

Chapter 6

The Eighth Horcrux

The young Palpatine walked along the midway and chewed on the pink sugary substance. Voldemort knew what it was; Cotton candy. The stuff was invented by carnival promoters in order to get kids running and bouncing around and demanding to go on every expensive ride, only to work their stomachs into knots and puke it all up in the back of their parents' cars on the ride home.

Voldemort could think of no greater evil than the craft of marketing. Despite the damage he could do, his magic paled in scope when compared with the destruction wrought by corporate shills. Here they were wreaking havoc on children of this galaxy, whose unsuspecting parents brought them to Mos Eisley for the rides and wound up shelling out Galactic Credits for everything from stuffed Ewoks to tradable Jedi cards.

“Say Bantha cheese!” a voice yelled from behind Voldemort. He turned and a woman flashed a camera in his face while a goofy stuffed creature held up two furry fingers behind his head.

This place had to be destroyed.

Voldemort took the photo from the woman and put it with the others in his cloak. This was not why he had brought the boy here. He wanted to see how powerful Palpatine actually was. The kid needed a bathroom, and as Voldemort waited outside, he saw his chance. He cast the Imperius curse

on the two cartoon creatures. One was dressed as a large six-legged dog, and the other was a lady dressed as a fairy with sequined wings, carrying a camera and a sparkling... wand.

The wand would be an upgrade from the quill Voldemort was carrying. He was just about to demand it from her when Palpatine came back outside. The wand could wait.

Voldemort hid behind a column nearby, and Palpatine looked around, wondering what was going on. The fairy-lady came over and tapped him on the head with her wand.

“Hello? And who are you?” she asked.

Palpatine looked at her and hesitated.

She whacked him over the head with the wand again, much harder. “I said who are you?” she demanded harshly.

“I am, I am, uh, Palpatine,” the boy responded. The six-legged dog came over.

“That’s a funny name,” he said in a loud bellowing voice. “Are you some kind of medicine or something?”

Voldemort stayed hidden behind the column, content to watch the magic unfold.

“No,” said the boy. “I’m from Naboo.”

“Naboo?” the fairy said. “You’re not from Naboo. The people there all have big floppy ears, like this.” She aimed her wand at him and two long pink ears emerged from the top of his head. Palpatine looked up and yelled.

Some of the tourists walking by stopped to watch the scene. Voldemort chuckled. It was his magic, of course, but the woman was doing a fine job playing the part.

“Aren’t those funny-looking ears?” asked the fairy. The big six-legged dog laughed, and so did the tourists.

“Don’t forget their bright bushy tails,” he said.

“That’s right!” said the fairy. She whacked Palpatine on the butt and a huge pink squirrel tail grew there. He turned around, yelling as tears started to stream down his cheeks.

“Look! He’s chasing his tail!” hollered the big dog. He mimicked the boy by spinning around in circles.

“Look at him cry!” yelled the fairy-lady. The gathering crowd laughed as their children pointed at the freak. Palpatine dropped his cotton candy and glared at them. Voldemort waited for the boy to respond, but something was wrong.

The boy did nothing but stand there crying. Voldemort suddenly realized what the problem was. He took out his quill and quietly released Palpatine from the Imperius curse.

“Why don’t you fight back?” demanded the fairy. She walked around Palpatine, and whacked him a few times with the wand. Some of the children started to throw candy at him.

“Pull his tail!” bellowed the big dog. “I know I hate it.”

The fairy held the boy’s tail out for the children in the crowd. They took it and pulled, and Palpatine yelped and fell to the ground. He stood up again with a look of rage. Watching from behind the column, Voldemort curled his lips into a grin.

Palpatine spun around as the children tried to yank his tail. One of them grabbed it and started pulling him around.

“Stop it!” Palpatine yelled.

“Oh, look, he’s getting angry!” said the dog.

“Ha ha! I’ll bet he’s going to hurt us,” answered the fairy. “Are you going to hurt us? Are you, boy?”

Palpatine waved his hand and sparks flew out, hitting her in the face. She screamed and fell backwards, while the crowd immediately fell silent. Voldemort arched an eyebrow.

“What was that? How dare you!” screamed the woman, trying to stand up.

The big dog ran toward Palpatine. “Why don’t you try that with me?” he demanded.

Palpatine held out both of his hands this time, and the sparks flew again, this time at the big dog. He fell on his back and howled loudly. The children in the crowd screamed as everyone started to run.

The woman got up and began to charge Palpatine. He raised a hand and a nearby light pole tore itself from the ground and fell on her, crushing her legs. He bared his teeth and directed his electricity at her until she fell unconscious.

“Call security!” The dog yelled as he got up and ran. The plaza emptied while a loud horn blew overhead. Bright red lanterns rose from the roofs of every nearby building and began to spin while the sirens blared.

Besides the boy and the downed fairy, Voldemort was the only one left in the plaza. He walked over to the fairy and took the wand from her limp hand. Within seconds, several uniformed men surrounded them and formed a circle.

“Cease and desist!” one of them yelled. Voldemort stood with the boy Palpatine, still with his bushy tail and long

ears. One of the men felt the woman's neck and shook his head. The men lifted some kind of laser weapons at the two.

"You must yield," the leader said. "Put your hands on your head and kneel down. Both of you!"

Palpatine looked up at Voldemort, who simply smiled.

"I said put your hands on your head or we will fire."

Voldemort looked up and saw a starship hovering overhead. A large transport. It was about to come in handy.

"Fire," yelled the leader. The men opened fire and shot bright red laser beams toward the two. Voldemort raised the sparkling wand and deflected the beams toward nearby buildings, where they left scorch marks in the walls.

"Please," he said. The men fired again, and Voldemort lifted his wand, throwing several men backwards into the bushes. Palpatine looked on with his eyes wide open.

"Boy," Voldemort said, pointing at the ship in the sky, "Can you bring that down?" Palpatine nodded.

Some of the men charged Voldemort, and he lifted them with a wave of his hand and threw them at the building.

"Let's see," Voldemort said, walking toward the terrified men. "Who likes cotton candy?" He raised his wand and yelled "Cotton Candio!", and a cloud of the pink sugary substance appeared from nowhere and fell onto the men, who became completely entangled in it.

Palpatine raised his hands toward the starship, and released his electricity. Immediately, one of the transport's engines shorted out, and the ship started spinning.

The men in the bushes climbed out and reached for Voldemort. He threw them off with a wave and aimed his wand above their heads. "Et Cetera!" he yelled. His last spell repeated itself and another ball of cotton candy engulfed them.

Another group of men came running with their weapons drawn, and Voldemort cast the Et Ceterus curse again. The men were immersed in cotton candy, which began to crush them. Every breath filled their throats with pink sugary threads.

Palpatine tugged on Voldemort's cloak. He looked up. The transport ship overhead had gone out of control and was about to crush the entire plaza.

The men who were thrown against the wall got up and ran. Voldemort raised his wand and yelled, "E Pluribus Unum!" All of the men felt themselves pulled into one group, directly under the looming prow of the starship, just as Voldemort and Palpatine levitated out of the way.

The starship crashed into the plaza nose-first, accompanied by the sounds of crushing metal and screaming men. Voldemort and Palpatine floated several yards away, watching the ship fly apart while flames roared from the engines. Voldemort threw a curse at the ship, and then cast a protective spell over himself and the boy. Instantly, a fuel canister ruptured, spraying hot plasma all over the buildings surrounding the plaza. The explosion was immediate.

The noise was like being inside a volcano. The shock wave threw Voldemort and the boy backwards above several buildings, and they landed on a street hundreds of yards away,

unscathed. People ran out of the buildings and stampeded away from the crash. Fire rained all over the city, and Voldemort saw people downed by shards of metal and balls of flaming plasma. This was the kind of mayhem he was used to.

The people running were trying to escape the disaster, as was Palpatine, but Voldemort just wanted to get to a decent vantage point to watch the city burn.

They finally got to a place where they could watch the collapse of paradise. The ship was immense. Its skeletal hulk dominated the city as the smoke engulfed everything around it. The city would never be the same, Voldemort knew.

“See that?” Voldemort said as he pointed toward the city. “That is death. I can teach you so much about it, so many ways to bring it about.”

Palpatine watched the dying city with a look of horror on his face. But Voldemort also saw the seed of a cold, remorseless stare in his eyes. Despite his funny ears and tail, Voldemort was amazed by his power and callousness.

“But I can teach you the most important lesson of all; how to cheat death. I can show you immortality.”

Palpatine looked at him squarely. “How?” he asked.

“Ah,” Voldemort said with glee as a thick column of smoke rose behind them, blotting out the planet’s two suns. “See that crashed ship there? I have turned it into a horcrux.”

“What’s a horcrux?” Palpatine asked.

“I will tell you all about that later,” Voldemort said. “For now, just enjoy the view.”