

STAR WARS: OUTER RIM

It is a lawless time. With the end of the Republic, the outer rim and expansion regions fall into the clutches of crime syndicates and gangs. Once great cities have fallen, victims of pillaging and wars between the criminal empires.

Although the chaos has destroyed cities and worlds, some safe havens are established, where bounty hunters and local militias keep the peace. The largest of these safe havens is Torani Station, a large satellite orbiting planet Raymoria. Large bases like Torani are commonly used as dens for the various bounty hunting guilds, and often have training facilities for young upstarts.

These stations are often the targets of crime syndicates, due to their vast storages of credits and spices. The orbital platforms have no defenses and must rely on their bounty hunter protection....

Introduction

“Remember, keep your breathing steady. If hyperventilate your aim becomes inaccurate. Head still. Imagine the bolt’s path of travel.” The instructor was calmly guiding Kerrin’s arms as he aimed the rifle at the target 200 meters away. Kerrin steadied his breathing and loosened his muscles. “Good.” The instructor said. *Full breath in, half breath out, 1 second pause, then nudge.* Kerrin recited the steps in his mind. The instructor stressed that you shouldn’t be pulling the trigger, that invites “yanking the shot” as the instructor

calls it. *Nudge, don't pull.* He had said earlier. *A nudge will ensure the rifle doesn't move when you fire.* Kerrin lined up the scope, breathed full in, half out, then fired. He kept his eye on the scope, in firing position, in case he was told to do a follow-up shot. *Remember, it may not always be a clean hit. You may need a second shot to finish the target.* The instructor has stressed on Kerrin's first day. For this exercise he was simulating incapacitating a target, then gather his quarry and escape by way of jetpack. A "Tag n' Bag" as it was called. "Clean hit." The instructor said. This told Kerrin that the target was incapacitated, but not killed. He set down the rifle, and used the jetpack to pick up his prey, a training droid built to weigh and feel like an average sized being. He unholstered his pistol and approached the deactivated droid on the ground. There were already droids simulating security officers running to the scene, and Kerrin set his blaster to stun and neutralized all of the droids in 5 quick shots. He scooped up the droid and flew back to his perch where the instructor waited. "Very good run. Good thinking of setting your blaster to stun, too." The instructor said. "Yeah, well I thought in a real situation I wouldn't need to kill the security officers, they're just doing their job." Kerrin replied.

"I see. That will be all for sniping today, Kerrin. Be back after lunch for some hand-to-hand practice."

"Will do."

"Tell the Illustrious Jabba we will be arriving at Torani Station shortly." Captain Piko said. "Very good captain. You may attack when you are ready." Said Moowag, Jabba's head advisor, and then cut the transmission link. Piko was anxious to get into combat again. It had been weeks since his last excursion. "Prepare the boarding ships! I want to hit that station hard and get out before they realize we were even there!" He yelled to the crew. "Tell the others." He ordered the comms officer. He went to the hanger where his own boarding craft lay in wait. "When the blast shields open, get going."

The first indication of a problem Kerrin saw was the fleet of Hutt ships emerging from hyperspace. The second was when boarding craft swarmed out of the docking bays of the ships. Third was the large rumble, the viewport shields lowering, and finally, the emergency alarms. To the average civilian, the alarms would have meant run to the saferooms and hide, but to hunters and hunters in training, it meant get to the armory and load up. Kerrin got his armor and weapons from his equipment storage containers and followed the small pack of hunters to the main engagement. When he rounded the corner

and ran straight into chaos. Shop stalls were on fire, civilians unlucky enough to be in the market were running around screaming, not making things easier. “Everyone, set to kill, but avoid civilians.” Someone said over the comm. One of the gangsters noticed the reinforcements and started firing at them. Kerrin dived for cover behind a toppled fruit stand. Blaster bolts zipped above his head and impacted against the stand. He drew his pistol and got ready to fire a volley in the general direction of the gangsters. Not a single shot hit anything. “Get it together Kerrin, remember your training.” It was Kerrin’s mentor over a private comm.

“Sorry, I’m just a bit nervous. This is my first battle in my career.”

“I know. Just keep your head and you’ll do fine.”

That seemed to be all Kerrin needed. He collected his thoughts, then peered over the corner to assess where the gangsters were. He slowly raised his blaster over the stall and fired a volley. All three shots from the burst hit a target. Before any of the gangsters could fire back, Kerrin dived back under the stall, just as a burst of enemy fire flew over his head or slammed into the stall. “You might want to get out of there, kid. Your cover’s almost penetrated.” Someone said. Kerrin finally realized that the inner wall of the stall was starting to smoke, and he found cover behind a pillar. “These gangsters are after the bank vaults! Someone get down there!” Someone said over the radio. “I can ge—” But the message was cut off. It sounded like Kerrin’s instructor. He scanned the battlefield and found his instructor by the big red X painted over his helmet as a gimmick. Kerrin sprinted and dove to get to his instructor. “Kerrin, get down to the vaults! The civilians need the money to survive.” The instructor coughed. “You can fend of the attack. Your training has covered every aspect of this. Trust your instincts, Kerrin.” With that, he was dead. Kerrin lost control of himself at that point. He stood up and started blindly firing in the direction of the gangsters. When his gun overheated, he sprinted to the vaults his blind rage had worn off, and he was strangely calm. He got to the vault hall and stopped at the corner. He peered, and found the vault blasted open already. He did a sweep of the hall and proceeded to the vault. He saw some gangsters and quickly blasted them all right where they stood. “The vault is clear for now.” Kerrin reported over the radio.

“Good. Stay there and eliminate any stragglers.”

“Will do.”

Kerrin waited in the vault, outshooting all of the gangsters who arrived on the scene. After a few hours the crisis was resolved, and Kerrin was called to debriefing. He was rewarded for defending the vault, but the entire time Kerrin was thinking about his

instructor, and how he should have been getting the awards. Before the cremation, Kerrin requested that he could keep his instructor's helmet as a thing to remember him by. His request was granted, and Kerrin wore it with pride any time that he could. He was graduated from the hunter's academy and was told to join a guild and find a good place to live, close to where jobs were readily available. Part of Kerrin's instructor's will was that he was to inherit the instructor's ship, a very high end *Tralona* class. "It has had many modifications on it" The station's chief technician, a rather short Nautolan, was going through the vast bank of armaments and installed technology. "The forward cannons have been upgraded to be able to swap between normal and ion shots. The missile payload has space for six anti-ships and two 'bunker busters' as I like to call them. They travel at exceptionally high speeds, and a durasteel coating thick enough to penetrate most starcruiser hulls. The missiles come with a delayed fuse, and the explosion can be quite forceful."

"What other mods are there?" Kerrin asked.

"The engines have been upgraded to include Twin Microthrust modules, for extra maneuverability. Very helpful against tracking missiles, but it will require some practice to get used to the controls. They are rather –" The tech searched for the right word, "Touchy."

"I see. What are the hyperspace capabilities?"

"She'll go .8 past lightspeed, very fast indeed. The ship comes with an embedded fuel factory, using atmospheric gasses as materials. It'll save you a fortune of credits, but you'll have to buy your own hyperfuel. That juice is quite hard to make."

"Thanks a lot. I have to get going, but I'll try to get some more business around here. It's the least I can do." Kerrin nodded his farewell and made his way up to the ship's cockpit and sat down. He looked at the control panel and found the takeoff sequence button.

"What are you going to name her?" The tech said over the comms. "I was thinking maybe *Hunter*."

"I like it. It has a good ring to it. *Hunter* you are cleared for departure."

"Acknowledged. Starting takeoff procedure. Goodbye Torani Station, *Hunter* out."

Kerrin cut the link and *Hunter* lifted off and pivoted to the hanger door. The ship slowly glided out, and after it was a half klick away gave Kerrin manual control. He tested out the throttle, and it worked beautifully. To test the limits, Kerrin set the throttle to 100%, and took off at an extreme speed. He tried to slight to the left, but the ship went a full 90 degrees to the left and rolled slightly. *Touchy, huh? Touchy doesn't even begin to*

describe it. He tried the maneuver again, this time barely nudging the control rod. The ship slighted to the left, just like Kerrin wanted it to. He looked for the computer interface and programmed the computer to navigate to the nearest Hunter's Guild location. The computer chirped its response, and Kerrin went to investigate the rest of the ship. He waked to the door separating the cockpit from the rest of the ship as the stars stretched into long lines, then the ship jumped into hyperspace.

One

7 Years Later

The *Hunter* landed just as smooth as ever. It was an old craft by current standards, but it was still a lethal predator. After the landing sequence was complete, Kerrin passed through the doors that separated the cockpit from the main hold. He walked over to the miniature armory that was housed in a small closet. He strapped on his thick durasteel armor and holstered the 2 heavily modified DL-44 blaster pistols hanging just to the right of the armor. He then grabbed the DLT-19X sniper rifle, also heavily modded, and slung it over his shoulder. He then checked the wrist modules, a grappling cable and a dart launcher, to make sure they were active. Satisfied with his preparation, Kerrin lowered the docking ramp and stepped outside. The chilly air of Myron-3 dusted into the hold of the ship, and Kerrin descended the ramp. When the ship detected that Kerrin had cleared the docking ramp, it automatically retracted itself. The small town of T'zesk was bustling with afternoon shoppers, various droids going from one place to another, and cargo pilots heading to the cantina. *That's where I need to go*, Kerrin thought. His intimidating appearance drew many eyes, but that was all part of the effect. This gunslinger was clearly not to be trifled with. Kerrin's target location was the *Moonside Cantina*, where he could most likely find employment.

In the cantina, a place well known for the Hunter's Guild's presence there, Kerrin immediately spotted a Guild bounty broker. "Hello, sir!" The broker said jovially. "What can I do for you?"

"I am currently in the market for employment."

"It seems you've come to the right place then. What's your type?"

"Something lucrative. I don't care how far I have to travel, and I'll do whatever."

“The highest bounty I can give you is 2500 credits, catching a retired starship booster. Made some trouble with the wrong people.”

“That’s all?”

“No. I have something else you can do. I saw your ship come in. Very nice piece of work. You obviously are quite the pilot, flying a rig like that.”

“Yeah? What’s your point?”

“This job is much more lucrative. 20000 creds upon completion, plus whatever you get tipped for your services.”

“Wh—”

“Before you ask, the reason you may not want to do this is the client is the Pikes. They are transporting illegal cargo and they are having issues with pirates. After that, the Empire got wind and now they have been rustling their transports too. You will probably have to fight both parties.”

“I see.” Kerrin thought about the risks of this endeavor. He’d make a very large profit, but he’d also get in trouble with the Empire. He would also have to fight pirates as well. He decided that it was worth the trouble. “I’m in.”

“Really? I guess I’ll transmit the coordinates of where you’ll meet the client. I forgot to mention, you get a 5000 credit commission bonus. But since you took the job, I’ll wire it right now. But I will warn you: once you take the commission, there’s no backing out. Are you sure you want it?”

“Yes, I’m sure. I’ll be gone within the hour.”

“Very well. Your commission will be transferred shortly.”

Kerrin shook hands with the bounty broker and left the cantina. He went back to the landing pad where his ship was waiting. He noticed a small crowd of citizens gathering around it, admiring its sleek build and sophisticated tech modules. When he got there, the crowd cleared a path. Even with a Guild presence here, there still weren’t many travelers. Completely ignoring the crowd, Kerrin started fine tuning some of the *Hunter*’s weapons systems. First, he went to the two forward mounted guns. The targeting actuators were sluggish and need some tweaks. He slightly loosened the inhibitor nuts. He knew that if they were too loose the gun mount would rattle off the actuator hinge after a few shots, so the change was minimal. After the actuators and hinges were set to his satisfaction, he went to work on the wiring. There was some damage from one particularly nasty dogfight, the casing for the laser priming array was

severely perforated with laser fire, and the wiring was loose. After some quick welding and binding, the array was back to full capacity. To fix the holes Kerrin had to buy some new durasteel plating, but that was no issue due to the 5000 credit commission he had just received. Satisfied with his work, Kerrin boarded his ship and went to the diagnostics panel. Part of why he had some issues in the dogfight was the targeting computer was running slow. He issued a software update and rebooted the main computing array. The targeting computer reported 300% computer capacity, and the link between the forward cannons and the computer was seamless. After running a quick check on the engines, fuselage, pipes, wires and reactor, Kerrin was satisfied with the repairs and began the takeoff sequence. The craft roared to life, and began to lift off the ground. Trying not to dust the crowd with the engine kickback, Kerrin told the nav computer to rise a few hundred meters before igniting the main engines and blasting into space.

After Kerrin was in space, he received a transmission from the Pike syndicate telling him to travel to the planet Oba Dia to meet with the convoy. He programmed the navicomputer and set the ship to autopilot. He went to the hold, and went down for a nice long nap.