*The Quality of Innocuousness*

**VT-49 *Aggressor***

**Cocytus System**

**39 ABY**

The sullen mood of the VT-49 Decimator Class vessel Aggressor was compounding minute by minute, and the skeleton crew were becoming wearier with each ticking and passing of the radial diagnostic flickering on the tactical display set up above the auxiliary consoles but behind the pilot’s viewport. None could venture a guess whether it was the proximity to the festivities they would miss on Judecca or the extended nature of their ambuscade that was more troubling to morale. The only sound audible was the decrepit 2-1B droid attempting to organize the makeshift sickbay.

Calling the bulkhead storage compartment a sickbay was a travesty to the word itself, but it did its purpose admirably. Until recently, the commanding officer of the *Aggressor* had no organic life-forms to worry about. He alone piloted the vessel and his only crew were a pair of IG-86 droids upgraded with gunnery aptitude to augment their role of ship sentries. Major Fenn enjoyed the newfound company, but was slightly hesitant about how his sentient passengers would take to the presence of so many droids working the controls of the Scholae Palatinae Fleet vessel.

Passengers were not the correct term; teammates. Upon joining Shadow Guard Major Fenn made his vessel at the disposal of the battle team. Having so many Force sensitive personnel onboard made the quarters cramped and put Fenn on guard. Several of the team were slumbering in the tiny crew quarters; a small room with two rows of bunks configured three bunks tall. Seated with the vessel commander were a young captain, a mercenary, and a Sith knight.

“If this wait becomes any longer I strongly welcome an engagement. This vessel is luxurious for inserting the team into a hot zone, but actually living in the damn thing is making me walk the walls,” came an angry, grumbling remark by the mercenary. Chrome, the newly minted Sergeant of the team, was glistening with anger at the situation. Perhaps the man was not use to working with a team, or being holed up waiting for days on a cramped vessel.

“Come now Chrome, your lack of patience is troubling,” replied Delak, the Knight leader of the team. Chrome eyed his superior with a cocked brow. “Del, I simply cannot understand how morale is not plummeting. Given enough time the team will be mutinous,” retorted Chrome. Anxious laughter filled the bridge. Major Fenn eyed a glance to 2-1B, who came over to the table. “Doc, bring us that bottle of Ryloth medicine,” ordered Fenn. The droid left as quietly as it had came.

Major Fenn tried to lighten the mood as the droid returned with a carafe of liquid and a stack of cups. Nodding his approval to the 2-1B model, the commander began. “Gentlemen, have you ever heard of the massacre at the detention center on Raxis Prime? It was a Separatist installation on the edge of the Tion Hegemony. Imperials took it over and never let anyone out. Skeleton crew of wardens and guards, a place of exile for both inmates and overseers alike.”

The mood instantly rose. Captain Wagglehorn looked up from the displays inset on the tactical dashboard of the table, “I remember hearing stories of that place. People been locked up there for over fifty years now. Odd thing is, the guards all died and the inmates died of some disease. Some say they are still there waiting to be rescued. Terrible things.” The captain turned his gaze away, aware that he had sounded like a superstitious child.

Fenn laughed a dry, throaty laugh. “Close, you see the damned thing is, everyone died on the same evening. It was the annual remembrance of the founding of the detention center. See, when you are locked up somewhere long enough it becomes home and the walls close in and clothe you. But this evening, during the celebration…everyone died. Some say it was Imperials cleaning up the trash. Others, that an alien assault destroyed the place. Me? I know what happened.”

It was Fenn’s turn to blush. The battle team leadership eyed him scrupulously. It was Delak who spoke first, “No chance. That is some remote space. How the hell did you come across this information?”

Taking his glass by the rim, he drank it down fully. Refilling his cup, Major Fenn urged his listeners to do likewise. “Well, its easy to know about such things when you acquire a droid who was stationed on that rock for decades. You see, Doc, he isn’t much to look at or talk to. But, he is damn eager to bring a drink and he cannot stand boredom…odd for a droid isn’t it?”

Everyone laughed, not believing a word the vessel commander said. 2-1B came back around to refill the glasses and brought a fresh carafe of the deep red ale. As always, he left without a word and without an incident.

“And 2-1B *really* disliked Raxus Prime. Poisoning *everyone* just to ensure someone would come and reclaim anything of value was an especially odd thing for a droid to do. Generally, droids only kill sentient life when specifically programmed and designed to do so. And yet, Doc, indeed poisoned every one at the detention center,” stated Fenn, letting the words fully resonate.

Laughter was nowhere to be found now. The mercenary stared wide-eyed and the other two had a mix of fear and appreciation for the story. “I can suspend belief, sure, but who programmed 2-1B to be such a merciless kill with such a long fuse?” Chrome asked with a jeer.

Major Fenn sighed and smirked. “Well, good friend. Count Dooku himself. He originated in those parts of the Hegemony, and the detention center was his personal domain. Doc, you see, was the Count’s personal medic.”

The jaws of the men nearly hit the floor. All eyes were now wide in disbelief, as 2-1B slowly walked back to the table. The monotonous voice startled everyone, “more drinks, gentlemen?”