

Mos Eisley

Tatooine

The old man tensed up as he walked through Mos Eisley.

He wore a cloak that fully covered him, from head to toe. He frowned – something was troubling him; his senses began working the problem. He was feeling something that he had not felt for many years; there were Jedi on Tatooine.

That was not a *huge* surprise; he knew that there could be – one in particular at any rate, however, what he felt was different – a young female and a young male. They were undisciplined, that he knew and they were close.

What *did* that mean?

Later that morning

Something told me that the next few days were going to go badly.

I also had no idea why that crazy old man was staring at me – I ignored him and set about gathering some much needed supplies for what could be more than a few weeks in space. The costs had gone up considerably on the Outer Rim as supplies were being interdicted by the Empire and either taxed extortionately, or otherwise simply diverted.

I had everything that we purchased, delivered to our Docking Bay, as it was bought.

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Apart from that crazy old man, I noticed something else unnerving – Greedo. I found the Rodian creepy and generally overzealous. He often gave us bounty hunters a bad name, bending and breaking our rules as he saw fit. What also worried me was who he usually worked for: Jabba the Hutt. If he was skulking around – and he *was* skulking – that meant the bounty hunter was ‘on the clock’.

There was one intriguing question that I needed answered: who was he after?

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His behaviour told me that he was trying to avoid being seen by someone, but who... I followed him into the cantina where he bought a drink and I watched as he took a seat in the back, behind the bar.

“What are we doing?” Dave asked, slightly confused.

Oops, I had forgotten about Dave, who had blindly followed me into the Cantina!

“Greedo – he’s a grade one loser who *pretends* to be a bounty hunter; he’s not anywhere near *my league*! He’s ‘bounty hunting’ at the moment and I want to know who he’s after...”

“Okay – so what do we do?”

“Just follow my lead, apprentice bounty hunter!”

Dave chuckled and adjusted his scarf as I adjusted my own to cover the lower halves of our faces.

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I headed over to the bar, bought a pair of daro-root beers, handed one to Dave and I then made a beeline for the booth where Greedo was sitting; he looked rather nervous. As I moved, I discretely primed my blaster – I trusted Greedo as much as I did Darth Vader!

“Mind if we join you?”

Greedo looked up and I could see instant recognition in his eyes.

“Private booth – sorry!”

I ignored him and pushed into the far corner of the booth where I could control the entrance, placing my drink on the table. Dave slid in beside me.

“Hit Girl, I want no trouble!” Greedo muttered.

“Neither do I and nor does my friend, Kick-Ass...”

“Kick-Ass?”

“Got a problem with that?” Dave growled.

Greedo raised his hands and shook his head. He could be a right wimp when given the opportunity – I had bigger balls than he did!

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“You got a contract, Greedo?” I asked conversationally.

“Maybe...”

“Anybody I know?”

“No, no, just scum.”

“I know a lot of scum, including you – who?”

My question was answered when I saw Greedo’s furtive look towards a newly arrived pair of customers walking up to the bar. One was over seven-foot tall and covered in fur, the other about six-foot or so tall and ruggedly handsome... Sort that dirty mind out Mindy, focus!

“Thank you – have a nice life!”

I nudged Dave and he quickly downed his drink before glaring at Greedo as he stood up. I followed, downing my own drink and headed straight for the Cantina exit, nodding at Solo and tipping my head towards Greedo who was trying to hide himself from Solo’s vision.

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“Somebody is in for a world of hurt,” I commented as we reached sunlight and the street.

“Solo?”

“My money’s on Greedo dying...”

The Sentinel

We returned to the ship to take stock of our freshly acquired supplies.

Kate had completed the inventory and as I ran my eyes down it, I was concerned. We had nowhere near what we needed for an extended stay in space. My biggest concern was our limited supply of Tibanna gas – the hyperdrive used it – the guns used it – even my blasters used it!

I sat down in the Lounge and began to break apart my blasters. Dave sat down to watch as I checked over the components.

“The Blastech DL-88 Heavy Blaster – border line illegal in most systems and entirely illegal in others! Has a maximum capacity of fifty shots before the power-pack needs replaced – the gas cartridge will last out about five-hundred shots. It’ll also stun if necessary; the selector is on the left side behind the power-pack.

“On the right side is the power-pack release lever – the pack pops out... Just like that and slots back in quickly and easily – I have various capacities: twelve, twenty-five or fifty. The gas cartridge fits into the butt, under here and is inserted and removed with a twisting action... Like so. Go on – try it...”

I reassembled and passed over a blaster to Dave to experiment with. He deftly removed the power-pack and the gas cartridge with ease before reinstalling both correctly.

“Has a good weight to it,” Dave commented.

“Gets a bit heavy at times!”

“Where did you get them – I’ve never seen that model before...”

“I’ve only known you a few days; I need to keep *some* secrets... The blaster has some other tricks too – but I’ll save them for another time.”

I hefted the blaster in my hand – it had some weight to it and Mindy carried two!

They were obviously custom and an exact match. The grip was curved and inlaid with what seemed to be some type of wood. The curved trigger was enclosed by a trigger guard. Above that, was the cylindrical power-pack which would pop out to the left side of the weapon.

At the rear, was the safety. In front of the power-pack, but below the barrel, was the main firing coil with its cooling heatsink and vents. Towards the end of the barrel was the final stage collimator and the cone-shaped flash-cone or flash suppressor.

The weapon was comfortable to hold and the sights were good.

The following afternoon

I needed credits and I needed Tibanna gas.

One way to get the Tibanna gas, was to buy it – legally. That required credits – a *lot* of credits! To get the credits, I needed a job – a job that paid. Tibanna gas could be obtained from Cloud City in the

Bespin system. It would take us a little under five days to travel from Tatooine to Bespin, however, we would need a substantial amount of credits *before* we visited – no credit would be available!

It was time to teach Kick-Ass how to be a bounty hunter.

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“The Bounty Hunters Guild has been around for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. I’m a member of the Guild, so I have to follow certain rules, or I get myself kicked out. The benefit of being a member is that we get notified of potential bounties way before they get advertised. That gives us the edge, plus Guild members can get higher rates.

“Within the Guild, there are Houses. We all aspire to join House Salaktori, which is for elite bounty hunters only – got some ways to go till I get there! For now, I’m a member of House Ragnar – we specialise in unorthodox methods...”

“Such as...?” Dave enquired.

“You’ll find out as we go... For now, lesson one in ‘Bounty Hunters’, is over.”

What was I getting myself involved in?

A bounty hunter? A Jedi? My mind was reeling with way too much information and not much of it good. It seemed that everything about my current life could get me killed. Bounty hunters were killed on a regular basis and there was a standing order for all Jedi to be killed on sight. I was throwing everything in with a thirteen-year-old girl who seemed almost a child, but I had to admit that she possessed both skills and galaxy-smarts. She was still alive after wandering the galaxy alone. I had witnessed her protect and handle herself. She saw danger and sought to avoid it if possible. Maybe I would keep living just that little bit longer.

Hell, I had almost died on Coruscant, but she had saved me. We had both embarked on a steep learning curve on the path to becoming Jedi. So, what did that make us? Padawans? Didn’t Padawans have a Master? We had no master. We were both force-sensitive, but neither of us knew how to control our new-found abilities.

What was I getting myself involved in?

My mind was in turmoil. A strong part of me said to go back to being a bounty hunter and *nothing else...* I barely knew the boy, but I was about to follow his weird dream literally across the damn galaxy. I was going to expend thousands of credits on his dream – only, it was not just his dream; it was mine too.

I wanted to find out more about how I had become what I was turning into and Dave could help me with that – we were both the same. The all mysterious force had drawn us together...

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I made my way through to the cockpit and confirmed that all was ready for launch. It was time to begin the search for our destiny, whatever that may behold for us both. For now, our destiny was on that remote planet and that remote planet was also on the other side of the galaxy, so for now I

could concentrate on being a bounty hunter and building up my stock of credits so that we could actually get there.

“So,” Dave enquired as he walked into the cockpit. “Where are we headed, oh mysterious Hit Girl?”

I grinned.

“Nar Shaddaa – the largest moon of Nal Hutta. We call it Little Coruscant; there is business to be made from that steaming cess pit – assuming we survive...”

“Can’t wait!” Dave replied.

“We’ll be cooped up together for eight days...”

“I can cope if you can... we got enough fuel and supplies for that long a trip?”

“Kind of...” I replied uneasily. “Kate’ll just have to eat less...”

“Funny!” Kate commented. “The ship is sealed, the hyperdrive and ion drives are primed.”

“Okay – bringing the repuslorlift engines to idle...”

The deck plates vibrated as the core of the *Sentinel* came to life.

“Navicomputer is set for Rishi...”

“An abandoned Clone War outpost about two days from here.”

“Bit cryptic...”

“A girl needs to keep *some* secrets.”

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The Sentinel lifted smoothly off the ground and rose upwards, out of the docking bay. I felt four satisfying thumps as the landing struts locked into place... I gave the control panel a fist and the fifth landing strut locked into place a few seconds later. We angled upwards slightly and accelerated into the sky. A few moments later, we broke out into the blackness of space and after a few seconds, the Sentinel tipped over to starboard, took up the correct course and the cockpit windows filled with streaks of white light as we accelerated to light-speed and on into the blue tunnel of hyperspace.

“I’m hungry!”