

WHAT WAS LOST MUST BE FOUND



THE
WHITFIELD SAGA
THE OLD REPUBLIC

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THE WHITFIELD SAGA

David's Book...The Old Republic

Chapter One: Black Skies

The Coastline

The sky outside was the colour of scorched steel.

David sat strapped into the cockpit of the Eurussian recon jet, the world reduced to dials, gauges, and the steady hum of the engines. He hadn't spoken in hours—not since crossing the sea—and the silence suited him. Beneath the thin whine of the turbines, his thoughts spun louder than the wind clawing at the fuselage.

The cabin was dim, the glow of the instruments casting pale light across his hands on the controls. Shadows shifted with every flicker of a gauge. His eyes were bloodshot from lack of sleep, his jaw set in the hard line of a man who had carried too much for too long.

He had never even buried his father.

The body had been taken—hidden, burned, paraded, or lost. No grave. No final rites. Just silence.

Shannon was gone. Lazarus had vanished. Elizabeth was trapped in a war with Lionel she could not win. The palace was no longer a home, and Phoenix City no longer a kingdom. It was a tomb.

He exhaled slowly, fogging the canopy glass. Far below, the sea churned in black swells, flecked white by the wind, stretching into a horizon of endless grey.

What did you leave behind, David? What did you actually save?

The control panel blinked steady green—altitude, fuel, pressure—all stable. For now.

His father's voice returned in memory, from one of their last moments in the war chamber:

A soldier carries the nation on his back, but only a fool thinks he's strong enough to carry it alone.

David had tried. He had carried it until his bones cracked and his spirit nearly broke.

A warning light flared.

He blinked, leaned forward, checked again. The air pressure reading dipped—sudden, sharp. The navigation system flickered, digits tumbling into nonsense before resetting, then tumbling again.

“No...”

He toggled the override panel. The joystick trembled in his grip. Static crackled through the comms, drowning out the steady hum. The nose of the jet tilted left, then down.

Another alarm wailed. Red lights cascaded across the dash in furious rhythm.

“Stabilisers offline. Cabin pressure compromised.”

The engine screamed. The whole fuselage shuddered, rivets groaning against the strain.

David didn't hesitate. He reached for the ejection lever.

"Come on—come on—"

He yanked hard.

The canopy blasted open with a deafening hiss. Wind tore into the cockpit, ripping breath from his lungs. A moment later, the seat catapulted him upward, hurling him into the blackened sky.

The jet twisted below like a wounded animal, smoke trailing from its fuselage as it spiralled toward the sea. He didn't look back.

The parachute deployed with a violent snap, jerking him hard against the harness. His ribs screamed. The wind roared like a beast, whipping his limbs until the chute steadied.

Below—grey waters churned, waves battering a jagged coastline. Through the drifting fog, the faint outline of ruins pierced the horizon, fractured and skeletal.

The ocean rose to meet him.

Impact.

Water swallowed him whole, freezing, merciless. Salt burned his eyes, his throat, his open cuts. The parachute tangled above, dragging him under. He fought it, clawing at cords, lungs burning. With a last desperate kick, he tore free and surged upward. His head broke the surface.

He gasped, coughing, sucking in salt and smoke. His arms flailed, then found rhythm. The shore was close—fifty feet, maybe less. Rough sand, broken stone.

He swam.

The waves dragged at him, each stroke a battle. His clothes clung heavy, boots pulling him down. But rage kept him moving. Rage at Lionel. Rage at himself. Rage at the world that had crumbled beneath his family's name.

At last, his knees scraped sand. He clawed forward until he collapsed on the shore, coughing brine, chest heaving. His body trembled with exhaustion, but he rolled onto his back and stared at the black sky above.

The old world greeted him in silence.

And behind him—nothing. Just the sea.

He had crossed into the forgotten land.
And there was no one left to welcome him.

Chapter Two: The Shore

The Coastline

The sea had spat him out like wreckage.

David Whitfield lay face-down on the wet sand, coughing brine from his lungs, his blood mixing with the foam that crept in around him. The taste of salt burned his mouth, the grit of sand scraped his teeth. His uniform clung heavy, torn in places where the parachute straps had dug into him and the surf had dragged at him. The cold went deeper than the skin—straight to the bone, a cruel reminder that the ocean never forgave weakness.

The parachute was gone, torn away when he cut loose beneath the surface. It might have dragged him down into the black if he hadn't found the cord in time. That he had survived at all was absurd. The cliffs above towered jagged, cruel edges of stone, and the tide crept forward with patient menace, already licking at the marks his body had left in the sand.

He tried to roll over. Pain shot through his leg like a blade. His breath caught, came ragged. Something was wrong there—muscle torn, maybe a fracture. Another pain throbbed deeper in his side, each heartbeat pulsing blood into the sand beneath him, dark stains blooming in the pale foam.

His vision blurred. The sky above him was a weightless grey, the colour of steel before it shatters. He blinked against it, forcing the world into shape.

Get up.

The voice wasn't encouragement. It was command. He didn't know if it came from his father's memory, from some old officer's bark, or from himself. But it was the only reason he moved.

He pushed one hand into the sand and dragged himself forward. Then the other. Each pull set fire to his ribs, and the wound at his side wept fresh heat into the cold. Behind him, the sea stretched endless, rolling in grey sheets, waves curling forward like beasts sniffing blood.

The cliff loomed above—stone and shadow, slick with rain and moss. Sheer in parts, but not impossible. His eyes found a narrow crevice, little more than a dark line splitting the rock. It would have to be enough.

He lay still for a moment, sucking in the mist-thick air, and muttered through clenched teeth: “You’ve survived worse.”

The climb was agony.

He clawed for purchase, his boots slipping twice against the wet stone. Once, his injured leg buckled and he nearly pitched backward into the sea. The rush of air at his back was dizzying—one slip and the tide would take him. But his hands clung stubbornly, the muscles in his arms screaming as he dragged his weight higher. Inch by inch, he forced himself upward, grit cutting his palms, damp moss smearing his fingers.

The higher he went, the sharper the wind bit. Rain came with it, light but steady, mist turning to droplets that chilled the already soaked fabric of his uniform. Every reach upward was a gamble, but down was no choice at all.

At last, he hauled himself over the lip and collapsed on the grassy shelf above. His chest heaved, his ribs ached, his whole body trembled with exhaustion. He pressed his cheek into the cold grass, the blades wet against his skin, and forced air into his lungs.

Below, the tide swallowed the spot where he had first lain. Foam rushed across it, scouring away the dark stains his body had left. The sea had claimed everything—except him.

For a long while he stayed on his side, listening to the sound of the waves and the rush of his own blood in his ears. He let the rain fall where it wished, soaking him deeper, cold biting down until it felt like another hand gripping his chest.

Finally, he turned onto his back. The sky above was foreign, heavy with low cloud. He didn't know this land, didn't know its paths, its dangers, its secrets. He only knew that it was all that remained.

His lips moved, cracked and dry, the words rasping out barely louder than breath.

“Not dead yet.”

The words weren't bravado. They were defiance. A reminder. A promise to himself.

He lay there until his breathing slowed, until the pounding in his head eased enough for thought to form again. His father's voice echoed through the fog of pain, not sharp this time but heavy with the quiet authority of memory: A soldier carries the nation on his back, but only a fool thinks he's strong enough to carry it alone.

David shut his eyes. The tide roared far below, relentless. He had carried it all once. He had broken beneath it. But he wasn't finished yet.

Not here. Not now.

Chapter Three: The Fence

The Coastline

David woke to the bite of cold rain on his face. For a moment he didn't know where he was. The ground beneath him was slick with grass and grit, the cliff edge only a few feet away. Far below, waves smashed against the rock, the roar carrying up in bursts of spray. He must have blacked out after the climb. The Eurussian weave in his suit had banked what heat he had left—just enough to keep his core warm while the rest of him went numb. He flexed his fingers, pins and needles biting back, and pushed himself upright.

Pain pulsed faintly in his leg but the bleeding had slowed, the salt and cold stiffening it into something he could bear. His side still ached with every breath, but the worst of it had eased. Survival, at least for now.

He pushed himself onto his elbows, blinking against the mist. Inland, the land stretched flat and empty—scrubland, broken earth, nothing to soften the view. But it was not the emptiness that caught him.

It was the wall.

A fence of steel mesh rose from the ground like a boundary line against the horizon. Twenty feet high, anchored every two hundred metres by massive concrete towers. Surveillance platforms jutted from the sides, their rusted spotlights fixed toward the interior. Barbed wire coiled thick along the rim, sagging in places but still bristling with menace.

David frowned. The design was wrong. This wasn't built to keep outsiders away. Every detail—the lights, the wire, the inward angle of the towers—spoke of something meant to be contained.

He limped closer, one hand pressed to his side. The closer he came, the larger it loomed, the mesh dark and corroded, the towers streaked with moss. Rainwater traced down the concrete in thin rivulets.

Then he stopped dead.

Indented into the nearest tower, faint but undeniable, was the Whitfield crest.

The lion's head, weathered and pale, faced the sea—as though declaring the name outward, not within. Salt and years had chewed at its outline, but the mark was clear.

A memory stirred: his father's voice in the library at Phoenix, palm resting on a statue etched with the same emblem.

“This symbol once meant order. Protection. Legacy.”

Here, it was carved into the bones of a prison.

David stepped back, eyes narrowing at the contradiction. What were his family guarding out here, at the edge of nowhere? Or... what were they hiding?

Beyond the mesh stretched a barren land—no houses, no signs of cultivation, only a desolation that blurred into the mist. The silence pressed heavy, unnatural. No birdcall, no movement, just the faint groan of metal shifting in the wind.

From somewhere deep within the fence came a scrape. Low. Brief. Then gone.

David's jaw clenched. He laid a hand against the cold concrete. His family's crest, stamped on this place, felt like an accusation.

Behind him, the sea cut off retreat. Ahead, only the fence and the wasteland beyond.

The path forward was clear.

The only way was through.