

"I can't believe how easy it was to round up this group of heretics."

"I guess this "Brotherhood" isn't all that brotherly. The data leaked was spot on."

"Less work for us, right?"

"Yeah. I was also surprised this one came so...willingly."

"Not going to look a gift bantha in the mouth, eh?"

"Until every chain is broken..."

"Every last one of them."



The Great Escape Rescue



Unknown Regions

Collective Forward Operating Base

40 ABY

Two Capital Enterprises agents marched behind their latest prisoner, an ashen-haired figure with hands bound together by a pair of specially made stun cuffs. A blaster barrel was pressed firmly between his shoulder blades, urging them forward through the spartan, matted metal walls of the recently constructed facility.

Guards were posted on either side of the entrance wearing full Technocratic Guild armor with riot shields and Z6 Riot Batons. They left them behind at the entrance, where the prisoner was taken down a long passageway seemingly leading underground. The guards were clearly there to prevent people from leaving, not from entering.

At a cross in the corridors, a small processing station with a transparisteel window and holes for speaking.

"Got another one of those Force-loving heathens ready for processing," the first Agent stated as he cracked their prisoner across the side of the head with a baton. There was

no cry of pain, but the dull *thump* was enough to force the figure's head sharply to one side.

"Excellent, let's have a look."

"Yep, didn't put up much of a fight either. Clearly he knows the wrongs he's committed in supporting the filthy Force Users.

"Name?" the attendant asked, barely looking up from her terminal.

No response. That A crack from the baton across the figure's pretty, bearded face.

"She asked who you are, scum!"

The figure slowly straightened and turned his too-blue eyes, to settle on the attendant behind the transparisteel.

"Maricky Tyris Arconae," the figure spoke calmly.

The attendant nodded absently and entered that name into her terminal.

"Yeah, he didn't put up much of a fight. Almost like he was asking to be punished for his sins."

The two Capital Enterprise agents shared a chuckle. The attendant smiled absently, but then as the record showed up on her screen her eyes widened and her smile vanished.

"You idiots, that's the Gray F—"

She never quite got to finish her sentence as a sickening *pop* echoed and her neck was *snapped* by an unseen force. Further down the rest of the unread file, it *did* in fact state that the Brotherhood's "Gray Fang", did not require hand gestures to harness telekinesis.

"What the—"

The blaster that had been pressed into Marick's back was suddenly ripped out of the Capital Enterprises agent's hands, clattering to the floor a short distance away. With a surge of strength from the Force, the Arconae snapped his head backward, slamming

it into his captors nose. Blood squirted free as instinctive tears blinded him, giving Marick enough time to focus on the second captor who was wielding the baton.

Marick quickly tapped the Force once again, this time for speed. He twisted unnaturally—more serpent than human—snaking his stun-cuffed hands over the head of the closest agent and swinging around behind them so that he could use the cuff-links as a makeshift garrote.

It also, conveniently, turned that agent into a human shield. Another Force-fueled flex of muscle gave Marick the strength to physically wrench the agent's neck sharply from side to side, creating another sickening *crack and* causing the body to go limp before him. Quickly removing his chained hands from the dead agent's neck, Marick tossed the body into the remaining agent.

The first agent whose nose had been bloodied was finally recovering and reached for a knife from his belt. But the awkward projectile of his now-dead partner was enough to stagger him off balance, and gave Marick plenty of time to close in. The knife that had been fumbled appeared instead in animated motion in the air, guided by an unseen telekinetic grip. The knife zipped like an angry wasp and buried itself to the hilt into the agent's neck, blood gushing out of the wound as he gurgled and collapsed in a tangled heap with his partner.

Quiet.

Everything happened so quickly that there had been no time to sound the alarms. The security system must have been still new, and constructed quickly by the lowest bidder. The Collective was back, but they had yet to return to the former power and efficiency that Marick had fought against for three long years as Voice.

The Hapan found the key to his chains and telekinetically willed it into the slot to free him. Hands now untethered, he recovered his travel bag from the dead Capital Enterprises agent. He slid his earpiece communicator in and established a secure connection back to his ship.

"Transmitting my location now, bring the Encanis II in, cloaked, and stand by," Marick spoke quietly.

"Copy that, boss," came Zig Kaliska's reply from the ship.

With that, Marick clipped both lightsabers to his belt, as well as his other armaments, and proceeded deeper into the facility to find his fellow Arconans that had been taken.



Some time later



The time for stealth had long since passed. Warning klaxons blared all around the facility. Marick glanced down at the vial of blood in his hand. While some might have found it strange to keep blood samples around, they were invaluable to a Master Arcanist when it came to tracking down captured or lost allies. The Citadel medical facilities kept such samples for exactly these kinds of situations.

He watched as Zuza Lottson ran back towards the Encanis. Zig would be so relieved. He had to use all of his guile and patience to convince her to *stay* with the ship, so hopefully that would...help. He had wanted to say many more things to Zuza, to comfort her, to let her know that he, too, had survived Collective torture and worse. But she didn't need him for that. Right now, she was driven to protect what was hers, and there was nothing more Arconan in that.

A sense of pride washed over him, but helped re-double his focus on the task at hand.

Sagitta, where are you?

While the Mirilan was not his apprentice or charge, she was still Arconan, and one with a bright future ahead as a fellow Arcanist. He would not let the Collective have her, or any of the others that were in the process of being annexed.

Reaching out into the slipstreams of the Force using the same technique he'd taught to Sagitta, Marick found the sympathetic link and tether from the blood vial in his hand to the person it had come from. He knew where she was.

The squad of Collective guardsmen that had been pursuing Lottson rounded the corner, then, expecting to close in on an injured, fleeing mercenary. Instead, they met the twin floating lightsabers and ebony daggers of the Brotherhood's *Gray Fang*.



Marick found Sagitta sitting propped up against a tree and looking...not great. Her green skin looked to be a shade lighter than usual, eyes puffy but dry at this point as she seemed to be defiantly fighting against her own exhaustion, daring it to try and put her to sleep. She was a tough one, to be sure. But she was alive, though, and that was all that mattered in that moment.

The Arconae rushed over and knelt down beside her. His bright blue eyes quickly assessed her array of bruises and injuries.

“M-Marick?”

“It’s okay. I’m here, you’re safe,” he replied calmly, hands already going for his medical kit as he started to work on the most egregious wounds.

“Heh...you think this is bad?” she gestured weakly at the wound. “You s-should... see the other...guy, ha-ha. Headbutted him, kinda...don’t tell Buir”

“That’s one way to use your head,” Marick replied evenly, his monotonous tone a familiar deadpan. Once the physical medicine had been applied, he reached out into the Force and willed it into the Mirilan’s body, letting it wash over her and mend her aching muscles and the surface abrasions on her skin with a soothing energy.

“I...I’m fine, by the way,” she said as she clearly felt some strength returning to her.

“I know, but you don’t have to share if you don’t want to. If you do, though, I will listen.”

He left it at that as he wrapped his cloak around her shoulders and lead her towards the extraction point he’d set up with Zig to get them both safely off planet.

The Collective was back, but they had made a mistake coming after Clan Arcona.