take me to Sinsa Turgen immediately." Teron responded, raising his hands as he used the Force to compel the two women to do as he had told them.

Immediately both of the guards levelled their weapons, short barrelled blaster carbines, towards him.

"You are our prisoner!" one of them snapped, "We're taking you to see Sinsa Turgen immediately."

One of the women then opened the door to the core section and Teron walked through it ahead of his supposed 'captors' who then guided him towards Sinsa Turgen. Along the way they passed a number of other members of the Turgen Front, the vast majority of them female but with a pair of guards escorting him, none of them paid any attention to Teron until they reached a large set of ornate doors protected by two more armed women and he knew that they had reached their destination.

Teron suddenly lowered his hands towards the guards on the doors and before either of the women escorting him could say anything he used the Force to rip the carbines from the hands of the guards either side of the door. Summoning the weapons to his own hands he pointed them back at their startled owners and fired.

From point blank range the energy blasts were more than enough to punch through the armour that they women wore and both of them fell dead in an instant. Teron then threw himself aside as a pair of shots from the two women who had brought him here passed through the air where he had been stood before he turned his weapons on them and fired again, killing them as well.

Tossing the carbines aside Teron then walked up to the ornate doors and with a wave of his hands he forced them open before striding through into Sinsa Turgen's throne room where he looked between the two rows of

female guards towards Sinsa Turgen herself where she sat at the far end of the room. Taking a few moments to study his surroundings Teron saw that the room had been designed to have an intimidating appearance even without the armed guards present. The seat on which Sinsa sat was oversized and ornately designed to resemble a throne while the walls were lined with spikes and burning torches that looked real instead of being holographic recreations.

"Sinsa Turgen my name is Teron Sharr." he called out to Sinsa Turgen, "From now on you and your organisation exists only to serve at my whim."

Sinsa glared back at Teron and laughed.

"Foolish man. Do you really think I would respond to threats from someone like you?" she said. Then she looked down at her guards and added, "Kill him."

The two lines of guards armed with force pikes promptly closed ranks, forming a barrier between the apparently unarmed Teron and Sinsa Turgen. Teron simply began to walk forwards, towards the line of armoured women with their weapon held out in front of them and there was a crackling sound in the air as they energised their force pikes.

That was the moment that Teron struck. Pushing his arms out in front of him he drew upon the Dark Side and unleashed a powerful blast of telekinetic energy that hurled several of the women backwards, opening up a gap in the barrier they had formed to protect their leader. Teron immediately charged at this gap and the guards still on their feet closed in to try and cut him off. This was what Teron had been expecting though and as they closed in from both sides he thrust his arms out sideways and channelled the Dark Side of the Force again and this time he unleashed twin storms of lightning bolts, one from each hand that blasted the closest guards on each side of him.

Surprise.

Fear.

Teron sensed Sinsa Turgen's shock at his display of his power and it was obvious that she was no longer as confident that her guards would be able to easily overcome him. The lightning had temporarily struck down another four of the women but they were just stunned rather than killed and there were still as many standing with more of those he had initially hurled away now getting back to their feet. With Sinsa's guards now so close Teron decided to reveal that he was not as unarmed as he looked and with a flick of his wrist his lightsaber slid from his sleeve into his hand and with a 'snap-hiss' the blade ignited.

Taken by surprise at the sudden display of the lightsaber the first two guards were easily cut down by a single wide stroke that very nearly cut both women in half as the blade sliced effortlessly through their armour. Teron then leapt out of the way as another guard jabbed at him with her force pike and when the charged tip of the weapon passed close by his side he twisted his lightsaber again and cut through the weapon before stabbing the woman wielding it in the centre of her chest.

Another pair of the guards charged at Teron simultaneously and he leapt backwards to avoid their coordinated attack. With a wave of his hand Teron used the Force to pick one of the women up off the floor and hurled her into a trio of her comrades who were rushing towards him from the side and after knocking them all to the floor the flying woman then hit the wall where a large spike protruded and was impaled, her body hanging limply from it while her force pike clattered to the floor below. Teron then pulled another of the guards towards him so that as she stumbled the tip of her force pike struck another of the women in the back and she screamed in pain when the powerful energy field surrounding it discharged into her and she fell dead as well.

Teron rolled under another force pike that was aimed for his head and as he did so the weapon dropped by one of the fallen guards came within his reach. Scooping this up in his free hand Teron stabbed the tip into and another guard and she too screamed as she died. With half of their number now dead the surviving guards retreated, backing towards Sinsa's throne and forming another defensive line while Teron steadied himself. Then with his lightsaber in one hand and the force pike in the other he let out a roar as he drew on the Dark Side and charged right at them.

The guards braced themselves to receive this charge and held out their force pikes toward Teron but he slipped between two of them and struck at both simultaneously, cutting upwards across the torso of one with his lightsaber while stabbing at the other with the force pike. In response one of the guards stabbed back with her force pike and caught Teron on his arm, causing him to drop his own picked up force pike. Roaring in pain and rage, Teron felt the Dark Side flowing through him and he thrust his lightsaber through the abdomen of the woman who had just attacked him.

Another guard raised her force pike in preparation to strike but once again Teron made use of the Force, using telekinesis to grab hold of her and lifting her into the air where she was unable to attack. While he held the woman in the air the other two remaining guards wrongly thought that he would be sufficiently distracted to allow them to attack before he could respond and they rushed at him together only for Teron to cut them both down in rapid succession with his lightsaber. Only then did he release the woman floating in mid air and she landed in a heap on the floor as Teron advanced towards her.

Fear.

"Please-" she began but before she could get any further Teron decapitated her. Then he turned towards Sinsa Turgen and smiled at her as she looked back at him in fear.

"What do you want? I'll give you anything." she said when Teron began to advance towards her, his bright red lightsaber still humming as he slowly walked in her direction.

"I'll start with that throne you're sitting on. After that I'll need to know exactly what it is that you have to offer." he told her.

Teron Sharr sat in the throne once occupied by Sinsa Turgen with Korvak and Mara standing either side of him and guards drawn from various criminal groups at key positions throughout the room. In front of them stood Sinsa Turgen and The Hand while Lusog sat in an oversized repulsorchair, still unable to stand unaided after the injuries inflicted on him by Mara.

"I'm so glad you could all meet me here in my new throne room." Teron said as the three former crime lords looked at him in silence, "I have brought peace to the planet Fulter's Reach and with you as the first of my new generals I will bring peace to the entire galaxy."