

Force Legend

Liberation

– Dalton Wylind –

The RS *Naire* dropped out of hyperspace, the state-of-the-art artificial gravity projectors making it barely recognizable for a Jedi Knight. Still, for Keese Somar, being a Jedi Knight for three weeks wasn't long enough to doubt his own skills. Nonetheless, just barely picking up the hyperspace drop made Keese feel...unskilled. He knew his thoughts were ridiculous, but felt them nonetheless. Realizing that going into Sith space with only two Jedi Knights on-board was dangerous to do, Keese reckoned it best to have at least *one* of those Jedi Knights actually up and about, ready to give aid whenever necessary.

So, Keese sat up from the bed in his quarters aboard the *Niare*, his light brown hair at shoulder length a frenzy mess. Despite telling Captain Abru he didn't need his own room, the captain had insisted anyways, giving Keese the closest room to the ship's bridge.

Getting out from his bed, Keese entered his room's refresher, taking a quick sonic shower before dressing himself in the traditional Jedi robes of a Jedi Knight. His bright blue eyes really stood out against his tan tunic and robes. He straightened his hair, making

himself look much more mature, before pulling it back in a ponytail. He shaved his face, giving him that smooth feeling on the base of his chin. Fastening his belt around his waist, with his grapple hook, lightsaber, and other items on it, Keese left his quarters and headed for the *Niare's* bridge, ready to see as to why the sudden drop from hyperspace occurred.

The bridge's doors slide open, and Keese entered the command deck of the modified starcruiser. The *Niare* was different from the other Republic ships, as it had an advanced shielding system and prototype stealth systems that other ships did not. The *Niare* was also around thirty meters longer than the average *Hammerhead*, a starcruiser heavily used by the Republic Navy. In addition, it featured five laser cannons and ten automatic turbolasers, along with four torpedo tubes. Commanding it all was Captain Kacj Abru, a veteran of the Mandalorian Wars, renowned as an officer in the Republic Military, and a respected man by all his peers and followers. Captain Abru had, a month ago, insisted that a Jedi Knight be with them on their next mission. Oddly enough, that Jedi Knight would become Keese, passing his Jedi trials then embarking on the mission within a matter two standard days. For almost three weeks straight, the *Niare* and her crew had been patrolling space, looking for any signs of secret Sith activity. The numerous reports from Galactic Republic Intelligence was enough to encourage the Navy to send a starship to investigate. So, for the past three weeks, Keese had been stuck on the *Niare* with only one friend: fellow Jedi Knight Nopin Leve. Nopin and Keese had trained together on Dantooine's Jedi Enclave.

Keese passed through the bridge's outer doors, stepping onto the command deck and walking up towards the bow of the ship. The crew on the bridge was hard at work, each person doing their part to make the ship function. It was, in a way, a beautiful piece of art.

Seeing no reason to not make his presence known to the captain, Keese stepped up next to Abru, who merely glanced at Keese, at first not saying anything, but then turning and looking at him for a second time, his brown eyes staring into Keese's.

“Don't tell me you didn't sense the Sith warship heading our way, Jedi,” the captain said. Abru's words struck Keese like a slap in the face, although he could sense that wasn't Abru's intentions.

“Well, Captain, to be honest: no. I didn't sense it. I had no idea it was even there until

you just mentioned it. My belayed apology,” Keese responded, a little sass in his voice.

Abru gave a short chuckle.

“Son, do you really think I'd just allow the Jedi Council to place some rookie Jedi that I didn't ask for without knowing your flaws. I know you're a damn fine swordsman, but your Jedi senses lack a little bit, Keese. Consider it nothing.”

Surprised by the captain's coolness, Keese, having nothing more to say, simply took a polite bow before taking several steps back. Abru then gave Commander Proсли, the Duros executive officer of the *Niare* and second-in-command, orders to sound the starship's battle alarm.

The alarm began blaring throughout the entire starcruiser. The bridge's doors slid open, and Keese friend and only other Jedi on-board, Nopin Leve, walked in. Nopin gave a polite nod to Keese, before saluting the captain.

“Captain, is there anything that me or Keese can do to help?” Nopin asked. Abru turned around and faced the Jedi Knight. He smiled and shook his head.

“Just return to your quarters and don't get in the way,” he answered bluntly. Outside, Nopin showed no emotion. Inside, however, Keese could sense his friend's embarrassment and anger. It was obvious that Abru had little fondness, or even respect, for Nopin on any level whatsoever. But Nopin quickly erased the feelings, as every Jedi was taught to do. Nopin turned and, just as quickly as he had entered, exited the ship's bridge. Knowing better than to ask the captain for anything, Keese turned and started towards the exit.

“Hey, Keese!” Abru called back to him.

Keese spun around faster than a Hutt could tell a lie. Captain Abru was staring straight at him.

“Our Intel shows this is the Sith warship we've been looking for. I'd hate to see three weeks of searching go down the crapper, so how about you get yourself into a flight suit and head down to the starfighter hangar bay. I'll signal down and tell 'em to give you the fastest starfighter we've got. You're gonna board that thing...alone.”

Terror yet excitement struck Keese, both at the same time, oddly enough. Usually,

the Jedi that would escort the Republic officers gave the orders, but Keese was far too shy to do so. There was nothing wrong with how the captain was commanding, and he knew that Captain Abru was far more experienced than he himself was, so Keese just allowed the captain to make the calls, and Keese keep his head down, doing what he was ordered. He could only say - actually mumble - one thing.

“Sure.”

Keese's embarrassment grew as he walked towards the Aurek tactical strikefighter assigned to him, his orange flight suit practically skin-tight on him, obviously because he'd grown much since he'd had it fitted over two years ago. All of the female crew members of the *Niare* stared at Keese as every curve in his body was revealed through the outfit, but he paid no attention to them.

Quietly, Keese as stood next to his A-wing, one of the females, a Human girl about Keese's age, approached him. Keese, despite all his Jedi training, was unable to hide the feelings that told him she was extremely attractive, a true beauty. She had golden, blond hair going just past her shoulders, bright blue eyes, flawless skin, and a well-curved body to match it all. Keese's shyness grew immensely, but used the Force to keep himself from blushing, a technique that he hadn't been taught, but made up himself. The girl stopped just in front of Keese, looking at him, scoping him from head to toe. She stood, leaning all her weight on her left leg, the other arched sideways, just like any feminine girl would stand. She gave a small, almost unnoticeable chuckle.

“You're Keese, right? My name is Vin. Vin Yiana.”

Keese, unable to speak, merely nodded. This drew another small chuckle from Vin.

“Okay... I guess you're the Jedi on this ship? Keese, right?”

Keese nodded. Feeling an unusual urge to say something, Keese cleared his throat.

“I'm Keese Somar, Jedi Knight of the Jedi Order, assigned to the *Niare*,” he blurted out.

The minute Keese had finished his sentence, he regretted it. Vin looked at him curiously... as if he was an insane madman. Swallowing the saliva in his mouth with an unintentional *gulp* sound, Keese stood, looking at Vin, making no other sound. After a

moment's silence, she spoke.

“Okay, well... my quarters number is room 14-T. After your mission, come on over. I'll be waiting for you.” she said. “I'm very curious about you Jedi. My father was one, before he was killed. Any chance I can, I like chatting with Jedi. Okay?”

Vin turned and walked away, not looking back as she left the starfighter hangar bay, the doors sealing shut behind her. A buzzing alarm sounded, and the quietness and stillness in the hangar turned into action and what looked a lot like chaos.

In actuality, every person, even Keese, was doing their job as fast as possible, looking like chaos, but really just well-practiced movement, with every person having their own specific job.

Keese made sure his flight suit was ready, and picked up his helmet as a crewman finished fueling his A-wing. Putting his helmet on and lowering its orange-colored tinted visor, Keese quickly moved up the ladder and sat in his A-wing's cockpit. The crewman removed the ladder, fuel lines, and other docking equipment as Keese shut the A-wing's canopy, sealing the air-tight locks. Powering up his main engines and thrusters, meanwhile, was an R2-series astromech droid in its socket on the back of the A-wing. Keese connected his comlink to the R2 droid.

“Um, hello, there. I wasn't aware A-wings could hold astromech droids. This must be a modified fighter.”

After a series of twittering, Keese watched as a small screen showed the droid's reply.

“You mean to tell me that the captain had this A-wing modified just for *me*?” Keese asked.

The droid beeped in response, warning him not to get cocky.

“Don't worry, I'm not too full of myself. I know the captain did it for the Jedi that would accompany the *Niare*, and not just for me specifically.”

Another response from the droid made Keese frown.

“I am *not* getting 'the special treatment!’” Keese argued. “I'm sure the captain ordered a few modified ships for other pilots as well, not just me.”

The R2 unit beeped in negativity.

“Oh, this is the only one? Huh. I never thought that he would do that for me.”

Beep, bleep, boop.

“I am *not* getting too full of myself, dammit! What's your number, anyways?”

The droid answered with a tone of pride.

“Well, then, R2-B3, pleasure to meet you. I am Jedi Knight Keese Somar of the Jedi Order.”

The droid responded.

“How could you already know who I am?” Keese asked. “I just met you.”

Another reply.

“Oh yeah, my Republic Naval records. I'd forgotten about those.”

This time, R2-B3 offered a rather long comment.

“Artoo, what are you talking about? What do you mean my service record says I'm not worthy of being Jedi Knight status? Who wrote that comment? Was it Captain Abru?” Artoo gave an empty answer.

“If it wasn't the captain, then who was it? Do you know?” Keese demanded.

Another negative response.

“What do you mean it's restricted and you can't tell me? Artoo, just tell me who wrote the comment.”

Artoo's tone of beeping didn't require Keese to look at the screen to tell it was a refusal. Shaking his head and rolling his eyes, Keese waited a few minutes, listening to receive the command to launch. Then, Captain Abru's voice came over Keese's radio headset, as well as every other pilot's.

“Listen up, gents. We've been looking for this ship for about three weeks now. I'd hate for our efforts to go in vain. So, we're not gonna let up. We ain't gonna surrender. Sith interdicator ships have a reputation for tearing apart Republic starships, but the *Niare* isn't a regular Republic starship. No, we're better than that. We're faster, stealthier, stronger, and we got a more kick-ass crew. So, we're gonna show this Sith ship that the Republic ain't kidding around. We're gonna blow them half to hell and back. May the Force be with us all, and with Jedi Somar as he'll be the one infiltrating that thing and tearing 'em up from the inside. Good luck.”

As the Captain finished, the comlink filled with chatter. The wings were reporting in.

“Green Leader.”

“Green Two, signing on.”

“Green Three, ready to rock”

“Green Four,” Keese said, turning on his radio headset's microphone.

“Green Five, one hundred percent alive.”

“Green Six, let it be.”

“Green Seven.”

Keese checked and made sure all systems were ready one last time, then watched as the first three starfighters launched. Keese flew his A-wing out of the *Niare's* hangar bay, bringing him into open space. The Sith interdicator ship was nothing more than a tiny spec of silver in his viewport now, but that would all change as they drew closer and closer. The *Niare* accelerated to full speed, with the A-wings taking up position around her. Keese took point at the front of the formation, ready for battle.

The three weeks of boring calmness were about to come to an end, and their mission as well.

The A-wing flew through space, with Keese's mind full of thoughts as they approached the Sith warship. His mind was carried away, daydreaming about the future, and fearing about what could happen.

But, Keese's daydreaming came to an abrupt end as his friend and Jedi Knight, Nopin Leve, used the Force to pull Keese back into reality through their bond in the Force.

Nopin's skills were the opposite of Keese's. Keese was particularly skilled in combat, with the Force and a lightsaber. Nopin, however, was more skilled at meditations, mind-powers, and things of that nature. Combined, Keese and Nopin were a well-rounded team, very capable of accomplishing tasks. In combat together, Nopin often used battle meditation while Keese fought with his lightsaber.

“All fighters, prepare for battle,” Green Leader's voice said over Keese's radio headset. “Lock S-foils in attack position and accelerate to attack speed.”

Keese pushed the A-wing's speed handle all the way up to the maximum, and was able to hear the engines and stabilizers roaring even through the airtight canopy. Keese's fellow pilots came around in front of him, placing Keese in the middle of their formation,

protecting him. His radar display began to light up with red dots signifying the Sith fighters coming straight at them.

“Deflector shields up. Sith starfighters incoming. Assume hunchback formation,” Green Leader’s voice ordered.

The A-wings went into the formation, with four starfighters on top, Keese in the middle, and two at the bottom. This formation was designed to allow them to fire and pass through the Sith starfighters without forming a large target.

But Keese took the precaution that just because something was designed to do something, it doesn't mean it will *always* do it. So, taking the Masters' word that the Force was more powerful than anything else, Keese closed his eyes, and allowed the Force to guide him. In additions, Nopin acted like a guiding angel over him.

“Here they come” Green Leader said. “Open fire!”

Keese, eyes still closed, squeezed the primary weapons triggers, and the A-wing's two laser cannons fired. The two laser shots hit an oncoming Sith starfighter, igniting it in a fiery explosion.

Keese fired twice more, and four laser shots from him hit two more fighters, destroying them both. He then held down the triggers, and a barrage of laser fire poured out from his laser cannons, hitting several more targets. He pulled back on the A-wing's yoke, dodging a starfighter just by a few meters. Green Squadron continued their assault until only a handful of enemies remained.

“We took care of them for you, Green Four. Now, move in and take ‘em down from the inside and hit ‘em where it hurts,” Green Leader said. “And good luck, sir. See you on the other side, Jedi Somar.”

Keese once again accelerated his A-wing to full speed. While the rest of Green Squad distracted the Sith warship, Keese landing in one of its smaller hangar bays. Leaving the systems online for his escape, Keese opened the A-wing's canopy and jumped out, lightsaber in hand. He used the Force to snap the necks of two Sith troopers whom were standing guard in the hangar.

Running out of the hangar, Keese heard the ship's intruder alarm. Knowing that the ship was full of Dark Jedi just as - if not more - skilled than him, Keese made to decision to

run non-stop and complete his mission. Disabling the Sith warship was not, however, going to be easy. Keese realized this from the second Captain Abru gave him his mission, but hadn't really had time to figure out how to do it.

Rounding a corner revealed a squad of Sith troopers, whom opened fired instantly. Keese reached out in the Force to his friend, Nopin, in search for help. Nopin responded instantly, using their Force bond to send his counsel. It was settled, and the little boost was all it took.

He leaped up into the air, diving down and entering a roll upon re-landing, swiping his lightsaber out to neatly clip each of the troopers one-by-one in a row. Within a few seconds, their bodies tumbled down onto the durasteel floors.

Keese continued on his way towards the warship's rear, heading for the engines. Making his way through the ship, Keese came to a dead stop. Three sentinel war droids stood, holding rapid-firing blaster rifles in their arms, which were specialized to fight lightsaber-wielding enemies, firing so quickly and rapidly that the lightsaber wielder would have to struggle to block the shots. Taking on these droids would be difficult, but Keese had to try.

The three war droids opened fire, and Keese brought his lightsaber around to protect himself, using the Force to accelerate his speed. Spinning around, Keese rounded the corner, putting distance between him and the droids.

Waiting with his back up against the wall, one of the Sith droids advanced, the other two covering the first. Keese extended his right arm, bringing his lightsaber around and slicing the droid in half, coming out from behind the corner. The other two droids opened fire, but Keese was already prancing on them, lightsaber slashing down.

However he wasn't quick enough, and the second droid raised a metallic arm which caught Keese squarely in the chest, sending the Jedi Knight onto his back. Using the Force, Keese jumped up and somersaulted over the droids, coming out behind them. Still, the droids' artificial reflexes were faster than Keese's, and they turned and re-opened fire. Keese's lightsaber was nothing but a blue blur, moving so fast and blocking the oncoming blaster fire. Unfortunately for him, one of the blaster shots slipped through his defenses, catching him on the left kneecap. Unwillingly, Keese's body fell to the floor, his lightsaber

rolling out of his hands.

The two droids stood over Keese, but the Jedi summoned the Force, moving one of the droid's blaster rifle and pointing it at the other droid, then forcing the droid's artificial finger to pull and hold down the trigger.

Over a dozen shots fired from the blaster rifle, catching the second droid off guard, destroying him in a small inner-explosion. Keese used the Force to summon his lightsaber back into his hands, bringing it up and impaling the first droid directly in its central computer.

Allowing the now-disabled droid to fall, Keese injected himself with a morphine syringe which he had been carrying in one of the pouches on his belt. He powered down his lightsaber, replacing it on his belt. Painfully, Keese stood, placing all his weight on his right leg, relieving the left from pressure. Focusing back on his objective, Keese used the Force to summon several fuel barrels to the main engine fuel shaft. Placing all the ship's fuel together, Keese armed a thermal detonator's timer to go off in ten minutes, then threw it into the massive tank of fuel. This whole place would be destroyed when that timer explodes.

Limping back to the hangar bay, Keese noticed the warship was taking damage from the outside, meaning the Green Squad and the *Niare* had managed to penetrate the Sith ship's shields. Using the Force to channel out the pain he felt in his wounded knee, Keese finally made it back to the hangar bay, seeing his A-wing starfighter left untouched, R2-B3 still in the astromech droid socket. One thing was different from when Keese had left the hangar, and it was a rather big problem.

A Dark Jedi stood between Keese and his A-wing, his lightsabers ignited in his hands, the crimson blade illuminating his cowl and black robes. Keese flipped his lightsaber's power switch on, the power cell activating the weapon, producing the blue blade of raw energy.

The Dark Jedi charged at Keese, placing Keese on the defensive early. Assuming the default stance of Form V: Djem So, which was particularly handy in using powerful strikes to defend and attack. It required muscle and bluntness, both of which Keese had plenty.

The Dark Jedi's blade came forth, but Keese mustered all his strength and batted it

away, taking the offensive and making several, long, powerful swipes, all of which were eventually countered by his opponent.

Through his maneuvers, Keese could tell his opponent was specialized in Form III: Soresu, which was most useful in defense without using too much energy. Form III was required peacefulness and sureness in its practitioners.

So now that Keese had taken the first step: learning your opponent's skills, it was now time for step two: learning your opponent's weaknesses. Then, and only then, would Keese be able to defeat his foe.

So he made several more blunt, useless parries, seeing how the Dark Jedi reacted, and how he blocked them. Several times, Keese purposely went on the defensive to see how his opponent attacked. After analyzing it all quickly in his mind he had a solution: the Dark Jedi tended to inadvertently cross his feet too much when stepping forwards to attack. If Keese applied enough strength to a strike when the Dark Jedi was attacking, then his foe would lose his footing, and Keese could then finish him off easily.

Keese took several careful steps back, assuming the ready position. The Dark Jedi charged forth once more, bringing his blade down in a diagonally-angled slash. Keese brought his blade up perfectly opposite of his opponent's, batting with enough force to knock over a Wookiee. The parry caused the Dark Jedi's lightsaber to fly from his hands, his left foot tripping over the right one, forcing him to stumble backwards. Spinning around and ducking, Keese rounded about and plunged his lightsaber's blade into his opponent's left abdominal area, mortally wounding his enemy.

Powering off his lightsaber, Keese jumped into his A-wing, leaving the fallen Dark Jedi for dead on the ground. Closing the A-Wing's canopy, Keese was greeted by R2-B3, who instantly began taking-off, setting the starfighter on automatic pilot. Flying out of the Sith warship, Keese opened his headset's radio channel.

“All units, this is Green Four. Requesting all fighters move away from the Sith warship.”

Captain Abru's voice came over the radio.

“Green Leader, you heard the man. Let's put some distance between us and this bastard!”

“Copy that, captain.” Green Leader responded. “All units, return to the *Niare* immediately.”

Keese rested as his A-wing's automatic pilot flew the fighter back into the *Niare*'s hangar bay. Keese exited his A-wing, climbing down the ladder quickly with pride filling him completely. Several squad members of Green Team congratulated him as they watched the Sith warship erupt in a fiery explosion. Green Leader approached Keese last.

“Good job, Keese,” he said, shaking Keese's hand firmly. “My name's Tike. Tike Hinhu.”

“I want to thank you for having my back while I was in that thing.”

“Don't mention it. It was easy. After the Sith starfighters were gone, all we had to do was make it look like we were trying to destroy them, while you were the one that did it.” Tike's eyes looked down at Keese's left knee.

“Might want to get that checked out,” he said. “Looks painful.” Keese shrugged.

“It kind of is,” he said. “But when you got the Force, you can block out most of the pain.”

“Sounds like a handy skill,” Tike admitted.

Keese's portable comlink beeped. He opened up a pouch on his belt and retrieved the comlink.

“Keese, that was some good work,” Captain Abru's voice said. “When you get a chance, swing by the bridge.”

The channel closed and Keese replaced the comlink on his belt. Tike looked at him.

“Sounds like the captain's pretty happy,” Tike said. “I wouldn't keep him waiting for too long. See you around, Keese.”

Tike walked over to the rest of Green Squadron, while Keese exited the hangar heading to the medical bay.

Keese's knee pained him greatly, but - in a way - it didn't bother him. The medicines

the doctor aboard the *Niare* had given him were working to their fullest extent, but a blaster shot to the knee wasn't something you could just patch up. Luckily for him, Keese was told that he didn't need a cybernetic kneecap or any amputation.

Now, he was on his way to the bridge, following the request he'd received from Captain Abru no more than two hours ago. Unable to walk or move quickly, Keese had to take his time, keeping steady heading from the medical bay near the rear of the ship to the bridge, which was located at the bow of the ship.

Oddly enough, though, Keese desired to go and see Vin, the girl that had asked him to come over to her room after he returned from his mission. Keese, for a reason unbeknownst to him, found himself attracted towards Vin, wanting nothing more than to swoop her up in his arms, embracing her in a kiss, his arms around her back holding her gently, with her blond hair of sweet scents filling his nostrils and her bright blue eyes gleaming into his. But, of course, it was a fantasy, nothing more than a crush on a beautiful woman. So, with that known, he purged the thoughts from his head, replacing them with others.

Keese remembered a time back when he was sixteen-years-old, three years ago, a young Padawan training in the Enclave on Dantooine, he was appointed the task of finding a missing child. His investigations took weeks, and, much to the Jedi Council's disappointment, Keese was unable to find out any information at all regarding the child, only that he was last seen sleeping in his room. His master at the time, Jedi Master Marh Nassi, then told Keese that he had officially failed his trials, but his task *still* needed to be finished. Together, Keese and Master Nassi were able to discover that the boy was murdered and buried by his own father. Once confronted, the deceased child's father attacked Keese, shooting at him with a blaster pistol. Keese, in self-defense, killed the man, ending his insanity. To this day, Keese still remembered the anger he felt when the Council told him he shouldn't have killed the man, but Keese's will for a debate made the Council even more unsure of him. However, due to the heavy urging of Master Nassi, Keese was Knighted nonetheless.

The *Niare's* bridge doors opened, and Keese entered the command deck, limping his way up to Captain Abru.

“Captain, you wished to see me, sir?”

Abru turned and looked at Keese, mostly at his injured knee, which was covered in medical tape.

“Yes, I did,” he said. “Firstly, I wanted to congratulate you, Keese. You've done a fine job, you have. Taking down a Sith warship single-handily isn't an easy task. But, I knew you could do it. Now, as you already may have heard from the crew, we're on our way to Dantooine.”

Joy yet sadness passed through Keese's mind all at once. He was glad to return to his home, to see Master Nassi, to be able to rest and heal his knee. However, he was sad he had to leave the Green Squad behind. The *Niare* had been like a home to him.

“That is...very good news, sir,” Keese lied.

“Indeed. So, we're going to drop you off there, and we'll, meaning me and the *Niare* with her crew, will be returning to Coruscant to report on our successful mission. I sure will miss you and Jedi Leve.”

“If I may ask, sir, why is it you sent me to the Sith warship alone, and not with Jedi Leve?”

Abru considered this for a moment. “Good question, Keese. I know you're both skilled in your own ways. However, his ways are more polite, formal, and mental. Your ways are aggressive, through combat and boldness. I needed someone with your kind of ways for that mission.”

Keese took advantage of the silence for a minute. He could sense Abru was telling the truth, and that he meant what he said as a compliment for Keese, and a sincere, respectful, polite apology for Nopin. But still, there was something else. Something that was causing the captain to dislike and distrust Nopin. Something he was keeping secret deep within his mind.

“Well, wouldn't want to keep you waiting, now would we, Jedi. We'll be arriving at Dantooine in four-point-five hours, so be ready when we get there.”

And with that, Keese bowed his head to Abru, and turned towards the door, walking towards the crew quarters section of the ship. He had four hours to do as he pleased, and Vin was waiting for him. He exited the bridge, took an elevator down three levels, to Level

14, then exited, making his way towards Vin's quarters.

Keese pushed the call button on room 14-T, Vin's quarters. After a moment, the doors opened, and there Vin stood, dressed in leisure attire, not wearing her uniform.

"Come in," she said invitingly.

Keese did so, with the door closing behind him. Her quarters looked just like his, the single bed, footlocker at its bottom, a couch, and a holoscreen. Then again, since it was against Galactic Naval policy for crew members to redecorate their quarters, Keese wasn't a bit surprised. He was surprised, however, at what was *on* Vin's bed: an open traveling case full of clothing. Another small case, one with a blaster rifle, Republic Military uniform, blaster pistol, and vibrosword.

Vin sat down on her couch, looking at Keese.

"Going somewhere?" Keese asked rhetorically.

"Dantooine. You?"

Keese's brow raised, and his heart skipped a beat. He began to cough, which made Vin laugh.

"Look, you don't have to be so nervous around me," Vin assured him. "I just wanted to talk."

"I'm not nervous," he lied.

His cheeks grew bright pink, blushing uncontrollably. Not even the Force ability he used to keep this from happening worked. Keese *never* been one with the ladies. Struggling hard, he managed to get a grip, and forced himself a straight face.

"Vin, you know well I'm going to Dantooine, too."

"Oh, goodness me, you are? I had no idea!" she said sarcastically. "Well maybe I just won't go now. I'll have to cancel all my arrangements."

"Vin, I didn't mean it like that. I'm glad you're coming."

She shook her head.

"No," she said, "it's *my* fault. Even though I have *nothing* to do with the Jedi Council, they decide to order my transfer there anyways. I don't *know* anybody on Dantooine, Keese. Just you. But you've made it clear you don't really care about being my friend, so I'm out of luck there."

Keese shook his head, knowing the fault was his, but her mind was already made up. Vin stood and walked over to the door's control panel. She pressed a button, and the door opened.

"I think it's time you leave, Keese. See you on Dantooine."

And with that, Keese's welcome had expired. He turned and walked out of her quarters, the door sliding close behind him. Seeing no other option, Keese started the walk back to his own quarters.

Taking the time to painlessly limp back to his room, Keese arrived, and took off his belt and tunic. He then began to pack, his mind full of thoughts.

The *Niare* dropped out of hyperspace, and Dantooine became visible through the bridge's front viewport. His luggage was loaded onto the cargo ramp, ready to be taken off the ship. The *Niare* decelerated, entering Dantooine's atmosphere, the planet's grasslands coming into view. Only about half a kilometer above the ground, the *Niare* flew directly over the Jedi Enclave, coming to a complete stop, then began to descend.

Eventually, the starcruiser was able to touch down in a clearing of grass, about a quarter of a kilometer away from the Enclave itself, landing here due to the fact that the Enclave lacked a large spaceport, and only had one landing pad, which was reserved for some ship named the *Ebon Hawk*.

Upon touchdown, the *Niare*'s crew sprang into action, the fuel lines and loading ramp being lowered, along with the cargo bay hatch. Keese followed Captain Abru to the ship's loading ramp where the two of them stopped at the bottom of the ramp.

"Well, Keese, it was good having you aboard. The crew will miss you, as will I."

"Thank you, captain. The *Niare* is a fine ship, take care of her."

Abru nodded and shook Keese's hand firmly, a true gentleman's handshake.

After half an hour of saying farewells, the *Niare* prepared for departure. At the last minute, Keese saw Vin get off, and take a speeder to the Enclave.

The *Niare* lifted off, flying out of Keese's sight into space on it's way back to

Coruscant. Having nothing more to do, Keese turned to his best-friend and fellow Jedi Knight, Nopin Leve.

“We're home, buddy. After over three weeks, we're home.”

“We sure are.”

The Jedi Enclave was much like it was when Keese left it. In fact, it was the same. There were very few Jedi Knights, the majority of the Jedi were just apprentices and Padawans. The Enclave was still full of complaining farmers and other citizens of Dantooine, some even criticizing the Jedi Order itself. Other than that, the Council of Masters remained in the council chambers, working through the struggles and challenges of recruiting, finding, and training Force-sensitives during a war, just like any military recruiter struggled to gather numbers.

The “aggressive negotiations” practice chamber was full of Padawans training with practice lightsabers, designed to give a minor sting if contact was made rather than severing a limb... or being killed. The Padawans trained restlessly since the Order was in a hurry to have more Jedi Knights war the dark Sith.

However, due the demand of Jedi, the training period of time needed for a Jedi them to become entirely ready was shorted dramatically, resulting in the fall of many Jedi students, with some even joining the Sith Empire. Those that didn't join Darth Malak's Sith Empire were considered to be foolish, as they then were wanted by both the Jedi and Sith, without protection from either.

Keese, however, knew better than to even consider joining the Sith. They didn't care for their own. They lied and killed each other, and were ruthless against one another, showing no mercy even in practice duels, in which they use real lightsabers against themselves, often ending in serious injury.

Keese and Nopin rounded the corridor, the Council chamber's doors opening in front of them, entering into the large, circular, round room. Jedi Masters Vrook Lamar, Dorak, Vandar Tokare, and Zhar Lestin of the Jedi Enclave Council stood in the center of the

chambers, the four of them deep in discussion. Also with them, were Jedi Masters Kavar and Keese and Nopin's former Master, Master Marh Nassi, whom were talking with the Council. Together, the six Masters were some of the best the Order had, if not *the* best. Keese knew Vrook, Vandar, Zhar, and Master Nassi. But, he didn't know Master Kavar, whom was famous for his skills with a lightsaber.

Keese proceeded into the chambers, earning the attention of the Masters. He gave a polite bow, and the Masters returned it respectfully. Master Kavar stared at Keese with great interest.

“So, you are Jedi Somar?” Kavar asked. “Nice to finally meet you. Master Nassi has told me so many things. Another few years and your fame will surpass mine.” Keese knew this to be a mere joke. Hardly anyone knew of him, and he was just as common as any other Jedi Knight. Kavar turned his gaze towards Nopin.

“And you're Jedi Leve? A skilled Jedi Consular from what Master Nassi has told me. Talk to Master Vrook, get a page out of his old book.”

Nopin bowed. “Thank you, Master Kavar. However, I believe Master Vrook is very keen on keeping his tips and tricks a secret. Remind me to butter him up later.”

This drew a laugh from all five Master, but Keese wasn't paying attention. His gaze was focused on a group of armored humans entering the Council chambers. Keese could still hear the Jedi droid ordering the intruders to discontinue their advancement, but because it was unarmed, the armored beings ignored the useless droid.

The intruders then pulled out Blaster rifles, aiming them at two Jedi Padawans, the younglings only approximately six years of age. Keese counted nine intruders, and three captive Padawans. He was able to draw a single conclusion.

They were mercenaries. Ruthless and cruel, they'd do anything for money, and were the scum of the galaxy.

Of the nine mercenaries, four entered the Council chambers, the other five standing guard. The leader of them, a black-haired man, wearing a radio headset and visor, pointed his Blaster rifle directly at Master Nassi and squeezed the trigger.

The blaster rifles were repeating ones, but the several bolts aimed at Master Nassi never hit her, but were sent flying back by Master Vandar's powerful use of the Force.

Master Vrook's lightsaber was out and ignited in a split second, but not before Master Kavar's two blue-bladed shots were. Kavar's blades blocked a barrage of bullets shot from the four intruders, spinning so fast that to Keese, they were nothing but a colored blur. Nopin placed himself behind Master Zhar, whom was igniting his lightsaber, holding his position and allowing the other Masters to dispatch the intruders.

Master Vandar hadn't used his lightsaber, but was sending powerful waves of Force energy at his enemies, causing of the intruders to whirl backwards, slamming into the wall. The other five intruders entered the chamber, firing their repeating Blaster rifles. Master Kavar managed to deflect all the oncoming bolts back at a single intruder, a dozen of them striking the man in the chest, killing him undoubtedly.

Unfortunately for him, Keese never noticed the intruder sneaking around behind him, whom kicked his injured leg, which wasn't hard to notice as it was wrapped in medical bandages. The blow caused Keese's legs buckle and give out from underneath him, sending him tumbling onto the floor, yelling in pain.

Master Nassi was already on the offensive, protecting his former Padawan by decapitating the kicker before dropping into a defensive position to defend the helpless Keese. Kavar somersaulted over an intruder, slashing his body three times.

Vrook swung his lightsaber around, cutting down two more of the mercenaries. Vandar's next wave of Force energy caught an intruder off guard, fatally slamming him against the stone wall so hard, the wall cracked, as did the intruder's bones. Vrook's next attack took out another intruder, with master Zhar taking down yet another.

Now, the only intruder remaining was the leader. Kavar rounded his lightsaber so quickly that when he sliced the leader's Blaster rifle in half, the other half in his hand flew away several meters. Rather than killing the leader, Kavar spun around, allowing his boot to catch the man in the chin, knocking him out unconscious.

With the three Padawans free, two older Padawans towards their Knighting age, came in, lightsabers ready. Vrook waved them off, and much disappointment came over the two Padawans' faces.

The Masters replaced their lightsabers on their belts, and Master Nassi helped Keese back to his feet. Keese's injured leg had been snapped and broken again, blood now

covering the medical bandages. Nassi and Nopin helped Keese get to the medical room in the Enclave, setting him down on a bed, allowing the doctor and Jedi Healer to aid him. His leg was snapped back into the correct position and re-bandaged with medical wraps and tape. With both the doctor's and Master Nassi's urges, he agreed to spend the night in the medical room.

The following morning, with the aid of medicines and pain relievers, Keese managed to awake rather early to attend a Jedi conference. Held in the sublevels, a conference was one of the few times when all Jedi on Dantooine could enter the sublevels, and listened to the Council's announcements.

Keese entered the sublevels, which he had only been in three times before in his nineteen years of living on Dantooine. The sublevels were restricted to most, but Master Dorak spent the majority of his time in the sublevels studying the archives.

Now, Keese entered the main chamber of the archives, and found all the Jedi on Dantooine gathered. There were at least over a hundred, all cramped into the small main chamber. Some stretched out into the sublevel's corridors. At the top of a portable platform stood the Jedi Council of the Enclave and Masters Nassi and Kavar. Much to his surprise, Nopin was with them, too, motioning Keese to join him. A little dumbfounded, Keese limped his way through the crowd of Jedi, and, with Nopin's assistance, stepped onto the platform.

After a couple minutes, Master Vrook signaled the Jedi crowd to be quiet. Respectfully, the crowd fell silent. Then, Master Vandar stood onto another platform that was a little taller, making him visible despite his short height. He cleared his throat and began.

“My fellow Jedi, we are gathered here at this time to discuss a rather serious and unfortunate matter. Master Kavar, has taken it upon himself to investigate the Sith's capture of Anon, and the various reports of Sith activity in that region. We do, however, have another matter to discuss. It appears Darth Malak has gained some intelligence reports on the Enclave. Fortunately, we know he is not yet aware of which planet we are on in the system, therefore we are safe for the time being. Now, I ask you all to please listen closely, and observe the Knighting ceremony of eight young Padawans, skilled and ready to receive honor of being a Knight in our Order.”

Eight Jedi stepped onto the platform, and Master Kavar grabbed Nopin and Keese, taking them off the platform and out of the crowd, leaving the sublevel. Keese's curiosity grew, and Master Kavar led them into the Enclave's Council chambers, then closed the door.

“Master Vandar's right, I'm going to Anon, but you two are coming with me,” he said, pacing up and down in front of Keese and Nopin. “We must leave now, though, as undoubtedly there are Sith spies and Dark Jedi still pretending to be Jedi here in the Enclave. Nopin, did you gather your things like I asked you to?”

Nopin nodded. “Yes, Master Kavar. And, like you asked, I gathered Keese's few possessions as well.”

Kavar looked pleased. “Good, good. Keese are you ready?”

Having nothing other to say, Keese nodded his head.

“I am,” he stated.

“Good,” Kavar said. “Let us leave, then.”

He lead the way out of the Council chambers and to a landing pad, the same one that the *Ebon Hawk* had landed on. Now, a freighter was landed there, ready for takeoff. Kavar smiled.

“The *Lebela*, a nice, little, old freighter. She's modified with two laser cannon turrets, capable of defending herself quite alright. She's saved my back quite a few times.”

Kavar motioned for Keese and Nopin to board, and they did as requested. After several minutes, Kavar himself boarded. He jerked a thumb towards the ship's cockpit.

“I think you might want to look in there,” he said.

Curiously, Keese walked through the ship's hall and found himself in the cockpit. It resembled much of the *Dynamic*-class freighters, with a pilot and co-pilot's seat, and electronic panels everywhere else. The ship was obviously modified by Kavar to be advanced and enhanced. What surprised Keese most, was the female human sitting in the pilot's chair.

“Hello, Keese,” Vin said, staring at him.

Keese's jaw dropped, and Vin chuckled.

“Still nervous? You're going to have to get over that. We're crewmates now, you and

me. And Master Kavar is our captain.”

As if reading Keese's mind, Vin explained.

“Master Kavar's a fair pilot, but he knew not good enough for our little journey. So, he asked Captain Abru for a recommendation regarding a pilot, which just so happened to be me. Master Kavar asked me if I wanted to pilot his ship, and I figured it'd be way better than boring myself to death in the Enclave. I mean, I wasn't even there when those mercenaries attacked. You guys took all the fun away from me.”

There was a laugh from down the cockpit's access hallway. Kavar appeared, Nopin behind him.

“That's another reason I picked you: you aggressive attitude. It should come in handy in a battle where we're running from Sith starfighters. Fast things, those little buggers, but not able to outmatch the *Lebela*. Oh, and Keese, by the way, we have two more crew members I'd like you to meet.”

An astromech droid and a Hunter-Killer series droid entered the cockpit. Kavar pointed at the astromech droid.

“Of course you remember R2-B3, the droid that helped you destroy that Sith warship. He managed to sneak off the *Niare* just to be with you. Isn't that touching?” Kavar then motioned towards the HK series droid.

“This is HK-48, a combat war droid, modified by myself. He's brand new, featuring the latest and best systems and weapons. He certainly should prove in handy against some Sith troops. Hey, he'll even give us a hand with Dark Jedi. He's got a built-in repeating blaster rifle.”

Keese looked at the two droids, both of which turned and exited the cockpit.

“So, Vin, we're ready to leave, I believe. Let's put the Enclave to our stern and get out of here. We've got ourselves a planet to liberate,” Kavar declared.

After a couple minutes, Vin piloted the *Lebela* off the landing pad, and left the Jedi Enclave and Dantooine behind. She pulled back on a lever, and the stars stretched into lines as the ship entered hyperspace.

The *Lebela's* quarters were fairly nice for a freighter. It made Keese feel like he was back aboard the *Niare*, sleeping in his quarters there. Keese was disappointed in the fact that he'd only gotten to stay on Dantooine for less than two days, and was back on a mission again. However, with Master Kavar, Nopin, Vin, Artoo, and a combat droid, Keese was at ease...for now, anyways.

The previous day, after they'd left Dantooine, Kavar informed the rest of the *Lebela's* crew that Anon was under a planet-wide quarantine, and that a blockade was set up, preventing any ships from entering or exiting the planet.

Their plan was to utilize the *Lebela's* state-of-the-art stealth systems, which should allow them to pass virtually invisible through the blockade and down to Anon's surface, and then they would be free to act from there.

What made Keese nervous, though, was how they were going to neutralize the entire Sire occupation on a planet with just the five of them. When Keese asked Kavar, the Jedi Master had said no other help was going to assist them, and that they'd be on their own. This made Keese's stomach turn.

He lied now in his bed, large enough for just him. Artoo was in sleep mode in the quarters' entrance hallway, with HK monitoring the ship's autopilot systems in the cockpit. Master Kavar was in the main hold, meditating, and Vin was in the bed below Keese's, sleeping quietly and peacefully. Growing more and more tired, Keese closed his eyes and slowly drifted into the realm of sleep...

Keese sat up, his loud alarm awaking him instantly. He was back aboard the *Lebela*, awoken from the nightmare he'd been forced to endure. Vin had, apparently, programmed an alarm to go off when they entered Anon system, which was now producing a loud *beep* throughout the crew quarters.

In the bunk below his, Vin awoke, standing up and taking a stretch. She turned and

bent over Keese.

“Wake up, Jedi. Time to get some action.”

Keese exited his bunk, dressing in civilian attire, knowing they'd need to be in disguise on Anon. Keese's belt held nothing but his lightsaber, comlink, and grapple hook, which was covered by an over-the-head cloak. Keese and Vin walked to the *Lebela's* cockpit, where Master Kavar and Artoo were located. Kavar was sitting in the co-pilot's chair, and Vin sat in the pilot's chair. After a couple minutes, the *Lebela* exited hyperspace, and a planet was visible past the viewport, with a ring around it. As they drew nearer and nearer to the world, Keese noticed it wasn't a ring at all, but a blockade of Sith starships, big and small.

“Activating all stealth systems,” Vin said, pressing several buttons.

The *Lebela* continued on passing right through the blockade unnoticed, the Sith unaware of the new arrivals. Master Kavar was using the Force to conceal their presences, and hiding the *Lebela's* visible state, making the ship completely invisible both in the Force and on the radar and inferred.

Once they entered Anon's atmosphere, Kavar released the Force concealment, and minutes later, Vin deactivated the stealth systems.

In a word, Anon was spectacular. An ecumenopolis, or world completely covered by one big, urban city, Anon's skyscrapers and glass towers stood kilometers high, resembling Taris before it's recent devastating bombardment.

The *Lebela* swooped down, with Vin piloting it through the towering skyscrapers, avoiding some by mere meters just for show. Bringing the ship around, the *Lebela* touched down on a public landing pad, with four ships on either side. After shutting down all major systems to conserve power and fuel, Vin stood, following Kavar out of the cockpit along with Keese and Artoo. Kavar opened the boarding ramp hatch, the ramp lowering and touching down on the metal landing pad.

Kavar turned to HK.

“HK-48, guard the ship. Nobody but us gets on, no exceptions. I don't care if it's the Dark Lord Malak himself. *Nobody.*”

“Obvious response: Of course, master. As always, I will obey,” the droid replied.

Nopin stepped forward. "I'll stay here and help him guard."

Kavar nodded, then led the way from the *Lebela*, taking Keese, Vin, and R2 to a cantina. The three of them ordered drinks, and, upon the bartender's request, Artoo had to remain outside due to the no droids policy. In their booth, Kavar leaned forward.

"I've got use some help I contacted last night while you two were sleeping. She's a bounty hunter, semi-retired and not pleasant, but she has some information regarding the Sith embassy here on Anon."

The three of them waited several minutes, before finally a human woman sat down in their booth. Kavar looked at her, nodding in approving gaze.

"Keese and Vin, meet Jani Mespar. She's going to help us break into the Sith embassy."

"For which I will then later be paid for," Jani added, staring at Kavar.

"Wow," Vin scoffed, "you went from being a bounty hunter to a mercenary. Got a thing for scummy, low professions, do you?"

Keese could feel Jani's anger surge at Vin's insult, and simultaneously felt Vin fill up with amusement. Kavar simply held out his hands in between the two.

"Now, now, ladies. Let us remember the *Sith* are the enemy," he said, drawing gazes from both Vin and Jani. "Now, we must work *together* to free Anon. Jani, please tell us your plan."

"Yeah, please do. But remember: sleeping with every Sith soldier trying to convince them to leave will take too much time," Vin smeared.

Jani was up and on her feet, as was Vin. Trying to be as subtle as possible, Kavar used the Force to push the two women back down in their seats.

"Well," Jani started, "I've already discovered how we're going get 'em. I've found out that if we can destroy their embassy, the Sith would be completely in disarray, and would have no headquarters to lead them. The people of Anon will naturally see their weakness and riot, and, seeing no need to hold onto Anon any longer, the Sith will retreat, leaving Anon behind."

Actually, Keese kind of liked her plan. He leaned forward, entering himself in the conversation.

“That's a bold plan, but it just might work. Any idea on how we're going to destroy the embassy, Jani?” Keese asked.

“Yes,” she answered. “We're going to bypass their lower security door, the one that's broken and not used. It's pretty far down, located in the lower city. Nobody ever comes in or out of that thing. So, Kavar told me you guys don't have any technicians or slicers, so I got one of my best friends in the galaxy to help us out.”

A male Barabel joined them, sitting down next to Jani.

“Everybody, this is Tisare Tesona, one of my best friends,” Jani announced.

Immediately, Keese could feel that Tisare was Force-sensitive, enough that, if he were still an infant, the Jedi Order would have taken him in, and trained him to be Jedi. Oddly enough, Keese could tell that Master Kavar wasn't able to sense the strong Force-sensitivity in Tisare like he was. Still, Keese kept silent.

“Tisare will get us past the broken door and rig all the Sith's stored explosions in their armory to detonate at one time. This should cause the fuel and oil tanks to be set ablaze, and create a big enough explosion to destroy the entire embassy.”

Kavar nodded. “That's a good plan, but we don't want to hurt any civilians during our mission. An explosion might do just that.”

“That's why,” Jani continued, “we call in and report a bomb threat to the Sith embassy as soon as we get inside. They'll order all civilians and visitors away, leaving only troopers and Dark Jedi.”

Keese was pleased and convinced.

“Alright,” Kavar said, “we'll do it. Tomorrow morning, daybreak.”

Once again, the crew quarter's alarm awoke Keese, causing a stir from both him and Vin. The two got out of bed and began preparing for their mission. Keese wore his civilian attire again, but placed all his equipment on his belt, not just his lightsaber. Now having a Blaster pistol, his lightsaber, comlink, grapple hook, his A99 aquata breather, Keese once again covered it all with his cloak.

After a little over a standard hour, Keese, Kavar, and Vin left the *Lebela*, walking towards the Sith embassy. Three city blocks away, the three of them took a public elevator down to its lowest level. Keese noticed that the lower they went, the more and more people got off. Eventually, the three of them were the only ones left.

The elevator's doors opened, and there was a dramatic change from the upper city to the lower city. The lower city was filthy, scummy, and full of thugs and gang members. Just walking off the elevator and smelling a rotting, foul scent, Keese wanted to gag. The three of them, obviously not belonging to the low poverty, didn't blend it at all, standing out like a Bantha in a pile of Huts.

They arrived at the Sith embassy's broken door which was deserted with nobody even around. At the door was Jani and Tisare, waiting for them to arrive. Their plan was then set in motion.

Tisare cut the door's control panel cover off, revealing the wires and buttons. After slicing through, the doors slowly slid open halfway, broken to the point to where they were unable to open any farther.

Together, the five of them infiltrated the base. Jani took a comlink off her belt, and opened a channel to the Sith embassy's main office.

"You need you get out of there as soon as possible. I just saw a bunch of thugs break in, and they're planting charges in the embassy. Hurry! You must do something!"

And with that poor performance of fear, evacuation alarms sounded throughout the embassy, ringing and blaring in the corridors. People were panicking, running out of the embassy with all haste. Even some cowardice Sith troopers left.

Finally, they arrived at the armory. Two Dark Jedi were standing guard. Kavar ignited his lightsaber, which he held in his right hand, and his shoto, which he used in his left. Keese also ignited his lightsaber, as did the two Dark Jedi.

Kavar cut off of the Dark Jedi's attacks, flipping them over and causing him to fall, although they quickly regained their stance.

Keese spun around, turning and blocking a slash from the first Dark Jedi. Jani and Vin used their blaster rifles to engage an advancing squad of Sith troopers, and covered Tisare, whom was rigging all the explosives.

Keese lashed out an attack which was blocked, and the Dark Jedi placed a boot in his face. Kavar had already disposed of two Dark Jedi, and was now dueling a Sith Master whom was wielding a double-bladed lightsaber.

Keese kicked the Dark Jedi in the leg, then followed up by plunging his lightsaber into the Dark Jedi's chest. Kavar decapitated the Sith Master with a beautiful arcing slash, but three more were already attacking him.

Keese took on one of the Sith Masters, leaving Kavar with two to deal with. Keese instantly realized why the Sith Masters were named as such. The Sith's steel boot caught Keese in his injured leg, and, for the third time, snapped it, breaking the bone. A loud *crack* sound popped, and Keese tumbled to the floor. The Sith Master raised his lightsaber to finish Keese, but a blaster bolt struck him in the face, sending his dead body back four meters. Keese turned his head to find Vin coming towards him, aiding him back to his feet.

"Tisare has finished rigging the charges. It's time to get out of here," Vin yelled over the noise of the battle.

Kavar turned towards the exit, followed by Jani, Tisare, and Vin, who was helping a limping Keese. The five escaped, coming out through a door that led them to the upper city, continuing to run as far as possible away from the Sith embassy.

Security and fire speeders had already arrived, along with Sith reinforcements. Keese assumed they thought the five of them were just late in escaping, because none of them made any attempt to stop them as they ran into the gathering crowd of citizens.

From behind them, a thunderous explosion boomed, and Keese turned and felt the heat as he saw the Sith embassy erupt in a fiery explosion. The people in the crowd cheered, glad their hostile enforcers were now in dismay. The crowd quickly turned into an angry mob, attacking the Sith and winning, gaining more and more followers.

The five of them eventually returned to the *Lebela*, and Keese was placed in the ship's medical room, with Vin patching up his re-broken knee, with Kavar using the Force to heal the skin. Vin wrapped it again in medical bandages, and Keese used the Force to take the pain out of his mind, along with pain relievers.

"Tell you what, Jedi," Jani said later on that night to Kavar. "Me and Tisare will stay with you guys, and join your crew. In turn, you don't have to pay us."

“I'd be happy to have you two join our group,” Kavar said, “However, this group is no longer mine.”

Keese, Nopin, and Vin looked at each other.

“What are you talking about?” Nopin demanded.

“I'm saying,” Kavar started, “that I'm not going to accompany you guys any more. We are returning to Coruscant, and when we get there, I will stay while you four undertake your own missions. The *Lebela* is yours now, so I expect you to take care of her.”

Keese stomach turned, unhappy about

“Keese, I've decided to name *you* captain. I know you'll do well at whatever it is you get assigned to do,” Kavar finished.

Keese was surprised by the action, yet honored as well. That night, Vin and Keese were joined in their quarters by Nopin and Kavar, with Tisare and Joni having their own quarters.

The following day, after the Sith blockade had been lifted, Vin piloted the *Lebela* to Coruscant, landing at Kavar's private docking pad in the Jedi Temple. The Jedi Master left the crew, and Keese, Nopin, Vin, Joni, and Tisare were assigned a new mission: find and eliminate the Sith Lord Darth Samah, a former apprentice of Darth Malak.

So with that, they fired up the *Lebela's* engines once more, ready to undertake their next mission...