



SUBMITTED IN ENTRY TO HSP COMPETITION: LOOKING
HOME CAMPAIGN - PTOLOMEA - OUT WITH THE OLD

Seeping Death

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NOTE: This entry is takes place three standard weeks after *Second Life*, the author's entry for the recent competition 'Fall Breakers', and directly refers to events in that submission. The document is publicly available.

October 5, 2013

1 Of Death and Deadlines

FROM: QUA Xen'Mordin Vismorsus

TO: Prof. Yerwyn Metzl

SUBJECT: Out with the Old

Professor,

The current dictator in power over the government of Ptolomea has grown too bold, and the time has come to end his time on the throne. Get it done.

For the Empire,

QUA Xen'Mordin Vismorsus

The resources available to her were vast, a collection of the greatest minds across the sciences, her mission to keep them in line and further the scientific interests of House Scholae Palatinae from the science labs in the city of Ohmen, located high upon the mountainside. Recently a talented young togruta, Dr. Elinicia Rei, joined her team as lead mathematician with an array of publications in chemical weapons diffusion. It was time to put her newest asset to the test. Her long black hair flowed behind her purposeful stride through the corridors of the science institute, glasses shining in the white light.

The appearance of a confident and aspiring togruta masked the darkness of her true identity, the lost Daughter of Palpatine, twi'lek Epis, Impetus M'Nar. Elinicia was still getting used to her office, her first week had been spent getting to know her team and collaborators, but things finally seemed to be settling down. Happy that her team were working, she settled down to continue her own research. Her research on optimisation of the diffusion of biological agents, a continuation from her work on Corellia, was approaching Stage II: the direct test on live subjects using the neurotoxin gas EA1205. However, under the supervision of Professor Metzl, the proposed live subjects were an assortment of sentient beings. It was more interesting than lab rats, the lack of any sort of ethical approval guidelines in Scholae Palatinae made things much more fun.

The room echoed with the sound of her furiously fast writing on the worksurface, the staccato rhythm of stylus on datapad, the work of a scientist with a penchant for conducting her research by hand. At the peak of her concentration, the door swung open to a woman with no time to waste on politeness. "Elinicia, we have need of you immediately."

She didn't even notice the intrusion, quietly muttering to herself while writing, "differential of thermophoretic force with respect to -

“Dr. Rei!” Metzl barked with a sharpness that jolted Elincia’s mind back into the room.

“Can it wait?” Elincia requested. Despite her quiet, polite voice, her words carried a undertone that screamed *‘leave me alone and let me get back to work’*.

“No, it cannot.” Metzl said flatly. “This order comes directly from the Quaestor himself. I’m sure you’ve been here long enough to know what that means.” *Yes, and when I had that job 10 years ago, he was my assistant*, Elincia mused silently. “We’ve lost control of Ptolomea, and we need the dictator eliminated, along with all of his followers. Dark Jedi are clumsy, they leave too many tell-tale signs. The blueprints of the Almagast Palace have been forwarded to your inbox. I expect the job to be done within one week.” Not even waiting for a response, the professor turned on her heel and left.

Scholae Palatinae’s slipping grip of Ptolomea triggered something deep in Elincia. Quaestor of Caliburnus many years ago, when the house rules over the planet, seeing the sloppiness of the leadership loosening its grip felt like a personal affront to her. Her professionalism and self control won a close victory in battle against her seething rage as she turned to the floor plans arriving in her inbox.

Her analytical, scientific, calculating mind regained control. This presented a wonderful opportunity. Mere weeks ago she had stolen a cache of chemical weapons from the University of Corellia, with plans to investigate their diffusive properties. The entire operation had been greatly accelerated. There was no longer time for Stage II to be a simple test. It was time for her research to be put to its intended use: the painful death of high profile targets. Due to the drastically shortened time scale, Elincia could no longer accomplish the project alone, however, it provided a perfect opportunity to test the capabilities of the team she had been assigned. After sending a flurry of messages, she left to conduct a briefing. She knew exactly what to do, it was just a matter of manpower.

Elincia had redesigned the small office in such a way to maximise collaborative efforts between her three research fellows. Light poured in through the large window, offering breathtaking inspirational views of the Judecca landscape. Her labcoat swinging behind her, She jumped onto a table, elevating her petite frame to a more prominent level to win the undivided attention of her subordinates. “Stop whatever you’re doing,” she said with quiet authority, having a certain aura about her, knowing how to lead, commanding attention and respect without the need to raise her voice.

2 Stage II

“We have a direct order from the Quaestor and I want everyone working on this and nothing else until it gets done. You’ve all been sent a blueprint of the Almagast Palace. There will be *no* survivors of either the dictator Lou Khebe or his followers.” She paused for a little to analyse the reaction of her team, noticing a slight cringe from Naresh, an elderly human male, after being ordered to facilitate such a massive loss of life. He would be replaced as soon as Elincia found a suitable student.

“Nuyen!” the zabrak looked up, thin black markings contrasting against his pale skin outlined his facial features, emerald green eyes sparkled with intelligence. “I want you to build a 3D model of the palace for use in a diffusion model, get to it. Use as many approximations as you need to get the job done fast.” He nodded, returning to his terminal.

“Naresh, I’ve included the locations of all electronic security doors in the palace. Our hackers should be able to open them remotely.”

As slow as the world-weary voice of the old man responded, his mind reacted slower still. “Very clever young lady... you want me to find the shortest route in?”

“That won’t be necessary,” Elincia responded sharply. “This isn’t about getting us in, it’s about stopping them getting out. Combinatorics. Identify all possible perimeters around Lou Khebe’s chambers that can be completely secured. Then order them by ventilation shafts per unit metre. Trust me when I tell you failing me in this task would not be a prudent course of action.”

She then turned to the last and brightest member of the team, Leeda, a young human woman, stunningly beautiful, long brown hair framing a feminine face of deep dark brown eyes and a bright smile. Elincia had struck up a close friendship with her, wanted her as more than a research fellow, but unsure if she could trust her to keep her biggest secret, she would hold herself back for now. “Leeda,” she said softly. “I have a difficult task but I need you on it straight away. I’ve sent you details on outside ambient temperature and the location of heating units and ventilation shafts. I need a pressure and a heat gradient of the entire building.”

“Got it Ellie!” she chirped back with a smile. “I’ll have a report ready for you in a couple of days!”

“Thank you Leeda,” Elinicia replied smoothly. “Come see me in my office if you have any issues. The rest of you shouldn’t need anything, now get to work!”

“Simulations were conducted using a diffusion based model factoring in heat and temperature,” Elinicia explained to Metzl, pointing to a large scale blueprint of the palace, with a thick red perimeter around the dictator’s room. “We identified this as the optimal region for the release of a chemical weapon. Three ventilation shafts, and a perimeter that we should be able to lock electronically from the outside. We’ve ran the simulations for a few different areas and distribution strategies. Insertion of 150g of EA1205 through vent 1, 45g through vent 2, and 10 in vent 3 released at night will ensure asphyxiation in 99.5% of all humans within 76 seconds.”

“I trust your calculations, Dr. Rei.” Metzl responded plainly. “I’ll send a team in to get the job done.”

While pleased that the operation would go ahead, Elinicia was uneasy about someone she had never heard of handling the chemicals she felt some sort of claim to. “I’ll disperse the chemicals,” she suggested. “I understand them better than anyone else in this system”. It wasn’t arrogance, it was just plain fact that she was a leading expert in that area of science.

However, Metzl was less keen on the plan, responding assertively. “That won’t happen. You’re too valuable to the team to risk when we can use someone more expendable.”

“I’ll come back in one piece,” Elinicia said serenely, waving her hand slowly. “You don’t need to worry. But keep this off the record”.

“You’ll come back in one piece. I don’t need to worry. Good luck”. There was more to being in control than simply having a position.

3 Operation Seeping Death

The darkness of night enveloped the Almagast Palace. Elinicia wasn’t going to take any chances tarnishing her new identity. Finding a private place in the vicinity of the palace, she took to work on a new appearance, which wasn’t difficult, considering everything about her was a charade anyway. Removing her fake montrals and morphing her pat-

turned skin to an even shade of blue, the twi'lek reverted back to her original species, also switching her labcoat for some black robes that allowed greater freedom of movement. The only pocket contained the small secure cannisters of poisonous gas, releasable only by remote trigger.

Reaching the palace walls was not a difficult task for a seasoned Krath Epis Assassin familiar with the surroundings, despite her advancing years and lack of action for half a decade. She approached the palace wall silently, moving under the cover of darkness. The entrance to the ventilation shaft was secluded, shielded from the public eye, but high, at ceiling level of the second floor. Thin black robes fluttering the the breeze, the blue twi'lek stepped back, sizing up the situation. This would be no problem for her.

Enhancing her agility through the Force, she took a quick and assured run up towards the wall, leaping up to it with grace. Light as air she took a step up the wall for extra height. She felt herself drifting away from the wall as she rose in height, her fingertips just about caught hold of the air vent, her body swung back towards the wall. Unable to stop her momentum, she took the impact on her knee, leaving a blood mark on the wall as she barely held on to laboriously clambering up into the vent, leaving a small trail of blood in her wake and lamenting the days she could have done that blindfolded and handcuffed.

Safely in the vent, she patched up her wounds through Force Healing, just enough to stop the blood loss, then proceeded down the dark and cold vent. Her knee slowing her down slightly, she moved forward silently. "This is Elinicia," she whispered into her commlink. "Prepare to lock down the area in 2 minutes".

Although she moved slower than she would have liked, staring at the blueprints for hours in the preparation stage taught her exactly where to go to make up the lost time. The cannisters were all linked to the same trigger, and would spread the toxic chemicals into the air the moment the area was locked down. Once all three were in place, Elinicia crawled back to the entrance, blocking the vent to prevent the escape of any of her nerve agent. "Lock the doors now. Gasses will be released in 5 seconds".

Elinicia climbed out of the vent, hanging by one hand, lowering herself as much as possible to reduce the fall. She hit the ground with a thud, unable to absorb her own fall, her ankle making a nasty crack, but a much worse fate awaited those still inside.

Khebe awoke with a terrible cough. "Arruna'ven!" he croaked angrily, his voice

hoarse. “What’s that smell? What is wrong with you? All I want is a nice room on this horrid planet!”

But Arruna’veen was more intelligent than her dictator, and was no longer in the room, recognising things weren’t right. Her small blue fists thundered against the security door, but it had been locked from the outside. She tried to scream for help. There was no air.

“Arruna’veen! Where are you!” Khebe growled more hoarsely, coughing and spluttering as he crawled out of bed. “What’s... wrong... me!” he coughed up blood onto the floor, wheezing and gasping to breathe.

The twi’lek dropped to her hands and knees, losing energy. Her muscles lacked the oxygen to function. She tried to scream but she couldn’t even breathe. She slammed her hand against the door again, her knuckles a bloody red. But it was useless.

Khebe’s throat was on fire as he collapsed to the floor in indescribable agony. Desperately gasping for air only made things worse. His suffocation was slow and painful.

Lou Khebe died alone.

WORD COUNT: 2148