

Imperial Outpost, Uluv, Ulress

“‘Tiure’? You’re positive?”

“I am. Back on Crannix Station, we ran into one of Thran’s... ‘agents’... who had been working undercover there for months before we arrived with the convoy. Once we started digging around, we found some crates in the lowest levels of the cargo decks, and marked on every single one of them was *that* symbol. The agent recognized them immediately as belonging to the ‘Tiure Clan’, but I don’t know what she was referring to, all I know is the name.” Ellac said, nodding at the angular symbol displayed from his holoprojector. “

Reiden tapped his foot as he stroked his goatee with crossed arms. “I do. The Tiure Clan is a family subset of the notorious Hutt clans. Have you ever heard the name ‘Jabba the Hutt’?”

“I’ve seen the Imperial records on him, yes, but he died nearly forty years ago. What’s so important about him?” Ellac replied.

Reiden continued to stroke his goatee, his foot tapping slightly faster as the gears in his head spun. “Jabba was a longstanding head of the Tiure Clan before he was killed, and at one point was even the leader of all of the major Hutt Clans. *But why would they be here now?*” He muttered that last part under his breath as he squinted at the symbol on Ellac’s device.

“Jasmine said that their involvement with the pirates on Crannix was only the beginning. She mentioned that the Tiure Clan might be trying to get to Kamjin, not that I’m particularly against someone putting a blaster bolt through his chest, but...,” Ellac said, cutting himself off as he realized he probably shouldn’t be going around actively putting the Emperor down to other Imperials.

Reiden’s brows lifted as a realization had struck him, looking up from the projection to meet Ellac’s eye. His foot had stopped tapping. The pieces in his mind falling into place as if they were a puzzle, and he had become its master. “There have been reports of people going missing from the city. No warning, no trace, just disappearing... We have reason to believe that this is the result of a slaving operation here on Ulress.”

“Ulress is Imperial space, no one would be stupid enough to-” Ellac stopped as he met Reiden’s gaze, the General’s brow raised as he waited for the Warrior to put the pieces of the puzzle together. “How have we not known about this until now?”

“I don’t know, but Ellac, *listen to me very carefully*. I need you to find out everything you can about the Hutt’s involvement on Ulress. If we really are only finding out about their presence in the Caperion system now, chances are they’ve been here for a while.” Reiden took a step forward, placing a hand on Ellac’s shoulder. “I need you to try to keep this quiet. We don’t know how entrenched they are here. If the Hutt’s find out that we’re on to them, the entire Empire

could be at stake. I'll have Kah'ri lead a scouting party across the rest of the city to see if they can find any other clues."

Ellac looked down at Reiden's hand, and then back into the Adept's blue eyes. "For the Empire?" he said with a smirk.

Reiden smiled, removing his hand from the Sith's shoulder as he straightened his posture slightly. "For the Empire."

Club Antonia, Ulress

Ellac stared down at the eyesore of neon lights from the rooftops across from the Club. Despite the establishment being closed after a busy night, he could almost swear he could hear that awful 'Acid Fizz' crap playing inside.

"What are we *doing*, Master?" An impatient voice groaned beside him.

Ellac ignored the question, staring intently at the building's entrance. "Shut up."

"Shut up, *please*? It's like you Sith have no manners," the voice beside him jeered. "But you still didn't answer my question: What. Are. We. Doing?"

"I said shut up, Titius," Ellac glared back at his apprentice.

A sly grin spread onto Titius' face as he looked into his master's eye. "What are you gonna do? Weren't you the one saying earlier that we needed to keep a low-profile? Can't do that if you're swinging that over-glorified glow stick around..."

A metal hand shot out from under Ellac's cloak, covering his apprentice's mouth as he shoved him toward the edge of the roof. The Warrior's eye twitched as he tightened his grip around Titius' face. "I swear to Bogan, Titius, I'm going to rip out your tongue and *feed it to you* if you don't shut your mouth."

Even underneath his hand, Titius' grin was visible.

Ellac pulled the Mercenary back from the ledge, moving his hand from Titius' mouth the the back of his neck as he turned him towards Club Antonia's entrance and the beefy giant of a Cathar bouncer, still posted by it, despite having closed the doors for the night.

"What do you see?" Ellac asked.

"All I see is that guy's arms. I mean look at the size of those things!"

Ellac jerked his apprentice forward and then back again. "Titius!"

The Mercenary smirked back at his Master before looking back at the Club. "I see three possible entry points: Obviously there's the front door, there's a ventilation shaft on the roof, and then there are the maintenance tunnels. You seem keen on staying out of sight, so that would rule out the door. Then there's the other two options. The ventilation shaft is a more direct route, but the maintenance tunnels will ensure we won't get caught. Of course neither of those facts mean anything because you're planning on walking right through the front door anyway. Did I miss anything, *Master*?"

Ellac matched his apprentice's smirk as he looked on towards Club Antonia. "I have trained you well," he said, releasing his former pupil.

"Please, you couldn't teach a Bantha to graze..." Titius responded, rubbing the back of his neck. "I'm years beyond your simplistic training." The Merc knelt down to the edge of the roof, slipping the sniper rifle from its holster on his back as he adjusted his scope.

Ellac looked down at his Apprentice as he took aim at the bouncer, grabbing the end of the barrel to point it away from the Cathar. "Don't..."

Titius yanked the rifle from the Sith's grip. "Touch my rifle again, and I'll take the other arm..."

Ellac glared at the man once again. "Do NOT shoot anybody. You are only here as support if things go poorly."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah," Titius mocked with a wave of his hand. "Just get down there and screw things up like you normally do so I can pop some heads."

Ellac growled at his apprentice's words, but decided to leave him be, turning back to the edge of the roof, and jumping down to the ground.

Down below, tucked into an alley between two buildings across from the club, a tall and dark Togruta knelt to the ground, waiting for Ellac to join him.

"Duk," Ellac said, nodding to the man as he landed on the ground. "You ready?"

The angry Togruta grunted with a huff as he nodded towards the bouncer at the door.

Ellac pulled the hood of his cloak over his head, stepping out of the alley toward the club entrance. "Leave him to me."

Noticing the cloaked figure approaching him, the Cathar bared his fangs with a hiss. "You need to move along," he warned with a snarl.

Ellac smirked, reaching a hand out the Bouncer, connecting with his mind in an instant. *"You will open the door and let us inside."*

The man resisted for a moment before his arms dropped to his sides, repeating Ellac's command. *"I will open the door and let you inside."*

The Cathar turned to the door, deactivating the locks, causing the door to slide open.

"Let's go" Duk said, pushing past Ellac as the pair entered Club Antonia once more.

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"Don't contact me again until you have the situation under control and you have members of Scholae Palatinae begging you for spice."

Ellac and Duk stepped through the double doors just as the hazy blue figure of a Hutt dissolved into the air, leaving only the two Imperial's and the Club Antonia staff standing in the otherwise empty room. One of them, another burly man, a Twi'lek, was facedown on the ground, and had just started his transformation into a Bouncer Meat Patty under the heel of a particularly stylish Quaren who was now repeatedly stomping on his face.

"Well that's no way to treat your employees!" Ellac called from the entryway.

The red-skinned Quaren's head snapped up to see the pair of intruders strolling in like they owned the place. "Who the frak are you?!" He yelled, digging his heel into the poor Bouncer's cheek as his beak clicked in agitation.

"I asked you a question! Who are you and what the hell are you doing in my Club?" The Quaren spat, stepping up and over the Twi'leks crumpled body. Seeing the Cathar Bouncer with them, his red skin turned even redder as he fumed.

"Uh, Sqygorn..." A young woman warned hesitantly from behind the bar. Ellac hadn't noticed her at first, but the cybernetic replacement of several parts of her body wasn't an easy thing to overlook.

"Quiet, Judith!" The Quaren, Sqygorn, snapped as he clicked his beak angrily as he marched up to the two intruders, removing his blaster from its holster. "One of you sithspits better give me an answer!"

"Sqygorn!" Judith yelled.

"WHAT?!" The Quaren screamed, turning back to the woman.

“Look at their clothes,” she said, pointing at Ellac’s cloak that had the Imperial insignia embroidered on the shoulder. “Their Palatinaeans...”

Sqygorn’s froze in place as he began to grasp the situation, swallowing hard as he quickly holstered his weapon, turning back to his ‘guests’. This was his chance; His chance for a profit in an otherwise fruitless night. He couldn’t let this chance slip away. “Oh, my Lords, please forgive me. I had no idea...,” he stammered, bowing slightly to the Sith. “It has been a trying day, and I fear the stress got the better of me. Please, come in, make yourselves comfortable while I get you some drinks, on the house!”

Ellac glowered at the man. “Stow it!” he shouted, causing the Quaren to fall silent as his tendrils twitched anxiously. “We don’t care about your drinks. We’re here for this...” Ellac activated his holoprojector, displaying the same angular symbol that he had shown Reiden. “What do you know about the Tiure Clan?”

Sqygorn’s face fell as he looked upon the symbol of his employers. His words seemed stuck in his throat as he considered just how dead he was about to be. “I- I don’t know what that means... What-,” he stopped himself as his voice cracked, coughing to regain his composure. “What clan?”

Duk roared as he lunged forward, seizing the Quaren by the collar. “**Answer. NOW!**”

“I- I don’t know anything!”

“The Tiure Clan is one of the five great families of the Hutts!” Judith shouted from behind the bar, covering for Sqygorn’s lie while evoking a stare of disbelief from her boss. “They used to lead the five Hutt clans decades ago, and have supposedly expanded their territories into numerous systems.”

“Keep going.” Ellac said, stepping past Duk and Sqygorn towards the bar.

“That’s all I know, I swear!” She said, stepping back from the edge of the bar as the Sith drew closer.

Ellac’s eye narrowed, studying the young woman. “I’m not so sure.” Extending his hand, Judith rose from the ground, suspended in air as her feet kicked helplessly for the ground.

“No, please!”

Ellac pulled her closer, raising his other hand as he began to reach into her mind. *Images of the bustling night in the Club flashed across both of their minds. One after another, she poured the drinks and filled the orders of the countless patrons that came to the bar, that terrible music*

blasting in the background. Finally, the Club was closed and all of the patrons had left, leaving her to clean up the messes they left behind. Sqygon questioned her about numbers...

"Stop!" She cried, squirming as Ellac rummaged through her memories. She couldn't keep him out.

"Don't tell them anything, Judith!" Sqygon shouted, still restrained by Duk's grip.

*Ellac could feel the panic she had felt as Sqygon demanded a straight answer. She watched him punch the bouncer again... Someone was calling him... **A Hutt...***

Ellac smirked as he fished the information from her mind. It had taken some effort, but he had found the information he needed. "Looks like someone's been running things for the Hutts here in Uluv," he said, eyeing the Quaren in Duk's hands. "You haven't been honest with us, Sqygon."

"What do you want?" Judith panted, drained from the strain of the Sith's intrusion of her mind. "The truth." Ellac looked back at the modded woman still floating in the air. "You're going to tell us everything you know about the slaving operation on Ulress."

The Togruta grunted at Ellac's words. "*Slaving operation?! You're a slaver?!?*" he shouted, ramming his knee into the man's genitals.

Sqygon beaks clattering as he coughed from the blow. "Go to hell!" he spat in Duk's face, ignoring his question.

The Knight snarled as he pounded his forehead against the Quaren's, throwing him to the ground. His anger boiled as he reached for his lightsaber, the Dark Side of the Force coursing through him. "I'll save you a seat!" he said, his red blade flashing to life as he slashed through Sqygon's arm.

Sqygon screamed as he fell onto his back, clutching the cauterized stump that was now his shoulder. "Frak!... FRAK!" he wailed, gazing up at the Sith above him. *Was this it? Was this the end of everything he had worked so hard for?* He imagined what Gaius would say if he saw him like this... Whimpering on the ground like a wounded Cath-Hound... All he could do was watch as Duk raised his lightsaber above his head... The end of it all in one quick strike...

From the corner of his eye, Sqygon saw something spring up from the floor, kicking the one-eyed human to the ground before slamming into the Togruta standing over him, knocking Duk off his feet. The blinding pain in his shoulder made it hard to focus on what exactly had hit the Togruta, but working for the Hutts had taught him to never waste an opportunity when it crossed his path. Pushing himself to his feet, the Quaren bolted for the back door while he had the chance, fumbling his way out of Club Antonia as he ran off towards the spaceport.

Back inside, Duk growled as he slammed into the ground, his lightsaber flying from his hand. Struggling to get up, Duk felt something heavy forcing him to the ground. The Twi'lek bouncer, who had been laying in a bloodied mess on the floor had picked himself up, had tackled the Sith to the in an attempt to save Sqygorn. The Twi'lek man wrestled with the Togruta, wrapping his massive hands around the Duk's throat.

The Knight gagged as the bouncer strangled him, raising both of his hands up in front of the Twi'lek's face as he released a blast of electricity from his palms. "Get off!" he gasped as the bouncer's hulking frame flew backwards, thrashing from the intense pain that engulfed his face. Extending his hand towards his fallen hilt, Duk's summoned it to his hand, igniting the weapon as he jumped onto the Twi'lek, plunging the fiery blade into his chest.

Jumping back to his feet, Ellac drew his lightsaber, ready to tear whatever kicked him to pieces until his eye locked onto Duk pulling his blade out of the Twi'lek's lifeless body. "Where's Sqygorn?", he said, looking down at the severed arm on the ground, but not finding its owner.

Duk glared up at the door behind the empty stage at the other side of the room, his Montrals twitching in the air as he tried to locate the Quaren. "...He's gone."

Ellac grit his teeth as he looked back over the bar at Judith, who had fallen back down to the ground when he had been knocked over. "Where did he go?"

Judith clasped her hands together to stop them from trembling as she looked up to meet Ellac's gaze. "The spaceport," she said, almost whispering. "You won't catch him in time... He's probably already gone by now..."

Ellac sighed as he pulled out his holoprojector again. Barely a moment had passed before the device lit up, the image of General Reiden appearing above his hand.

"Ellac. I trust you have found something useful." the General said.

"More than you know," Ellac confirmed. "Titius, Duk, and myself went back to Club Antonia to investigate. We ran into a few of the staff here, including what seemed to be the Club's manager. We managed to get some information out of them that confirms our suspicions of the Hutt's involvement on Ulress. We had to kill one of them, and the manager, a Quaren named Sqygorn, escaped. We do still have one of the staff in our possession however, a woman who worked at the bar.." The irritation of the Warrior's face was apparent.

Reiden considered his words for a moment before speaking. "Kah'ri has just reported back that the Tiure Clan had also been running a front through a local swoop gang not far from the Club. Their leader, Ixtal, has been confirmed as deceased." he said, stroking his goatee. "Bring the woman in for questioning. It looks like she's our only lead right now."

"Consider it done."

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Ellac looked down at the datapad Reiden had handed him, still trying to process the words he had just read. "Kamjin was shot?"

"By a sniper, yes. After your Quaren manager, Sqygorn, escaped, it seems he returned to the Tiure base of operations. Shortly following, a representative of the Clan reached out to the Emperor to set up a diplomatic meeting." Reiden leaned back in his chair. "The attack was so sudden, even Kamjin didn't realize what was happening until it was too late."

Ellac recalled his words about not hating the idea of someone shooting Kamjin, and instantly regretted his words. It was true that he wanted Kamjin dead, but he'd be damned if it was by any other hand but his own. "Kam," he muttered to himself. "You'd better not die."