



SUBMITTED IN ENTRY TO HSP COMPETITION: ASSASSIN
FUN

Sacrifice

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NOTE: This story furthers the personal turmoil facing Elinia Rei, her new identity and the past which follows. The character history of Impetus M'Nar is central to the plot, although this fiction functions as a standalone piece.

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Prelude

Stone statues towered high above master and apprentice, the images of heroes and villains old, the Sons and Daughters of Palpatine. A large, well built human with more a taste for fighting than mysticism, the apprentice was in awe of the legendary warriors, tales of war, bloodshed and victory. His eyes drifted upwards from one to the next in trail of his petite female master.

“Emperor Phoenix Palpatine, the Ruthless,” she said smoothly. Leader of Scholae Palatinae during the Yuuzhan Vong invasion, under his guidance and prowess on the battlefield, the clan survived under insurmountable odds.”

Her student’s eyes drifted to another idol, one much unlike the rest. A slender, beautiful twi’lek, her pose elegant, her attire revealing, her figure breathed life and colour into the grey stone. “And what relevance, master, does the stripper have?”

“The stripper is Impetus M’Nar Palpatine, the lightning. Legendary spy and Krath assassin as famed for her promiscuity as her lethality, the clan has neither seen a quicker duellist or a better dancer. She was the mother of our special forces for many years.”

“And where is she now?” the apprentice asked out of more than historical curiosity.

“Impetus is dead. She was killed by a heat storm on an expedition to the Ryloth Brightlands. Her whole team were burned to ash.”

TWO YEARS LATER

1 The Task

Togruta Scientist Elincia Rei peered out her office window across the wastes of Judecca, her emerald eyes absent mindedly scanned the empty landscape. It had been six months since her infiltration into Scholae Palatinae and none had suspected her true identity. Everything was just the way she wanted it. As lead mathematician of the Scholae Palatinae’s Military Science division, far from the Dark Jedi, far from their power games, far from politics, she was left to focus on her academic pursuits, and had done so with great success, attributed as the mastermind behind the assassination of the Ptolomea dictator, Lou Khebe.

Her Force illusions had served her wonderfully to preserve her charade, and while she wasn't as quick as she used to be, her mind had never been sharper. She glanced back at her workstation, awaiting results on simulations regarding a theoretical neurotoxin grenade.

Dr. Elincia Rei,

You did us a fine service on the elimination of Lou Khebe. Now we have an even greater task for you. We have heard rumours that Impetus M'Nar, the Lost Daughter of Palpatine we believed dead, has returned to Ptolomea. We've attached a dossier on her. We need you to find out what she's up to and put an end to it if necessary.

FOR THE EMPIRE

Quaestor Xen'Mordin Vismorsus

2 The Briefing

Well this might be the most awkward assignment I've ever had, Elincia thought to herself before responding that she'd get on it right away. It was also slightly disconcerting that the Quaestor had personally delegated the assignment to her, rather than to the head of the Science division. She was a master of disguise and subterfuge, one of the most intelligent women in Brotherhood space, but getting out of this one would be a challenge even for her. Immediately, she left her office to brief her team, the elderly human Naresh, a young Zabrak named Nuyen, and Leeda, a beautiful female human.

"This may be the toughest assignment we've ever faced as a team and comes directly from the Emperor himself," Elincia said plainly, jumping onto a table, her pure white lab coat trailing her movements. "We've been tasked with locating one of the most dangerous assassins in our history, the Krath Epis Impetus M'Nar."

"Who did you piss off?" croaked the elderly world weary voice of Naresh. "Even when she was alive she was a ghost."

"I heard she could go invisible at will, and crippled armies without leaving a trace," Nuyen chimed in.

“One does not simply find Impetus unless she wishes to be found.”

“This is not optimal,” Elinicia said, suppressing an awkward smile. “To make matters worse the Emperor does not want to be seen chasing these rumours as they cannot be given fuel to spread. This means we have very limited resources at our disposal.”

“I’m with you Eli!” sounded the young voice of Leeda, Elinicia’s research student. “We’ve never failed a task under you.”

I wish you were under me, Elinicia thought, having sexual desires for the girl but maintaining her professionalism. “Thank you Leeda. It’s just the four of us on this one, even for field work, and the target is elusive. But fictitious tales of Sith and Jedi are not uncommon, they’re probably hugely exaggerated. A dossier has been forwarded to your inboxes. All of her known favourite spots, her allies, her enemies. Naresh, Nuyen, I want a network theory based approach. We have the data, make the connections. Flag up every incident involving a twi’lek, before and after her death, every mysterious killing or disappearance. She was a hedonist known to hate slavery, give greater weight to any sex related or anti slavery incidents. Build a mathematical picture not of her, but of the influence she has on her environment. Leeda, use their work to detect any recent irregularities that may be related to Impetus and send them to me immediately.”

3 The Bait

The dancers danced, the fighters fought and the band played. Wisps of smoke swirled through the thick atmosphere, filling the air and the lungs of the cantina patrons. This was not a place of wealth. The Drunken Rancor Cantina reeked of poverty and drugs.

A luscious blue skinned twi’lek displayed herself on a table, her dancers outfit leaving little to the imagination. She was visibly nervous as she danced, the metal shock collar round her neck indicating how she ended up in this occupation. The guests didn’t care, slave or not she satisfied their sexual desires. A small credit chit was handed to the bartender. The dancers protests were met with a short and sharp zap from her collar.

“You belong to us,” the bartender said heartlessly. “They pay for your time, they get it. Your opinion is worthless. Its about time you understood that,” he berated before turning to the guests and handing over the slave collar controls. “You have half an hour

with her. Do what you want, but don't damage our property." The twi'lek choked back tears as she was dragged away to a back room.

Elsewhere, a thin cloud of purple smoke hollowed up from a corner of the room, barely noticeable behind the haze of drug smoke. The gas spread across the cantina undetected, smoke hidden in smoke. The bartender spluttered, leaning on the bar for balance. He took in a deep breath but there was no air. The cantina guests soon followed, choking on neurotoxin gas along with every human in the cantina. Nearly every regular asphyxiated to death. The slaves, mostly twi'lek, survived.

"This is interesting," Leeda reported. "A cantina gas leak has just caused the unintended release of 5 twi'lek slave girls and the death of 69 humans that used or owned them."

"A gas leak?" growled Naresh. "That was the same cover story we used after poisoning Lou Khebe. She must have got the idea from us. She knows we're chasing."

"Can we be certain it's her?" Nuyen added cautiously. "It could be a chance accident."

"The cantina was near one of her favourite spots," said Leeda serenely. "And the numbers speak for themselves. Taking everything into account, this is four thousand times more likely to happen with her around."

"And so what if she is?" Naresh snapped. "Then what? The brilliant Dr. Rei leads us into a death trap? I don't trust her."

"I trust Eli," Leeda said defensively. "She wouldn't hurt us."

"Wouldn't hurt YOU," came a scathing response. "You always were the special one. If you tell her about this, and she wants us to investigate, our deaths will be on your hands."

"I trust her judgment," Leeda responded flatly.

4 The Darkness

The Drunken Rancor looked abandoned. No one had been inside since the accident. Silent, no movement, the smell of death. "We know she's been here and we know when,"

Elinicia said to her team. “I want to find some clue towards what she’s up to and what her next move might be. I’ve had the place ventilated fully ventilated and I’ve been told she used a compound similar to the one we used against Lou Khebe. Its likely a copy cat attack and appears directed at us. Stick together and keep your eyes open.”

Elinicia stepped over a security barrier, gesturing her team to follow. She held a small blaster pistol at her right hand side, given to her by Koryn during her first field assignment, although she had never been trained in its use. It was more for show than anything else.

Elinicias white coat was the brightest thing in the decadent cantina. Corpses littered the floor. Elinicia ran her hands over Leeda’s reassuringly, sensing her nervousness. “I don’t think we should be here,” Naresh said ominously.

“On the contrary this is exactly where we need to be. We need to observe her work to understand her, and we cannot follow what we can’t understand. I want to check out the back rooms, come with me,” she finished with a direct authoritative tone.

When the doors closed behind them, leaving the four of them inside, a darkness filled the air. The darkness was more than a mere absence of light. It was tangible, thick, oppressive. Elinicia’s hand reached inside her labcoat. Her illusions dropped. The darkness faded, replaced by a snap-hiss and a violet blade of light. She ran her fingers over the embossed M’Nar family crest. Green eyes turned blue. Red and cyan skin turned yellow. The togruta scientist faded into her true form, the Twi’lek assassin.

Her team stepped back, astonished, terrified. The deaths of Naresh and Nuyen were mercifully quick and painless. Impetus’ lightsaber skill had diminished but was enough to deal with unarmed cowering scientists. She turned to Leeda, who had broken down in tears.

“My sweet Leeda,” Impetus said in a paradoxical affectionate tone that dripped with malice. “There’s so much I’ve always wanted to do with you...” she pushed Leeda against the wall, kissing her deeply on the mouth. “It’s been many years since the last time,” she said, aggressively undressing her student. “My final gift to you.”

Epilogue

Dr. Rei,

I heard about the slaughter of your team. They did not die in vain. This confirms her presence in our system, especially after what happened to Leeda. The Dark Jedi will follow this up personally with the methods your team provided. The costs for hiring a new team will be credited to your research budget. Use them as you see fit.

FOR THE EMPIRE

Quaestor Xen'Mordin Vismorsus

Safely back in her office, Elinicia looked over the data collected on Impetus. Her team's work had been very thorough. While there were some mistakes, their network had linked her with incidents in which she left no trace. They had successfully constructed a fingerprint of Impetus' influence on the world around her. Luckily for her she was no longer the same person she was during her assassin days.

Her self inflicted shock and lightsaber scars did wonders to support the tale of her lucky escape at the hands of Impetus. Her own rather intimate knowledge made her story even more believable when retelling the tale to her old allies and acquaintances. The cost was her team but she was now safely disconnected from the mystery of Impetus. She felt sad about the loss of Leeda, she had such a lovely long tongue, but it was necessary for her own self preservation. She scouted the holonet for suitable mathematicians, weapons scientists and biochemists to build her new team.